

The unexamined life is not worth living.
-Socrates

Don't just do something. Sit there.
-Quaker Saying

September 15, 2013

Dear Lansdowne Friends School Families,

Among the many gifts of Friends education is the opportunity for our students to get in the important habit of quiet reflection. What Socrates said in the 5th Century BC is true today and meeting for worship, the center of any Friends school, is where we corporately reflect on the sacredness and meaning of our lives together. It is remarkable to see such restraint and self-discipline in such young people, and this discipline will pay dividends throughout their lives.

The first full week of school has proceeded swimmingly. All of the classes have settled well, with every class establishing their charters under the practices of the responsive classroom. Examples of what our students agreed to in their class charters are the following: *We will be known for the kindness and respect that we show others, ourselves and our spaces. We will support each other. We will make learning fun.* The themes of support of community, of the joy in learning and respect are ways that this school provides a healthy contrast to many unsettling messages we hear about much of our culture.

There have been other great moments this week. For example, my cross-country team had its first three practices, and in that brief time I saw enormous growth in stamina, resilience, speed and togetherness. This morning, the 5/6 class was in charge of Gathering, and they spoke on the theme of peace. They shared a fable of the destructiveness of war, told us about the refugee crisis in Syria, explained the role of the United Nations in bringing peace and justice to the world, and informed us of the upcoming International Day of Peace and how LFS observes it. (See below.) All of this preparation in just one week! I want to remind you that you are all welcome to Gathering every Friday morning. There you can witness your students taking ownership of their learning, displaying poise and confidence as they speak in public, and practicing their skills in listening, thinking and questioning.

It was so great to see all of you last night as we gathered for Back-To-School Night. It is great to be part of such a supportive and engaged community. I wish to reiterate a point that Teacher Nancy made last night. One of the best ways to support your child's education is to read to him or her as often as possible. Reading to your children aloud strengthens your relationship with them, enhances their reading and critical thinking skills and concentration, and most importantly, fosters their love of reading.

Have a great weekend.

Sincerely,
John McKinstry