

Kindergarten

Fall is my favorite season because the air is refreshingly cool, the afternoon shadows are long, and we feel a special connection to nature, not only because of the chill in the air, but also because we know that this is the time of the harvest, which we will shortly celebrate with the most glorious of American rituals, Thanksgiving. How fortunate our Kindergarteners are to have Teachers Mingh and Christa, who have as the themes right now the Fall and community. The two themes go together, for there is something about autumn that makes us want to connect to one another. In their class, the students have enthusiastically embraced many books related to the season such as *Pumpkin Day* and *Strega Nona's Harvest*. The class has been outdoors, and has walked to the public library as part of its study of community. They have used pumpkin seeds to toast, to eat, and to count. How lucky they are to have teachers who emphasize nature and one another to help them feel grounded.

Simplicity

I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book.

Groucho Marx

There is nothing of which we are apt to be so lavish as of time, and about which we ought to be more solicitous; since without it we can do nothing in this world.

William Penn

In meeting this week, T. Deb spoke to a concern of hers that too many students are inundated with electronic devices and the images and messages they carry. She lamented that students have little space in their lives for tranquility, thought, and schoolwork. It is fortunate however that at a Quaker school, we have the language and the testimony of simplicity to speak of how hazardous to our health and well-being this clutter of overstimulation is. Across the nation, there is also recognition that this flood of stimuli can have an adverse effect. Susan Cain, the author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, writes that "people are more creative when they enjoy privacy and freedom from interruption... Solitude has long been associated with creativity and transcendence... Solitude can even help us learn. According to research on expert performance by the psychologist Anders Ericsson, the best way to master a field is to work on the task that's most demanding for you personally."

Therefore, another way that you can support the school and your child's development is to limit his or her time with electronics. Television, video games, computer games, texting, *et cetera* not only can exhaust a young person, they also displace other activities that can give a young person solitude, which allows him or her to think and enjoy the imagination. It is disheartening to hear an otherwise intelligent student spouting the nonsense of some video game that is obviously leaving him impoverished by not letting him read, or have conversations, or sleeping. So feel free to take away the cell phone at night and to take the television out of the bedroom.

Another way that you can support the school is to be very careful about what your child is exposed to in the media. Please be aware that various video games, such as Grand Theft Auto, glorify violence, sending a message contrary to our values about peace and respect. Likewise, we hope that you are careful about the songs that your child is exposed to. So many lyrics are violent, sexual or misogynist and it is quite likely that your children might assume that the negative sentiments these songs and shows embrace should be the norm. We have high standards at Lansdowne Friends, and we aim not just for academic excellence, but human excellence.

Thus, provide space for your child and your family, and enjoy this glorious fall weekend.