

**THE QUAKER SELF-STUDY AND MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL PROCESS  
FOR QUAKER ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, AND K-12 SCHOOLS**

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The **Quaker Self-Study and Membership Renewal Process (MRP)** is designed to be a rich learning and growth experience for a school community. It involves a year-long self-study followed by a school visit from the Friends Council on Education at least once every ten years.

**The Hope** - *Our Friends schools' most fundamental strength and source of renewal is our Friends philosophy of education rooted in Quaker faith and practice. There is a profound and hopeful ambition in the Quaker vision of schools as spiritual communities. When we approach this potential, our schools are places rich in love, challenge, collaboration, fruitful conflict, and a generative sense of what is possible in the classroom, in the community, and in each other. We are able to help children and adults bring the light of the spirit to each other and out into the world.*

To engage in the **Quaker Self-Study and Membership Renewal Process (MRP)**, the school will form a self-study committee that includes representation from all constituency groups – faculty, administration and staff, board, parents, alumni/ae, Friends Meeting members as appropriate, students as appropriate. Friends Council has compiled a list of resources to support the school in the self-study process and is available to consult with the self-study team. The focus of the self-study is to affirm the Quaker identity of the school.

**Cycles** - *Our ability to truly live this ideal, to sustain clarity of focus on the Quaker life of our schools, comes and goes amidst the many challenges of contemporary schooling. Indeed, healthy spiritual life in schools seems to unfold in cycles: periods of active focus and attention to this dimension of the community, sharpening our vision for it, developing key skills, consolidating our efforts of faith and practice, and strengthening the commitment of the community to our most fundamental values. This vital work is often followed by a quieter period of living out the fruits of this labor, using the community's renewed strengths to turn to other important agendas. In time, the need for a new cycle of community reflection and inquiry into Quaker faith and practice comes around again.*

The school will confirm faithfulness to its Quaker identity as evidenced by its commitment to the *Principles of Good Practice for Friends Schools: Affirming the Quaker Identity* through a brief, clear report to Friends Council on Education supported by documentation confirming the six principles. After a school visit, Friends Council Membership Committee will provide commendations and recommendations to the school, and to the FCE Board, which gives final approval for membership renewal.

**The Opportunity** - *Gathering all in a Friends school community in this reflective work, engaging the full range of voices in this dialogue, and making new the meaning of Friends faith and practice in the school's life is a process that can be tremendously rewarding and renewing. The **Quaker Self-Study and Membership Renewal Process (MRP)** asks you to consider where in the cycle of spiritual work your school is right now and when, among the other rhythms of school life, it may be the right time within the next ten years for the school to undertake a self-study process for renewing membership in the Friends Council on Education.*

## PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR FRIENDS SCHOOLS: AFFIRMING THE QUAKER IDENTITY

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**Principles as a Guide** - *These principles are offered as a guide for Friends schools to consider when engaging in a year-long self-study process of the school's Quaker identity. Friends Council on Education encourages schools to form a self-study committee and to involve the whole school community in conversation about what makes the school a "Quaker school." Each set of principles includes ways for a school to demonstrate confirmations of those principles. Some confirmations involve drawing from existing documents. Other confirmations are designed to encourage dialogue within the school community – in a similar way to considering a query.*

### I. MISSION

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*Principles:*

- The school's mission includes a commitment to embrace the core tenets of the Religious Society of Friends.
- The school's mission supports the spiritual as well as the academic formation of its students.
- The school's mission respects and embodies the spirit of seeking and discernment of truth.
- The school values its interconnectedness with the Religious Society of Friends, which strengthens both groups in transmitting the abiding values, beliefs, and traditions of Quakerism.

*Confirmation:*

1. Share the school's mission statement and provide a few examples (brochures, promotional materials, publications, web materials) through which the school's Quaker philosophy and mission are disseminated.
2. Attach the organizational by-laws or charter that clearly describe the school's affiliation with the Religious Society of Friends.
3. Briefly describe how the school maintains a living relationship with the Religious Society of Friends, Quaker meeting communities, Friends organizations, and other Friends schools.

## II. WORSHIP

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*Principles:*

- Meeting for worship in the manner of Friends is fundamental to the Quaker essence and character of the school, and is fully articulated, understood and embraced as central to the school's mission and philosophy.
- The school holds meeting for worship in the manner of Friends (in a developmentally appropriate way) at least weekly, as well as on special occasions.
- The school's meeting for worship is conducted in a way that is sensitive to the ages of the students and the diversity of religious identities represented by the students and faculty while remaining faithful to Quaker practice.

*Confirmation:*

1. Describe the yearly calendar for weekly meetings for worship, and those held on special occasion (e.g. opening day, baccalaureate, commencement, etc.).
2. Briefly describe how each constituency group in the school is oriented to and educated about the practices and purposes of meeting for worship and its underlying beliefs, with sensitivity to the religious diversity of the community.
3. If the school uses a different term for its meeting for worship, briefly describe the community's language and the decision about using it.

## III. GOVERNANCE

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*Principles:*

- The school is in a care relationship with a monthly meeting; or its board membership is 50% Quaker; or the board membership includes sufficient representation of Quakers to model, support, articulate and advocate for the school's continuing Quaker identity.
- All board members, regardless of religious affiliation, embrace their responsibility to be ambassadors of and advocates for the school's Quaker mission.
- The board orients itself to and uses Quaker-based decision-making practices as appropriate.
- The school's governance structure calls for regular review and examination of the school's Quaker identity by the board of trustees or school committee.
- The board, as it exercises its responsibility for fiduciary and strategic planning, assures that the school's Quaker identity remains a principal focus of both the content and implementation of any plan.
- The school commits to attracting and supporting Quaker families.
- School commits resources to sustaining a diverse and inclusive community.
- The board emphasizes the centrality of the school's Quaker mission and identity as it seeks new members and leaders.

*Confirmation:*

1. Briefly describe how the school attracts Quakers to the board and orients board members to Quakerism, Quaker-based decision-making, and Meeting for Worship.
2. List the members of the school's board and their Quaker meeting affiliations, if appropriate.
3. List the members of the board's committee or task group whose function is to nurture the Quaker dimension of the school and briefly describe its recent work.
4. Give a recent example of the board using Quaker-based decision-making for a major decision.

5. List the Quaker-related board development and other networking opportunities attended by board members during the past three years, e.g. Friends Council workshops and peer networks meetings, etc.

#### **IV. LEADERSHIP: HEAD OF SCHOOL AND KEY ADMINISTRATORS**

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*Principles:*

- The head of school models the use of sound Quaker practices, and is a primary ambassador of and advocate for the school's Quaker identity.
- Other key leaders in the school are also responsible for understanding, communicating and supporting the school's Quaker identity in developing and implementing programs.
- The head of school is responsible for the orientation of faculty, staff and other key administrators in Quaker tenets and practices.
- For schools that are in a care relationship with a Friends meeting, the head of school, together with the board clerk and the clerk of meeting, actively participates in relationship-building with the Meeting.

*Confirmation:*

1. Briefly describe how the school attracts Quaker administrators, faculty and staff and orients all to Quakerism, Quaker-based decision-making and Meeting for Worship.
2. Give a recent example of the head of school, and also at least one key administrator, using Quaker-based decision-making for a major decision.
3. List Quaker-related professional development and networking opportunities attended by the head, faculty and other key leaders during the past three years, e.g. Friends Council workshops and peer network meetings, etc.

#### **V. SCHOOL PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY LIFE**

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*Principles:*

- Friends' tenets, testimonies, and values are at the core of all aspects of school life and influence program, curriculum, and the school's relationship to the wider community.
- Students are introduced through the curriculum to the values, beliefs, and traditions of Quakerism and are guided to understand these principles at the root of the school's community life.
- Visible in the school's ethos is a culture of respect demonstrating the belief that there is that of God in every person.
- The school has a fundamental commitment to be an inclusive community grounded in respect for each of its members. The religious pluralism of the school community provides an opportunity to foster the religious and spiritual formation of people from a variety of religious backgrounds.
- Community outreach, service-learning, and other forms of community involvement are tangible expressions of the school's Quaker identity and are essential elements of a student's educational experience at all levels.
- The school's program is characterized by a culture of inquiry-based, reflective practice.

*Confirmation:*

1. Briefly describe how the school attracts Quaker families and orients students and parents to Quakerism, Quaker pedagogical approaches, and Quaker-based decision-making and supports them in understanding the school's Quaker identity.
2. Give a few brief examples of how Quaker history, practice and testimonies are embedded and taught in the academic program.
3. Attach a summary of programs in which students, in developmentally appropriate ways, learn about world faith traditions, global studies including respect for commonalities and differences among individuals and cultures; study ethics and engage in moral reasoning; and explore the role of religion in history and contemporary life.
4. Briefly describe three examples of service-learning/community outreach activities, or attach the community engagement / service-learning curriculum.
5. Briefly summarize how students are grounded in the school's Quaker identity through the teaching of accountability, responsibility, reflection, respect, and non-violent conflict resolution.
6. Briefly describe how Quakers and Quaker organizations are involved in school life.

## **VI. CONTINUING REVELATION**

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*Principles:*

- The school's "visioning" process draws from the deep, spiritual purpose of its founding, and from the school's enduring mission, in order to assure the school's continuing integrity and viability. A shared vision in a Friends school is one that has evolved from a process of corporate discernment, similar to a Quaker process of shared decision-making.

*Confirmation:*

1. As a result of completing the self-study process, a school will likely identify new or refined areas of focus in affirming its Quaker dimension. Briefly describe the school's focus, timetable and process that will be addressed over the next five years.

## **RESOURCES FOR THE MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL PROCESS SELF-STUDY**

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- *Advices and Queries for Friends School Community Life*
- *Governance Handbook for Friends Schools, second edition*
- *Leading in the Light: Celebrating 325 Years of Quaker Education in America*
- *Principles of Good Practice for Friends School Boards & Every Friends School Trustee*
- *A Quaker Book of Wisdom: Life Lessons in Simplicity, Service, and Common Sense*
- *Readings on Quaker Pedagogy: Philosophy and Practice in Friends Education*