

Friends Council  
 & Education  
**Chronicles**  
 OF QUAKER EDUCATION

## WINTER '98

### WHAT IS A FRIENDS SCHOOL? - REVITALIZING OUR QUAKER DIMENSION

What are those elements in a school that make it a Friends school? It helps to have Quakers on your school committee or to be under the care of a Meeting but for Quaker education to have a real impact there must be something more. The Friends Council on Education Program Committee decided to answer the question, in typical Quaker fashion, not by providing answers but by providing more questions. In February, 1997, the Program Committee revised a set of Friends school queries originally written in the 1960's. These became the cornerstone of the new Quaker Dimension Support Service offered by the Council. "We wanted to provide schools with a way to nurture our common center which is our Quaker heritage," reflected Diana McGraw, former Clerk of the Program Committee. "The Quaker Dimension Support Service allowed all the constituencies in a school a chance for self-reflection".

The Queries themselves apply to four main statements of purpose for Friends Schools: 1) Friends Schools are organized and operated out of a deep religious concern 2) Friends schools offer spiritually based education 3) that education teaches spiritual, religious, and human values cherished by the Society of Friends and 4) that education should emphasize certain qualities of mind and spirit such as integrity, curiosity, and creativity. Schools were to respond to the Queries in writing and then select a committee of no more than three from outside the school community to visit the school and provide feedback.

Alan Craig, Head and FCE Board member, volunteered his school, Moorestown Friends, a pre-school to 12th grade with 575 students, to pilot the program. "We took one look at the questions and felt overwhelmed," said Barbara Caldwell, Quakerism coordinator at Moorestown and Coordinator of the Quaker Dimension pilot. "We struggled with developing a process for six months - we knew we had to break the Queries down into something more manageable." Moorestown divided up the Queries by constituencies. The School Committee and Admissions looked at the first two sections of the Queries. MFS parent, Mary Frintner, created questionnaires for faculty, parents and students out of the other two sections. "The questionnaires provided a starting point to the process, explained Barbara. "We can use the responses on the questionnaire to reflect on the queries in more depth." For example, the school held an all-school faculty meeting to discuss the faculty's comments.

"To be an effective Quaker school, you have to ask two questions - what are we doing now and what could we be doing?," reported Alan. Barbara agreed. "The process can't be used to just pat yourself on the back or to compare yourself to other schools," she remarked. "The result of this self-evaluation should be a long range plan to improve the application of Quaker spiritual values in your school".

Another very different Quaker school decided on their own to pilot the Quaker Dimension process.

As a result of the vision and leadership of Jim Clay, Head, School for Friends, a pre-school with sixty three - five year olds in Washington, D. C., has been reflecting on the "What is A Friends School Queries?" since September, 1997. "I thought the process could be a benchmark for us to live up to regarding our commitment to Quaker values," explained Jim. "It would lead us to questions about ourselves and show us ways in which we have to grow".

At first, the School Board thought the each question could take a year to answer. They were also worried about who would read the self-evaluation. "The Trustees thought it would be kept on file at the "Vatican" (Friends Center in Philadelphia)," recalled Jim. "I put in an urgent call in to Kay Edstene (Executive Director, FCE) and she assured me that any report that came out of the process would be for our own use."

The Board finally agreed with Jim's initiative because they believed the process could enrich the school life at School for Friends and increase its ties with the Friends Meeting of Washington. The only Quaker parent in the school provided leadership by editing the questions because some were not applicable to younger children. The School formed three subcommittees made up of parents only, teachers only, and Quaker Board members. It was still undecided as to whether each subcommittee would look at all the questions or focus on a section. "Whether we produce a document or not, the discussion generated from this process has been very helpful, said Jim. "I am hoping a plan will evolve to help us increase our emphasis on Quaker values, but I am waiting to see what comes out of the process."

It did not surprise anyone that Diana McGraw, Division Head of the Lower School at Baltimore Friends and deeply involved in developing the Quaker Dimension service felt a personal commitment in the Queries. She used the Queries as part of the professional development process with the Lower School faculty. Each teacher picked several queries they would like to focus on for the school year and those became a key part of their development plan. "Quaker values should be incorporated into the classroom like the sun rising - quietly, naturally, and every day," said Diana. "Because Lower school teachers are more isolated than those in the Upper Divisions, having the Queries keeps Quakerism in the teachers consciousness whenever they enter their classroom."

Diana shared the Queries with her colleague Scott Harrington, Division Head of the Middle School, "Many things seem to fall under the umbrella of Quakerism at the Middle School, but the teachers thought the efforts might be fragmented. Sometimes we fell like we are driven by factors that are not under our control or that we don't always believe in. I thought the Queries could help us re-focus our efforts on what is truly important." explained Scott. Scott introduced the Queries at faculty meetings and the teachers have been brainstorming responses and then develop action plans for improvement. "This process can help us not only to talk Quaker but to walk Quaker," mused Scott.

## **NURTURING OUR FUTURE LEADERS**

### **STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE - NOVEMBER 13 - 15, 1997**

**By Deborra Sines Pancoe**

Picture this - 120 high school students from 19 Quaker upper schools getting together for two and a half days --- Kente cloth and blue denim, preppy dressers as well as funky hat wearers, pierced ears, noses, etc., braids, green hair and dreds. The outcome? 120 young people with renewed energy and excitement for service to their communities, inspiration to explore the spiritual basis of their lives and the depth of their souls, and lots of new friends (or Friends) at other Quaker schools.

Students from Friends secondary schools up and down the East coast gathered at the Arch Street Meetinghouse for the first Student Leadership Conference.

The event was conceived and organized by Dick Wade, Head of Germantown Friends School, Bruce Stewart, Head of Abington Friends School, and Rose Hagan, Head of Friends Select School. The goal of the conference was to encourage and nurture students leaders by bringing them together to research and develop action plans on topics chosen by the students themselves. Each school sent six student representatives and local Friends school families hosted the out-of-town students and chaperones.

The conference opened Thursday evening with an inspirational message from Deborah Saunders, a Friend of African ancestry from Cropwell Monthly Meeting in Marlton, New Jersey who spoke about her personal search for spiritual meaning. Katherine Gulick, a student, noted, "I was particularly struck by the living silence in the room as Deborah spoke. You could hear a pin drop!" Speaking out of the silence, Deborah offered libations to the ancestors in the tradition of African cultures as a way of acknowledging the gifts made in the past which we benefit from even in the present. Students called out the names of their own ancestors and loved ones who have passed away to thank them for their continued presence in their lives. Deborah urged each person to pay attention to the Inner Light and she challenged us all to bring a spiritual perspective as well as an intellectual perspective to our role in transforming society.

Prior to the start of the conference, students had been assigned to groups so that each member of a group attended a different school. These "mixed" groups met by topic on Friday to discuss such issues as the School Community Environment, Service to Others, Technology: Tool or Trap, American Public Schools in Crisis, and the Bosnian Dilemma. Each group had faculty advisors to assist the students in researching the topic and developing action plans to be implemented back in their school communities.

Saphi Glosser, president of Friends Select student government noted, "I really appreciated the opportunity to talk to other students who were as concerned about an issue as I was." Another student remarked, "The Student Leadership workshop helped us to improve our skills as student leaders and to see that we need to work together as leaders as well."

Friday evening's dinner at Friends Central School was followed by a student coffehouse which featured an acappella group from Germantown Friends, a jazz band from Friends Central and an open mike for any of the students to perform for their peers. The focus on service to others was put into practice on Saturday when all of the students and chaperones went off to nine different sites such as Philadelphia Food Bank, Community Home Repair, Germantown Boys and Girls Club and Project Home for a morning of community service work.

After a fried chicken lunch, the students joined the annual public gathering of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) to hear Oscar Arias Sanches, Nobel Peace Laureate in 1987 and former President of Costa Rica. The Cherry Street Room facing benches were filled with men and women who had volunteered with the AFSC in Europe following World War II and the students sat across the room in the balcony. Their faces appeared eager and ready to participate in the effort to eliminate injustice and as George Fox wrote "to live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars." The older generation of AFSC volunteers who had spent much of their lives working for a more peaceful and just world for all expressed confidence in passing the torch to the Friends school student leaders.

Deborra Sines Pancoe is the Upper School Dean and also teaches religion at Friends Select School in Philadelphia.

## INTERVIEW WITH ROSALYN BERNE, HEAD OF TANDEM FRIENDS SCHOOL

**Q:** Tell me a little bit about yourself. How did you get involved with Quakerism?

**A:** I was raised in my early years in Philadelphia. My family was living in the Friends Neighborhood Guild which is a planned community started by Quakers in urban north Philadelphia. The Quakers took this old factory, refurbished the building and turned it into housing units. It was planned for residents who were economically, racially, and nationally diverse. This introduced me to Quakers. It was a rough neighborhood and I was aware that outside the boundaries of the Friends Neighborhood Guild was the world and the world was dangerous. Both my parents were into education - my father was a teacher my mother was a social worker. So I took the trolley car up 8th street to Greene Street Friends School.

I was educated by the friends until we moved out of Philadelphia altogether in eighth grade. However, the Friends experience left a deep impression inside of me. I remember Meeting was one of the most significant experiences of my week as a child. For eleven years, I was very much involved in Siddha yoga. In 1990, I began to seek something that felt like other people were a part of my experience. So I remembered about the Friends, even though it had been a long time and I went to the local Quaker meeting and I enjoyed it. I started going more and more and before I knew it I had been attending for 8 years. I had many profound mystical experiences in that setting.

**Q:** How did you become to be the head of Tandem School?

**A:** I was at the Darden School, a graduate business school of some note, very competitive, and I was the Director of Admissions there and taught ethics.

I dream a lot and I follow my dreams. I had a dream and I woke up my husband and I said I have to run a school. From that moment forward, I began preparing myself to be the Head of a school. My whole career had been in higher education - administration, teaching, and counseling. I heard about Tandem School. I applied and was hired.

**Q:** How did the school become a Friends school?

**A:** A week after I accepted the job, the Board brought me in to tell me that Tandem was a failing institution and that I was expected to turn it around. Apparently, the school had been in the red for years. They looked to me to articulate a vision for the future. I had done all this research in terms of what kind of school would be viable in the market. I needed to present a finalized action plan at the Board Meeting.

Once again, I went back to my prayers. My problem was that I thought Tandem was an exquisite school just the way it was. I wanted to hold on to the beauty that is Tandem because at the point the Board was even ready to close it down for a year and start over. I was sitting in Quaker meeting thinking, "What have You called me to do?" Suddenly, the light went on - this is a Friends school. The problem with Tandem is it doesn't know its a Friends school. It hasn't been awakened to its true nature and it needs a mirror. Quakerism was the mirror to say look at what you are. Even



though the school was completely secular, all the ways of being, all the values were in the nature of a Friends institution. Focus on the heart, listening to the individual, cherishing each individual voice, equanimity - all that stuff was in place. And I said, "I've got it. This is what I was called to do." And then the really scary part began.

The parents who were drawn to this school were attached to a very radical sense of individualism and secular humanism. We went through a period of my being attacked angrily by parents. We called a community meeting for everybody. Virtually every parent in the school was there and they came angry. Questions came and I felt very alone. About ten minutes after the meeting started, the door opened and six people from the local meeting came and they sat right in the front. I looked at them and I realized it was going to be just fine. We had about a two hour open meeting. I took as many questions as I could and I leaned on their presence. They were very calm and beautiful and they answered some questions themselves when someone asked "Well, are there any Quakers here?" And that's when I became a Quaker.

We have more students than ever because we are a Friends school. Meeting for Worship is so cherished here. Last year a student committed suicide. I called my teachers together and told them what had happened and we gathered up every person in the school community. The whole school walked in silence to the Meeting Room and we sat there for two hours. What would we have done if we didn't have Meeting for Worship? They knew what to do - they knew to go to that. There was a long grieving process but that was the first step. What do other schools do without it? This shows why kids need spirituality in their repertoire of living. Its not enough to just give them academic skills.

I feel the Presence of the Spirit here in a very profound way. Part of what we have to do with these kids is to give them the strength to keep their hearts and minds open to the Light because I truly now am starting to see that the world is a place where the Light coexists with another way of being. The kids are inundated and that what we are doing for them is more than adding another component to their curriculum. It is really a battle to keep them able to walk in the Light and to be strong in that. To hear it and to feel it and to go to the Light when they need to. So this is very important work for us all. I want to take this very broadly. I want this to touch many more children than just those at Tandem school. I don't know how that will happen, but I have my marching orders.

## THE NEWEST OLD QUAKER SCHOOL

Everyone is familiar with the fact that Quakers often start Quaker schools. But what if you have been a secular private school for 27 years? How do you turn into a Friends school? We only have to talk to the administration, faculty, and students of Tandem Friends School located on the outskirts of Charlottesville, Virginia to see how it is done. "It was a Friends school all along. The spirituality was here," explained Charlotte Matthews, head of the English Department and Clerk of the school's Spiritual Life Committee. "There was always a spiritual element at Tandem in honoring the goodness of each person." Sandy Richardson, Director of Admissions and head of the History Department agrees. "We were all ignorant of Friends education. But our philosophy was that kids should be free to learn, to be taught in the way that they learn the best. Kids should be able to be themselves in school, and school should know the kids well and recognize their strengths."

Tandem School had been struggling financially for years. Something had to change or the school would have to close. It took the prayers and vision of Rosalyn Berne, head of a school for the first time, Quaker attender for eight years, to recognize the true nature of the school (see accompanying

interview). Becoming a Friends school gave Tandem a greater definition and a clearer vision. Not only do parents want a moral education for their kids, the kids want it too. "We are now filled to capacity," said Sandy, "even though our teaching philosophy has pretty much stayed the same."

The biggest change at Tandem has been the addition of a weekly silent Meeting for Worship to the school's schedule. "The kids have been very receptive to Meeting", reported Charlotte. "They are learning the value of waiting and listening. It is a still place in a turning world. The kids try to help each other find value in meeting. It is not unusual to see a senior go sit next to a restless 7th grader."

Everyone at Tandem agreed that the school has had a tremendous amount of help and support from the Charlottesville Monthly Meeting. Members of the Meeting often attend Meeting for Worship and are called to vocal ministry. Chick Moran, a conscientious objector in World War II and a member of the monthly meeting is often seen around town with his Tandem Friends School T-shirt.

Because Tandem was the first school that applied to the Friends Council on Education that had already existed as a school, they requested that they be allowed to join the Council through an alternative method of membership - self-evaluation. (See article on Membership Committee). The Spiritual Life Committee gathered input from all members of the school community and submitted a written document to the Friends Council in 1997 describing the spiritual life of the school, method of decision making, and teaching philosophy. A team of experienced Quaker educators was sent by the Friends Council visited the school. "Tandem School was such an interesting place to visit. You could just feel how much the whole school community wanted to be part of the Quaker movement," said Anne Javsicas, Head of Plymouth Meeting Friends School and part of the Friends Council team. Tandem knew \*that there were areas that needed to be developed in terms of their Quaker identity and values, but they felt it would be easier to do if they were part of the Quaker education community. And the visiting team agreed with them."

Where does Tandem Friends School go from here? "We really want to deepen our Meeting for Worship because it is the heart of the school. I would like every child to see Meeting as an open space, a gift and believe in the possibility of a spiritual experience," confirmed Charlotte. "Kids from Tandem who went to the Student Leadership Conference in Philadelphia were transformed by the experience," said Rosalyn. "They are urging us to go to the next level of commitment to spirituality and Quaker testimonies in education." Everyone at Tandem believes that the more interaction they can have with other Friends schools, the more they will be able to deepen their Quaker identity. "We wanted to join Friends Council on Education because we wanted to be part of a community with like schools. We feel we are deeply and deliberately embracing the values of Friends schools," reported Charlotte, "but we need guidance from experienced schools to continue to move forward."

## ALL ONE FAMILY

In 1989, faculty at Buckingham Friends School, a Kindergarten to 8th grade Friends school, located in rural Bucks County, Pennsylvania, never dreamed they would be starting an international cooperative project which spans five continents and has been growing for almost ten years when they asked children at the school to draw pictures of the Soviet Union. Their drawings were dark and violent - full of tanks and bombs and blood. It became clear that each student carried an unspoken fear of the USSR and its people. The teachers wondered if these enemies could be turned into friends. Could the students learn to see that of God in the Russian people?

The school began with a USSR theme week which focused on the culture and geography. Later, a

Russian language program was introduced at the school. The students were once again asked to draw pictures but the pictures had changed. Although some violence still existed, they also showed the similarities between human beings. Teachers felt it wasn't enough; they wanted to make more of an impact on the students. The chance came when Buckingham Friends was asked to be part of a pen pal program sponsored by the Quaker US/USSR Committee. They were paired with School Number 213, located in what was then Leningrad.

Within a year, Buckingham invited School Number 213 to visit. In 1990, ten Russian students and two teachers arrived in Buckingham, PA to live with students families and work on joint projects at the school for two weeks. " We could feel the stirrings of a small miracle," said Karen Seaton, school librarian. "The bond between the children and adults of the two schools was almost immediate. They were no longer an unknown enemy, but friends." In 1991, the Buckingham Friends School entourage landed in Leningrad on the day in October that the city's name was changed back to St. Petersburg.

After a few more exchanges, the teachers in both schools yearned to add more meaning to their joint efforts. They realized that now that the Soviet Union had collapsed, the kids were no longer so afraid of nuclear war. However, they shared another fear - the environmental destruction of the planet. The Joint Environmental Mission (JEM) was born. "We realized that if anyone of us harm the environment locally, that action harms the environment all over the world. The environment connects us all. The kids could work together to try to understand the issues and develop positive action plans which could be carried back to the home country," reported Karen, now clerk of the JEM Committee and JEM Coordinator of the program at Buckingham. The Russian teachers, Natalya Shidlovskaya and Tanya Vorobieva, came back to the US for a planning session and helped Buckingham teachers developed an environmental curriculum with units on soil, water, air, and light.

At this point the scope of JEM seemed large enough for a small Quaker school to handle. However, the project had taken on a life of its own. Glendal School, located in a suburb of Melbourne, Australia, heard about JEM through a friendship between a teacher at Glendal and a teacher at Buckingham Friends. In 1994, they asked to join the project and two years later, Vivek Patil, an educator visiting from India, wanted his new school, the Phoenix School located in Belgaum, India, to participate in the JEM project.

In the summer of 1995, perhaps the most exciting exchange of all occurred. Buckingham students, faculty, and parents traveled through the Andes Mountains in Ecuador to Jatun Sacha, a biological research base which was located in primary rain forest and contains the greatest diversity of life on earth. In Ecuador, the group met a shaman of the indigenous Indian community, Rio Blanco. Predicting the encroachment of civilization with its concomitant danger to their way of life, the community had moved as far into the forest as it was possible to go.

The shaman, Augustine, asked the school to visit his community and help him to preserve their way of life. After a grueling all day hike in which Augustine cut the path through the forest as they walked and the kids and teachers ate lemon ants as a cure for thirst, they arrived at Rio Blanco. Augustine cultivates acres of medicinal plants and is teaching the Rio Blanco children the ancestral knowledge of the plants and the environment so that knowledge is not lost. "We have to learn from other cultures", said Karen, "and the students are beginning to understand that people have important knowledge to share even though they may not have many material possessions."

What's next for JEM and the Buckingham Friends School? In the spring of 1998, Buckingham

Friends will visit the Great Barrier Reef in Australia with the Glendal School. There they will study the ecosystems of the Barrier reef, the Daintree rainforest and the mountains that shelter some of Australia's rare and endangered species. Now that the Rio Blanco community is participating in the project as well as a Native American group, the Native American Alliance of Bucks County, JEM wants to connect with indigenous people wherever they travel. Plans are already underway for an Earth Summit in the Year 2000 in which all the schools (except Rio Blanco) will meet in St. Petersburg.

"Through JEM, the students have learned that beneath the cultural barriers is the human heart. The kids now know that they share a common humanity and that they can respond to that humanity inside others even if their culture seems strange or different, said Karen. "They also have learned that children can make a difference, that their ideas are important, and that each person's behavior has consequences on the larger society. "

Has JEM made an impact on Karen Seaton's life? Well, I am godmother of Natalya's daughter an son and I am expected to attend the major events in their lives including graduation, wedding and baby showers, " laughed Karen. "I guess you could say that we are now family".

### **IF GEORGE FOX WERE ALIVE, WOULD HE HAVE A WEB PAGE?**

It really is quite amazing to think about George creating a Home Page to let everyone know what his newly created Religious Society of Friends was doing e.g. Meeting for Worship schedule at the Miller's barn; Who just got released from prison, who just went to prison; Training sessions for traveling ministers! Unfortunately or fortunately, depending on how you look at it, George and the Quakers in the 1700's did not have to deal with technology.

However, Quakers, especially those who are also educators, two year away from the second millennium, must not only learn technology but use it effectively . Thanks to the expertise and tireless work of the Technology Committee (Jane Stavis, Clerk, Judy Bartella, Jim Brubaker, Juan Jewell, Andrea Martin, Bob McBride, Emily Myers, and Siri Akal Khelsa) the Friends Council on Education is on-line and in cyberspace in a variety of ways.

The Technology Committee under the inspired direction of Jane Stavis created E-Quakes, a listserv for those individuals connected to Quaker education. Its a place where teachers, staff, Quakers, and other interested people can come together to engage in a dialogue about issues and problems in Quaker education. Its also a chance to meet new people, get those burning Quaker questions answered (What is Quaker decision-making anyway?) and even have fun. We sometimes trade Quaker jokes if we can think of any!

So please join up! The quality and meaningfulness of our discussions on E-Quakes is directly related to the energy and interest of its subscribers. To subscribe, send an e-mail with your name, e-mail address, and connection to \*Quaker education to April Diop at [friendscounc@connectinc.com](mailto:friendscounc@connectinc.com).

### **OPPORTUNITY ALERT!!!!!!**

If one of your New Year's Resolutions is to stop just focusing on your own school's issues and problems and get involved with the wider Quaker educational community, this is your opportunity! (And if its not your New Year's Resolution, it should be!!)

The Friends Council on Education is looking for Quaker educators to further the mission of Quaker



education by working on any one of the following FCE Board Committees: Development, Finance, Grants, Membership, Publications & Outreach, Self-Study/School Visitations, Technology, and Workshop Coordinating. You know that any time spent on this work helps you, helps your students, helps your school, and helps all Quaker schools everywhere. And it is a great way to meet very interesting people like the staff at Friends Council!

Let the Head of your school know you are interested and your name will be forwarded to the FCE Nominating Committee. If you have any questions regarding the work of the Board and its Committees, call Ellie Elkinton, Board \*Clerk, at 215-951-2346 or Kay Edstene, Executive Director, at 215-241-7245.