

A new requirement for MPFS staff: racial identity development as professional development

"This work is about creating wholeness; it's about bringing people together, rather than separating from one another"

- The Race Institute

Over the last year, the faculty and staff at MPFS have examined the work being done across the curriculum around race and racism. This deeply personal work is crucial for the educators at MPFS to better serve our current community and to continue growing into the welcoming, diverse community we strive to be for our prospective families. As a leader in Friends education, it is our responsibility to be an example to our community that racial

subjects, our work with justice, equity, diversity, and inclusivity is a journey of learning and discovery that must be fostered throughout the curriculum.

As part of that charge, over the next year, all faculty and staff at MPFS are required to attend one of two selected workshops focused on topics of race and racism. At the time of this article, 13 staff members at MPFS have already completed The Race Institute, which has proven to be a transformative experience for those who have attended.

One of the first attendees from MPFS of the Race Institute was Assistant Head of School and Director of Admissions & Program, Angela DiMaria. "Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion work always starts with oneself, with the telling and retelling of our own stories. When engaged in this work we put our stories out in front of us and take a look at them from multiple perspectives," writes T. Angela. After her own experience at the RI, T. Angela became an advocate for sending the entire MPFS staff to this workshop, or others like it.

The mission of the Race Institute is to provide educators the opportunity to grow positive racial identities, so that they in turn can be that support for their own students. It was important for the MPFS administration to recommend a professional development opportunity for the entire staff that would speak to the many roles and varied responsibilities of an MPFS employee. The RI proved more than simply "professional development" in the typical sense.

"I think it's important that teachers or educators in general do their own work first, meaning personal work," says Race Institute Facilitator and Co-Director, Toni Graves Williamson, who also serves as the Director of Equity and

Annual
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Faculty and staff at MPFS strive to foster positive identities (racial, gender, religion, sexuality, family structure, class & ability) in our students, staff, families, and trustees, and encourage their personal development.

literacy and teaching social justice issues are not simply one-off lessons to be checked off of our academic calendars. In the same way that Friends education infuses the SPICES (also known as the Quaker Testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship) across

THE RACE INSTITUTE... | [Continued on page 7](#)

2

Letter from
The Head of School

3

New Clerks
of the Board

4

Alumni
News

6

Annual
Giving Report

LETTER FROM The Head of School

Friends,

I have been thinking a lot lately about the journeys we encounter as we make our way through life. Some last from the first breath to the last. Some are shorter in nature, but can have a huge impact. What I love about MPFS is the consistent and prevalent concern for the journey of others. To me, it's what best represents the nature of a Friends education. It also represents the best in humanity. And these two things are beautifully intertwined.

We have all been on a journey the past year and a half. So many lives have been cut short. So many lives changed. Also, there have been many whose journey took them to a place that made the journey of others easier, or less painful. We owe such a debt of gratitude to those people. Our faculty and staff are among them.

In addition to our amazing faculty and staff, there are others to thank for where MPFS is today, a week out from the end of the most unusual school year of my lifetime: our thoughtful Board of Trustees, our passionate and persistent students, our incredible community of families, and the Chester County Department of Health and its director, Jeanne Franklin.

We have been through an unprecedented experience brought on by COVID-19. It seems as if we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, and hopefully next year, while we may have some mitigation procedures in place, school will look much more "normal". Having said this, COVID-19 has taken up so much space in our lives; I don't want to give it any more in this message.

Other events over the past year and a half have shone an especially bright light on the stain of normalcy as it relates to the treatment of people of color, and the journey they have been traveling for generations. It seemed as if every other week there was another incident; it is naïve to think that this is a fluke but rather that the world and the media are finally paying attention the way neither has in the past. Add to this the exponential rise in violence against Asian Americans, the rolling back of rights for the LGBTQ and Transgender communities, and it can be hard to remain optimistic that the world is moving forward instead of backward.

The lens through which to see the obvious has never been more clear. I have never feared for my life when engaging with police. I have never had the color of my skin held against me overtly or covertly. I have never been negatively impacted by the systems embedded in our society that contribute to racism and



Jon Hall, Head of School

marginalization, and in fact have contributed to them. I have never had my rights as an American denied because of who I love or how I identify. And, unfortunately, I have never been forced to reckon with these realities the way anyone who has shared these privileges should be reckoning with them right now. So, for all of these reasons, it was hard not to feel like a bit of a fraud when contemplating a message around whatever recent tragedy had befallen a Black person at the hands of a police officer, or an Asian person at the hands of an ignorant racist.

Actions, however, speak louder than words, either written or spoken, and what we can, as a school do, is to continue our history of being dedicated to providing an education that can lead to the changes our society needs as much now as ever. We have committed to having all of our faculty and administration attend The Race Institute or The Lion's Story either this year or next (we will be beyond halfway to reaching this goal by summer's end). We enlisted the work of the Philadelphia Children's Movement to conduct a listening campaign with students, families, faculty and staff

HEAD OF SCHOOL... | *Continued on page 3*

centered around elements of identity, inclusion and exclusion, and social and racial justice. We are making adjustments to the curriculum that are more representative of our society and our community, in part based on the results of this campaign. We began having affinity groups in the middle school based on race and identity. We increased our candidate search network by joining the largest minority recruitment firm and posting job openings with HSBCUs.

Despite what has been done, there remains much to do. June 19 (now a federal holiday) represents one step in a very long journey that is not close to over for millions. If the events of the past few years have taught us nothing, it's that despite our best efforts, history can and will repeat itself and that for so many in our society, their journey has always been two steps forward and one step backward. George Floyd's murder is a stark reminder of this. Too many people have had the metaphorical knees of our government systems and pervasive racism on their collective necks for hundreds of years.

One important role of a Friends school is to remind ourselves of the power of the individual as well as the collective to make change. Quakers have always had a role in the journey of others and Friends schools must continue to make this particular journey smoother and maybe, just maybe, even finite.

We all thank you for your support this year, and for your support in our efforts to be better. I hope you had a chance to see our graduation last Friday on Facebook. It's reassuring to know that our graduates will be pivotal in shaping the mindset of the future. With every one of their graduation speeches, I felt better about our prospects. I know they care about the journey of others.

I'm wishing you a happy, healthy, and reflective summer. There's much to be thankful for, much to be hopeful for, and much to be done.

In Friendship,

Jon Hall
Head of School

INTRODUCING

Our New Clerks of the Board



Susan Elliott-Johnson earned degrees in Philosophy and Theology. Her work in Quaker communities as Clerk of Chester Friends Meeting, and Trustee on the MPFS Board, spans two decades. Susan understands the visionary aspect of MPFS Board work and will bring her deep knowledge of Quaker practice, and through empathetic listening, help clear obstacles to reaching agreement on Board direction. She describes her role as "Servant/Leader", and her strongest impact will be helping others to express their vision.

Martin Pepper earned degrees in Chemical Physics and Computing Science. For the past several years he has been an IT Manager in various industries, including banking and utilities. His hobbies and interests include board games (holding two U.S. patents), game design, and all types of sport, including sailing and tennis. Martin is an innovative thinker and enjoys bringing that out in others. He believes his strongest impact in the MPFS community will be his ability to build teams that can solve complex problems quickly.



Greg Gephart earned a degree in English Literature and, early in his career, love of theater drew him into non-profit theater work in a wide range of roles. He also worked at Peak Development Consulting, developing large-scale communications, marketing, and PR initiatives. More recently he started his own business, Alloquy Creative. Greg believes both broad experience in the non-profit sector, marketing and advancement, and his ability to take complex issues and distill them down, will have the strongest impact in the MPFS community.

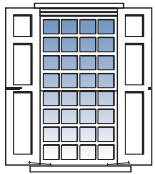
CLASS OF 2017 UPDATE

If you knew the MPFS Class of 2017, you'll be pleased but likely not surprised to see their meaningful choices and purposeful plans as Class of 2021 high school graduates. These alumni navigated uncertain times and an unprecedented college admissions cycle with tenacity, resilience, and productive optimism for themselves and our world.



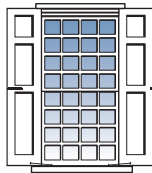
Aiden McLean will head to the West Coast to University of California (UC) Davis where he plans to major in Environmental Policy Analysis and Planning.

Casper Hoffmann was admitted via early decision to Haverford College. He enters with interest in a Comparative Literature major (bringing in Spanish and English texts) and an Education minor.



At press time, **Chris Green** was considering college acceptances in PA and NJ toward studies in the film and video production arena, while contemplating a gaming and comedy-focused YouTube venture.

Jack Schlegel will attend the University of Pittsburgh. He plans to pursue an Engineering degree at Pitt, crediting T. Daryl as an inspiration.

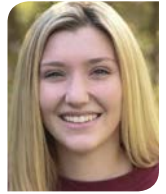


Raised to root for the Nittany Lions, **Jake Greenlaw-Scully** is off to Penn State University Park. Undeclared, he'll explore Economics, Political Science/Public Policy, and Communications/Journalism with a sports emphasis.

Jay Kostal is Philly bound, enrolled at Drexel University toward an Engineering degree.

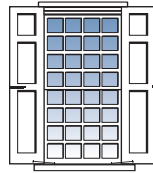


Also heading to the city, **Julia Coffman** plans to major in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Temple University.



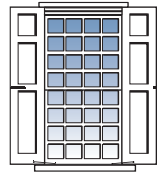
Consistent in his academic passions since his MPFS days, **Lucas Lindenmuth** is undertaking a Physics/Math double major at Lafayette College in Easton, PA.

Margot Sissell will attend Juniata College in Huntingdon, PA, with interest in Psychology and Criminal Justice programs of emphasis.



On to neighboring Ohio, **Natalie Dodds** will enter Oberlin College undeclared. She is considering a science concentration while maintaining theatre and singing interests.

Reece G. will be in flight to the Arizona campus of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in degree pursuit within the school's Aviation and Business fields of study.



Sherisse Peterson will be on the move to Washington, DC, to attend Howard University. While considering interests in sports medicine, physical therapy, and sports psychology, she will also compete as a member of Howard's NCAA Division I women's track and field team.

Tom Pepper will get his start this fall at Delaware County Community College with plans to continue his studies abroad in England.



A Memorial Tree A LEGACY

In Memory of Fern Clark

MPFS Class of 1978

Fern, an MPFS alumna and what we would term a “lifer” started here in Kindergarten and graduated 12th in 1978 with the inaugural 9th-grade class from our high school that was located at Providence Monthly Meeting. Fern and her many siblings all attended MPFS back in the day. She was beloved by her fellow classmates and had an undeniable and radiant Light within her. The Friends community lost Fern in 2019.

Many remember those special years at the MPFS upper school, the close-knit community, and the strong attachment to the space and place of the Providence Friends Meeting building and grounds. The community thought it fitting to contribute to a legacy gift in memory of their beloved classmate, Fern Clark. This memorial tree creates a lasting and living memorial to Fern’s memory and honors the formative impact the school had on the students who went there.

The tree was planted by the Linvill family, in the burial ground behind Providence Friends Meeting. In April, F(f)riends, alumni, teachers, and family, gathered to honor Fern’s memory at Providence Friends Meeting.



ANNUAL GIVING REPORT

Philanthropy is about generosity in all its many forms, gifts of time, talent, and treasure. In challenging times the MPFS community historically steps up. ***It is because you let your lives speak that our school thrives today.***

This school year was nothing short of a challenge. We witnessed our faculty and trustees jump into high gear when we most needed them. Our students and parents did what was necessary to keep each other safe, demonstrating an atmosphere of mutual concern, and allowed us the agility to succeed this year. Our alumni, grandparents, parents of alumni, and other members of our larger community reached out and participated in the care of MPFS. You all inspired, encouraged, and uplifted one another as we simultaneously worked toward increasing our focus and enhancement of DEI programs.

In addition, our MPFS community gave the

financial support essential to the education of our students. You made the school a charitable priority, even if you were facing personal challenges.

No one gift is more important than the other. Your stewardship for MPFS has a profound impact on the children we serve. You've helped us provide a safe, joyful space in which our students could thrive.

Every gift received this year is what makes you **THE BEST community ever**. You let your life speak and embraced the Quaker S.P.I.C.E.S. (Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, Stewardship). Your children will learn by your example.

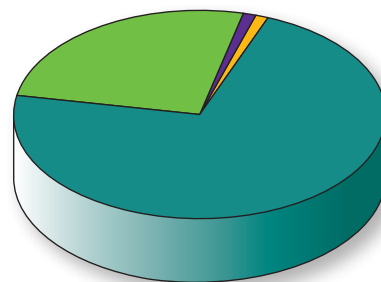
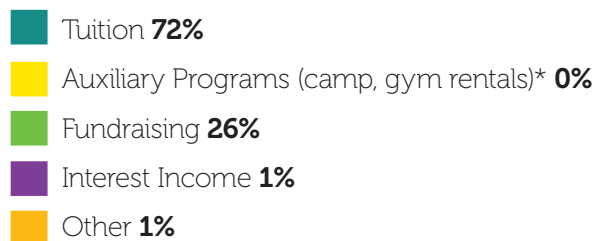
In our continued effort to save paper and help our environment, the Annual Giving Report is available online: visit mpfs.org/annual-report for a full listing of all our generous donors!

2020-21 MPFS Fund by the Numbers

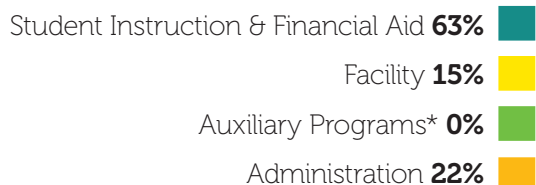
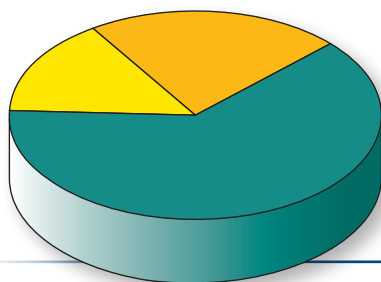
TOTAL: **\$139,351** • DONORS: **240** • GIFTS: **350**

*We thank our Trustees for giving with 100% participation.
Help us achieve 100% participation all around in 2021-22.*

INCOME



EXPENSES



*Due to COVID-19 mitigation procedures, MPFS did not host a camp program or rent out the gym

Inclusion at Friends Select School in Philadelphia. “We tell people all the time that this is not a space... to get a bunch of exercises to do with your students. It’s not, that’s not what it’s about.”



Teacher Holly Hoffmann, a recent participant of the Race Institute, writes, “I was struck by the realization that when a person feels excluded or marginalized, they can feel both hyper-visible and invisible. There’s so much power in those moments to interrupt mainstream marginalization with something as simple as smiling at another person, saying hello, and asking questions.”

Over three, eight-hour days, a group of twenty educators participate in an intensive workshop that builds on in-depth, personal experience to tackle concepts like: the difference between multicultural and anti-racist curricula, identifying where you are in your own racial identity development, the importance of inter-group and intra-group learning when talking about race and the basic, but often fraught, concept that race and racism conversations are ones that should bring people together instead of creating further separation.

“The Institute showed me the importance of accepting students and my peers on an individual level for who they are and not who I expect them to be based on appearance or first impressions,” writes Teacher Syreeta Bacon, Director of Business Operations at MPFS. “The biggest goal I have moving forward is to always be sure that I am being heard and to speak up for others that might not be in the room when difficult conversations are happening.”

One of the most consistently cited strengths of the RI

by MPFS participants was the time spent in small “anchor groups,” where participants could digest concepts and talk through real-life scenarios happening in their lives and at their schools. “We hope to give folks the language and the practice, I mean, that’s one of the biggest pieces of the Institute that actually, as a facilitator, I don’t get to be a part of that,” says Graves Williamson. “And people ask for more of those breakout groups! People long for that opportunity to practice, just having a conversation about race, and being vulnerable. That’s the most impactful thing I see happening.”

MPFS 5th Grade Teacher Dianne Cooney agrees, writing, “...one of the best parts (of attending the RI) is that I feel I have a whole other network of anti-racist educators with whom I can discuss ideas and action plans.” Being a small school has its strength, of course, but it can also be limiting at times with such all-encompassing work. Building these valuable connections outside of our close-knit community not only empowers the work of our teachers but enriches the MPFS experience for our students and families.

While the focus on race and racism throughout our program begins with the internal work of all the educators at MPFS, which is in itself valuable to our staff on an important level, the driving force is to provide a safe space for the social-emotional and spiritual well-being of our students. Students who feel the safety and security of their whole selves acknowledged by their teachers will thrive academically at MPFS and that experience builds a foundation for lifelong learning. “I continue to examine how we are offering mirrors for younger people to see the constellations of their identities in our classrooms and communities,” writes 4th Grade Teacher Holly Hoffmann of her RI experience. “I value the reminder that anti-racism and decolonization takes time, and I am encouraged and committed to engaging daily in the practice.”

As the faculty and staff at MPFS continues with this enduring work, we hope that you will follow along through our Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusivity (JEDI) Updates & Resources page at mpfs.org/jedi-updates. If you are a current MPFS family, and would like to join the JEDI Task Force, please visit mpfs.org/join-jedi.

If you have any questions about this or any other programming at MPFS, please do not hesitate to contact Assistant Head of School and Director of Admissions & Program, Angela DiMaria at adimaria@mpfs.org.



COME EXPLORE WITH US!



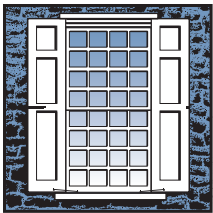
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IMPORTANT DATES:

Virtual Back-to-School Night
September 23

Virtual Open House
September 24 and October 29

**Virtual Grandparents &
Special Friends Day**
November 23

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