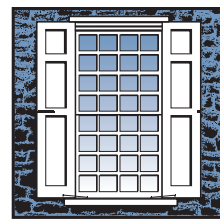


DRAGON Tales

WINTER/SPRING 2022 mpfs.org



MEDIA - PROVIDENCE
Friends School



OUR MISSION

“

We awaken the passion and potential of all individuals within a welcoming, diverse community led by Quaker values.

”

With the new year comes a season of embracing change, renewal, and a sense of possibility. At MPFS, this feeling has never been more true. There are so many new, exciting initiatives that have launched this fall and winter, we want to recap them for you here:

- We have expanded our early childhood program to include students as young as 2 for the 2022-23 school year. To learn more, please visit mpfs.org/early-childhood.
- We have updated our financial aid process to make applying for aid easier for all our families. Families apply for financial aid every other year after enrolling at MPFS and can expect the same grant for two consecutive years. MPFS is committed to supporting a student through graduation unless there is an upward change in financial circumstances. Learn more about the financial aid application process at mpfs.org/tuition.
- Also new for this year, MPFS is offering families a 3 for 2 Tuition Discount. Families who have three children enrolled qualify for the discount, wherein the youngest child receives a grant for their full tuition. Families can still apply for financial aid for older two children as needed.
- Our new digital curriculum guide explores our full program across divisions with an updated and interactive platform. Get a bird's eye view with our Overviews tab or deep dive into individual subjects complete with example lessons, projects, texts, and more! Woven within the guide is our faculty's commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion education, along with service learning, across subjects, beginning with our youngest students. View the curriculum guide at mpfs.org/guide.

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LETTER FROM The Head of School

Friends,

One of the more important skills a person can build is the skill to manage change in their life. This comes in many forms: resilience, creativity, an understanding of problems and how to solve them. At MPFS, we strive to ensure that all of our graduates leave with these characteristics, because as the old saying goes, “Change is inevitable, growth is optional”. Some change you have no choice but to accept and take on, while some change you have control over. However, as cliché as it may be, when change is forced upon you, how you react to the circumstance is what matters the most.

If Covid has taught us anything, it's that things can change on a dime and the better equipped we are to recognize, accept, and embrace it, the better off we will be.

Nobody realistically saw the changes we had to make coming before March of 2020. We (not just schools, but every one and every business) had to make some pretty drastic changes to our day to day lives and routines. Some of these have pushed us to do things better, some we (and I'm sure you and your children) cannot wait to get rid of. But without accepting what was at hand and being open to seeing the growth possibilities that are inherent in most situations involving change, we would not have had the success we have had since March of 2020.

What follows are some of the lessons we have learned from Covid specific to change and growth.

Recognize that Change is Happening or is Needed

I think it goes without saying that the schools that realized what was coming on or around March 13, 2020, were in a better position to handle the circumstances. While some schools were struggling to figure out a virtual option after campuses were shut down, our faculty was preparing for it two weeks prior. And while we were always hopeful that the initial shutdown would be a few weeks, then maybe a few weeks more, we recognized that the likelihood of a longer campus closure was strong and worked to adjust and adapt the schedule and the procedures throughout the spring. The same is true for how we operate today. You cannot put yourself in the best position to respond to change if you are not paying attention to the possibility of change in the first place.

It's Easier with Support

With the first wave of pandemic shutdowns, we relied on a multitude of resources to decide how to move ahead. NAIS (The



Jon Hall, Head of School

National Association of Independent Schools) shifted gears at the annual conference at the end of February, 2020 to put a lot of focus on how schools might be affected by Covid. Small school heads in the area started meeting weekly. The Chester County Intermediate unit began holding weekly meetings with the Chester County Health Department, including Delaware County schools. We put a fantastic team of administrators and teachers in place to look at all of the different scenarios that could play out and how to respond to them. A supportive board of trustees stayed involved, and offered support. Finally, the school community was incredibly cooperative in doing its part to respond to all the many changes.

Be Open to All Possibilities & See the Positive

Right away in the spring of 2020 ADVIS (The Association of Delaware Valley Independent Schools) began creating the narrative that things may never be the same in schools again, and the schools that would survive would not try to recreate the past as it had been prior to 2020. We chose to look at this as an exciting possibility.

HEAD OF SCHOOL... | Continued on page 3

How could we operate differently? What safety measures would we be wise to never let go of? How might curriculum change as a result of everything else going on in America in the spring of 2020? Could we structure differently? How might we make permanent some of what we did to make things easier for families who were impacted by Covid? How might other similar policies be adjusted? *How do we hold true to who we have always been as a Friends school but also innovate for the future needs of our kids and families?*

Look to the Quaker Process

Much like our preschoolers reached consensus on how their pumpkin should look (see article on page TK of this issue!), those of us on our scenario building team, and our Board of Trustees utilized the Quaker process of reaching consensus in all major decisions. As T. Lisa writes, “everyone gets to say what they think, we all listen, and then we try to find a way to compromise so that everyone feels heard, included, and, hopefully, happy as well!”

In the end, what ended up happening is what we wish for all of our students as they face change in their lives: Recognize it’s happening, embrace it, grow from it. It doesn’t necessarily make it easy, but it makes it *easier*, and more importantly, you come away stronger. MPFS certainly has!

In Friendship,
Jon Hall
Head of School

In addition to the expansions and improvements listed above, this fall, the MPFS Board of Trustees approved the new mission statement created by the Mission Statement Sprint Team, with input from the full MPFS faculty. Those on the team included a cross-section of constituents including staff, teachers, board members, meeting members, alum, as well as parents of both MPFS students and MPFS alum.

A goal of this update was to craft a statement that anyone in our community could relate to, reflect on throughout their MPFS journey, and easily recall! As valued members of our community, we wanted to share the process behind its creation.

The Sprint Team spent several weeks researching best practices in crafting a mission statement across industries, as well as within education, and then dove into feedback from family surveys, the recent Listening Campaign with Philadelphia Children’s Movement, and testimonials. In describing what makes an MPFS education unique, there were two phrases that were repeated, over and over again: those phrases were “welcoming community” and “diverse community.” Using the words of our own constituents as an anchor, our new mission statement began to take shape.

It was central to this work that the statement speaks to individuals across our many diverse constituencies: not simply to students or their families but also to staff, meeting members, trustees, and friends of the school who have all, in their own ways, chosen to be a part of and provide support for this school. Additionally, we wanted the mission to encapsulate the idea that all members of the MPFS community, regardless of role, are themselves students of Friends education, continually engaging in meaningful learning for a purposeful life alongside our student body.

We hope this new mission statement resonates with you and your relationship with MPFS, and we encourage you to take some time to reflect on these words.

MPFS Mission Statement Sprint Team

Pat Demiranda
Trustee

Bruce Haines
Trustee, member of Providence Meeting

Holly Hoffmann
MPFS parent, faculty member, member of Media Meeting

Cristina Perachio
MPFS Director of Marketing & Communications, alumna

Emily Richardson
MPFS faculty member, alumna

Meagan Watkins
MPFS parent, trustee

FACULTY Q & A: **Teacher John Romano****Where did you grow up?**

I grew up outside of Boston in a town called Swampscott, right on the ocean. It's a postcard New England town, with church steeples and schools along the harbor.

Do you have a significant other? Children? Any pets?

I have a significant other, my wife's name is Aqila. We don't have children but we have five cats. Aqila has an enormous heart so every time we saw a feral cat in our garden it wasn't long before it was inside. We also have a Bengal cat, who is not a rescue. I have fish tanks, and also different lizards, turtles, and snakes that I now keep at school.

What are your interests, hobbies, volunteer activities, summer activities?

My interests are animals, fishkeeping, gardening, and painting. My wife and I are also musicians: my wife plays the drums and I play the bass. We like watching movies and foreign films. Aqila is my Google search engine for interesting movies.

I volunteer doing group work helping people that have PTSD. People need to talk about what's going on in their lives with someone that they trust. Over the years we've built that trust. It's easy to be kind and listen, and it can make a huge difference in someone's life.

In past summers, I went home to Massachusetts and fished and sailed with my dad. He and I also did cross country motorcycle trips. In 2020, I wasn't traveling due to the pandemic so I helped run the camp at MPFS. The students make me smile and I like being around them, so that's my summer activity now.

Where do you reside?

My wife and I live in an apartment in the Fairmount section of Philadelphia.

Where did you attend college?

I went to the University of Maryland to study evolutionary biology. The National Zoo in DC was the first place to breed Komodo dragons outside of Indonesia and there was a scientist there I wanted to work with. He gave me a unique opportunity as an undergrad, doing behavioral research for the Smithsonian.

What prior jobs have you had, teaching or otherwise?

I was a zookeeper-researcher, reptile breeder, and a science teacher. I taught middle school science, high school biology, and then was a department chair for science and taught biology, chemistry, evolutionary biology, anatomy, earth science, and environmental science.

Have you participated in any recent Professional Development or workshops?

I attended The Race Institute through MPFS. With so much misunderstanding, it is wonderful to get the outline and terminology, and to know what the words mean. Part of my professional development is to be a better community member.

Why did you choose teaching as a profession?

I know the exact moment. I love Komodo dragons and I was doing the Komodo dragon study at the zoo. A father and son walked in and the kid asked his dad, "What kind of lizard is that?" His dad didn't even look, and said, "An iguana." I realized I could do more good teaching, and getting younger kids interested, than doing research for other scientists. I love science and want other people to love it.



Teacher John Romano in the MPFS science lab with then grade 5 students

How long have you been teaching?

I taught one year in Brooklyn, and thirteen years at Girard College. That's where I met Jon Hall (MPFS Head of School.) This is my second year at MPFS.

Why did you choose MPFS?

I wanted to be in a Quaker school. When I was at Girard College I experienced a Quaker meeting when I attended the funeral of the Quaker Headmaster. I thought it was the

JOHN ROMANO... | Continued on page 5

most beautiful way to say goodbye. I also attended Meeting for Worship when we worked with Germantown Friends. I like Quaker schools’ philosophy and belief system.

One of my first visits to MPFS was to the 2020 graduation. When I saw our faculty during that event, it made me realize how much they truly cared for their students, and that really hooked me in.

What do you think are MPFS’ greatest strengths?

The sense of community with parents and staff. When I started, the staff were there for me, they told me to ask any questions, and it was genuine.

What strikes you most about the MPFS community, your classes, and your students?

With the community it’s how open and friendly it is. With

classes it’s how much fun we have. Young students have brains that haven’t been limited by the world. They come up with cool ideas like making different magic tricks with magnets. Just explaining why the sky is blue excites them. Their sense of wonder is a science teacher’s dream and a testament to the other faculty encouraging their curiosity. I feel grateful to be able to learn from them.

What are some of the ways you prepare students for the next level of their education?

We focus on the scientific process: have an observation; ask a question; develop a hypothesis; experiment; and make a conclusion. I try to instill that way of thinking. Every kid’s a natural scientist and my goal is to develop that.

**AN ENDURING LEGACY—
A Powerful Impact**

Planned giving society members are committed to the support of our mission “to awaken the passion and potential of all individuals within a welcoming, diverse community led by Quaker values”. Comprised of past and present trustees, parents, alumni, faculty, and grandparents, they share a deep regard for the work we do here for children in their formative years.

Bequests, charitable gift annuities, trusts, and other planned giving arrangements are vital to the School’s work and future. In 2006 Media-Providence Friends School founded the “1876 Society”, named after the year Friends was established, to recognize those in our community who have included the School in their estate plans.



A gift to MPFS that is a part of a thoughtful, comprehensive estate plan, provides a way of completing a lifetime of giving. It may also allow you to make a significant gift to MPFS that was not possible at an earlier stage of life. Planned gifts can provide advantages such as lifetime income and tax benefits to the donor or other beneficiaries. This is an easy way our advocates can carry their impact further in support of Meaningful Learning for Purposeful Lives.

Whether it is naming MPFS as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy or other liquid or non-liquid assets, we encourage you to consult with your financial advisor to discuss the options.

WAYS TO GIVE

Gifts that help now	Gifts that help later	Gifts that pay income
Cash to endowment	Bequest in Will	Charitable Remainder Annuity Trust
Stock and Appreciated Securities	Gift of Life Insurance	Charitable Remainder Trust
IRA Charitable Rollover	Beneficiary Designation Gifts	
Donor Advised Funds	Gifts of Retirement Assets	
Charitable Lead Trust		

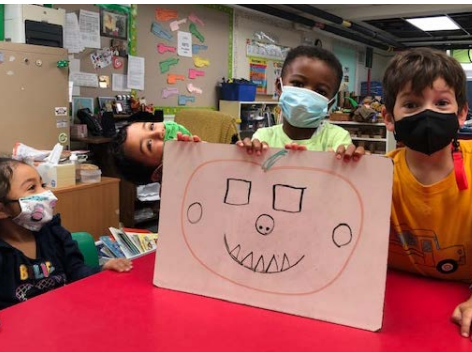
You need not be wealthy to leave a legacy. Ensure the sustainability of our school in a way that makes your core values known to others. Generations to come will benefit from your gift. Your support of our mission will be long remembered and serve as an inspiration to others. We would be delighted to welcome you as a member of the 1876 Society. For more information please contact Director of Development, Cynthia McGoff.
Visit mpfs.org/planned-giving

Consensus Decision Making in Preschool, a Lesson on Quaker Process with Teacher Lisa Dainton

This fall, preschoolers explored what it means to be a community. To build class unity and when talking about kindness, the class discussed feelings and facial expressions that could be read as clues to how friends were feeling. We discovered that narrowed eyes and tight mouths often reflect anger, whereas open eyes and a relaxed, uplifted mouth indicate happiness. We sorted magazine photos of people according to the emotions on their faces and made patterns in math out of different pumpkin face emotion cards.

many of the children were familiar with voting, but I explained that taking a counting vote almost always meant that some people would not get their way at all, might feel sad, and would certainly not feel as if they were included and part of our class community for that decision. Next, I described how grown-up Quaker friends often made decisions another way, called “consensus.” In consensus decision making, everyone gets to say what they think, we all listen, and then we try to find a way to compromise, so that

much room on the pumpkin, everyone was okay with the plan to carve as many eyes as we could! Ethan pointed out that having eyebrows would help it look angry and Aidyn similarly suggested a “mad mouth with sharp teeth,” which were also agreed to. Unfortunately, we hit another stumbling block when we started discussing the nose. CJ really wanted to have two noses but Henry B wasn’t sure of that. Together, a proposal was made to have one nose but two nostrils. Ta-da! Problem solved, decision made, class-unity



Preschool students learn how to come to consensus while designing pumpkins!

We also drew different facial expressions on individual paper pumpkin face proposals and worked in small groups to use descriptive language (e.g., “a big, upside-down triangle nose in the middle under the eyes”) to come up with three different proposals.

Next, we decided to carve the class pumpkin we had used for science with a face reflecting an emotion. Unlike with our individual paper pumpkins or small-group proposals, we did not have 14 (or even three!) different “canvases,” but instead only one, big pumpkin. This posed a problem: what to do?

With Election Day coming up,

everyone feels heard, included, and, hopefully, happy as well!

When we began, Emily proposed we do a head, Lila a face, and Henry suggested a monster or pretend face. Agreeing to these general ideas was fairly easy and everyone additionally agreed that an angry or scary face as suggested by Reid would be more fun than a happy or sad face. Opinions varied about the number of eyes with Tessa proposing the pumpkin have four, Oren three, Evelyn and Sophia felt two would be best, and Ben wanted six or even more eyes! After acknowledging that there was only so

maintained, and an awesome, mad pumpkin was planned with some extra facial features added in!

Finally, and as an amazing example of our awesome little community, we all unanimously decided that our jack-o-lantern really needed to be Covid safe and so we had a lot of fun giving it some Mr. Potato Head ears and a fresh mask. It looked as beautiful, cute, healthy, and brilliant as all our wonderful preschoolers – they all let their inner lights shine so brightly throughout this fabulous exercise in consensus!

COME EXPLORE WITH US!



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IMPORTANT DATES:

Virtual Spring Auction • April 9

STEAM Week • April 19-22

Virtual Admissions Open House
April 22

8th Grade Graduation • June 10

MPFS Fund Donation Deadline
June 30

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