

May 5th Award

Thank you, Zach. First, I want to thank Cal Simon. If it were not for Cal, Lynne Berman, and the support of Richard Laden and Peter Berman, none of us would be here tonight. Sadly, Lynne, Peter, and Richard are no longer alive.

I am deeply honored and grateful for this award. I am grateful because it gives me the opportunity to accept this honor on behalf of the faculty and staff, the board of The Philadelphia School and the volunteer parents from the years of 1982-2006.

The board because of their imagination, courage, and trust, the faculty and staff for their commitment, talent, and tenacity, and the volunteer parents who made it possible for us to put into action many of our whacky endeavors-like making lasagnas for the entire school for the Thanksgiving Feast. This incredibly gifted and sometimes quirky faculty created a community of learners, young learners who went on to become life-long learners and like Zach have not only found work they enjoy, but who are engaged in their community. We have heard of many graduates who are making a positive difference in the world; writers, academics, researchers, original entrepreneurs, artists, musicians, environmentalist, to name a few. Some of these past students are now parents of current TPS students and are here tonight. (Can those parents who were students of TPS, please raise your hands).

There was nothing that daunted this faculty and staff. There was Mission to Mars, The Great Experiment, a musical performed by the entire school to celebrate the bicentennial of the Constitution, the writing of operas and musicals like Manjiro, singing O Fortuna from Carmina Burana, theme celebrations like Wind in the Willows, or creating a robotics or writing program. Let's write an opera with the children about Picasso said the Primary Unit teachers and they did just that. Let's open a preschool, and they did that. Let's open a summer school and summer camp and they did that. Let's create an after-school program and they did that. Let's have a string ensemble, and they did that. Many of those people dedicated to progressive education are fortunately at the school today. We were not perfect, but we did create an environment where the children and adults found personal fulfillment, social well-being, and joy in their daily life.

There is a lot to be worried and angry about today; banned books, lack of respect for the teaching profession, loss of some civil rights, proliferation of guns, and forbidden words like equity, gender, gay, and consent.(tell story of Utah teacher) I

am sure the faculty I knew would have read the banned books like To Kill a Mocking Bird, and Are You There God, its, Me Margaret, with the students, to examine what and why certain people are frightened by such words and ideas expressed in these books. Actually, the banning of books might in the end have an unintended but beneficial effect, driving children to seek out those books, and thereby producing more readers. I remember when as a teen, I knew that Lady Chatterley's Lover had been banned in the 1920s but was no longer, I found and read the book, mostly I was disappointed.

But that is all the more reason we must be grateful for and must support the work of The Philadelphia School, because the school, under the leadership of Lisa Sun, provides an example of respect for childhood, for teachers and academic freedom, for teaching real history and for encouraging critical thinking.

On behalf of the faculty and staff and board of 1982-2006 thank you for this beautiful honor, now let's continue this joyous celebration.