MEDIA-PROVIDENCE FRIENDS SCHOOL
DRAGON Tales
FALL 2024 mpfs.org

MEDIA - PROVIDENCE
Friends School

Tackling the Pandemic Learning Gap



Kindergarten teacher T. Kristin Lewis reads to her class on the first day of school and asks questions throughout the story to engage her students.

Annual Giving Report Now Available Online!
mpfs.org/annual-report

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education on a global scale, leading to significant learning losses (UNOCHA, 2022). At Media-Providence Friends School (MPFS), however, administrators and teachers have been actively working to address these challenges and ensure that students are on track for future success.

According to Jon Hall, Head of School at MPFS, the pandemic's impact on learning was particularly severe for younger students who missed out on crucial social and emotional development. "The transition to remote learning was a dramatic shift," Hall explained. "For many students, it created a sense of isolation and made school more stressful."

One of the primary reasons why learning losses have proven so difficult to overcome is the disruption to students' normal routines. The transition to remote learning, coupled with increased absenteeism and limited access to resources, created significant barriers to learning (Lynnwood Times, September 16, 2024) Additionally, the social and emotional impact of the pandemic cannot be ignored. Students missed out on essential opportunities for social interaction and skill development, which can negatively affect their overall well-being and academic performance (Hanley, A., Symonds, J. E., & Horan, J. (2022).

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LETTER FROM
The Head of School Jon Hall



Dr. Jon Hall, Ed.D.

Embracing Failure and Adversity:
The Partnership Between Schools and Parents

Watching our children fail can be one of the greatest challenges as a parent. The first instinct may be to find a way to remove all things that upset a child, or remove them (sometimes permanently) from any situation where they could face discomfort. However, numerous educational and psychological experts argue that allowing children to fail is crucial for their development. Books such as *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee* by Wendy Mogel, Grit by Angela Duckworth, Mindset by Carol S. Dweck, and the works of Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg offer comprehensive insight into why *failure, adversity, and accountability are not just inevitable but essential*.

Research-based, innovative, creative, and collaborative approaches to instruction and learning guide our philosophy of education at MPFS. While we as educators believe in the validity of this particular research, it is critical to the success of our students that our families understand the importance of holding children accountable for their actions. We must allow students to fail and make mistakes, as well as allowing them to manage difficult relationships in order to learn from them, and be better off down the road because of these opportunities for growth.

The Value of Failure in Child Development

By skinning their knees, both literally and metaphorically, children learn to navigate challenges and build a realistic understanding of the world. Wendy Mogel's *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee* highlights the importance of embracing life's imperfections and the learning opportunities they provide. Mogel, drawing from Jewish teachings, emphasizes that *overprotecting children deprives them of essential life lessons*. She argues that experiencing failure helps children develop resilience and independence. At MPFS, we often talk about nurturing a lifelong love of learning, but what does that look like in action? In Angela Duckworth's Grit: *The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, she introduces the concept of grit as a combination of passion and sustained persistence. Grit is cultivated through enduring setbacks and learning from them. For children to develop this trait, they must be allowed to experience and work through failure. Duckworth's research demonstrates that grit, rather than talent or intelligence, is a significant predictor of success.

Someone (hopefully not somebody reading this…) gave my daughter one of those learning toys that covers ABC's and 123's. It says to the child who uses it, without any ability to gauge how the child is actually doing, "You're doing great! You're so smart!". The second I heard this, that toy went to the donation bin. The research is quite clear that praising "intelligence" (real or not) produces children who give less effort in the face of adversity and display a greater willingness to give up, while praising *effort* results in children who do the opposite.

Additionally, how children are taught to perceive their own failures is a valuable skill taught at MPFS. Instead of viewing failure as the end of a learning experience, students are taught to see this challenge as a step along their journey of growth. In Carol S. Dweck's *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, her work shows that fostering a growth mindset in children encourages them to view failures as opportunities for growth rather than insurmountable obstacles. This perspective shifts the focus from simply achieving success to valuing the process of learning, which relies on learning from mistakes, and improving.

The Role of Accountability in Learning

Accountability is an important component in the learning process and development of resilience. In the same way MPFS students are taught about their own agency as citizens, they also learn what it means to be accountable to a community. When children are held accountable for their actions, they learn to recognize the consequences of their decisions and behaviors. This accountability helps them develop a sense of responsibility and *integrity* (which, as you may know, is one of the five testimonies in Quakerism). It also encourages them to reflect on their mistakes and think critically about how to improve.

In *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee*, Mogel emphasizes that accountability should be balanced with support and guidance to create a sense of empowerment for students. Children need to understand that while they are responsible for their actions, they are also capable of making better choices in the future. Dr. Kenneth

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Ginsburg, (Professor of Pediatrics at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and the co-founder and director of programs at the Center for Parent and Teen Communication), highlights that resilience is strengthened when children are held accountable for their actions, as it fosters a sense of responsibility and self-efficacy.

The Role of Schools in Embracing Failure and Accountability

Schools play a pivotal role in shaping children's attitudes towards failure and accountability. Dr. Ginsburg also stresses the importance of creating environments where children can make mistakes and learn from them. At MPFS, it is our responsibility to create environments where mistakes are an integral part of the learning process and where students are held accountable in a constructive manner.

In our lower school, formative assessments that focus on feedback rather than grades can help students understand that learning is an iterative process. We also focus on project-based learning and problem-solving activities that inherently involve trial and error, demonstrating that perseverance in the face of challenges leads to deeper understanding and skill development.

I have often heard our own faculty and staff model growth mindset behaviors, sharing their own experiences of failure and how they overcame them, thereby normalizing the concept of making mistakes. I do this with almost every conversation I have with a student – as I have many mistakes to draw on.

We also establish clear expectations and consequences, ensuring that students are aware of the importance of accountability. This helps students internalize the value of taking responsibility for their actions.

The Role of Parents in Supporting Failure and Accountability

Parents hold equal power in fostering a healthy attitude towards failure and accountability. Dr. Ginsburg advocates for parenting which combines high expectations with warmth and support. This approach ensures that children understand the consequences of their actions while feeling supported in their efforts to improve. As primary caregivers and role models, parents' reactions to their children's setbacks significantly influence how children perceive failure and responsibility. Overprotective parenting, often driven by a desire to shield children from disappointment, can hinder the development of resilience and grit.

Just like at school, parents should hold children accountable for their actions in a supportive manner. This involves setting clear expectations, providing consistent consequences, and encouraging children to reflect on their mistakes. This approach helps children understand the relationship between their actions and outcomes, fostering a sense of responsibility and ethical behavior.

How can we as parents support this effort?

- Allow children to take risks appropriate for their age and experience the natural consequences of their actions.
- Encourage children to set realistic goals and celebrate small achievements along the way to help build confidence and perseverance.
- Praise effort rather than inherent ability. This reinforces the idea that skills and intelligence can be developed through hard work and dedication
- Share your own struggles and failures to show that setbacks are a normal part of life and provide valuable learning experiences.

Our Partnership!

For children to truly benefit from the lessons of failure, adversity, and accountability, we (all of us at MPFS, and you, the families) must work together. *Explaining away a child's role in their failures is setting them up for much greater failures in the future, and a lack of ability to manage those defeats. As an educator and as a parent myself, I have noticed a significant increase in this style of parenting over the past 15 years. While I understand this protective impulse, we as parents should adopt an approach that encourages independence, problem-solving, and accountability.*

Communication between teachers and parents is essential in creating a dependable and supportive environment. A unified approach ensures that children receive consistent messages about failure, accountability, and learning. In the past few months I have had two families really lean into the school-family partnership. Both reached out to me regarding some difficulty their child was having in a relationship at school, and asked us for our advice on how best to handle it. When children see both their teachers and families embracing a growth mindset and valuing perseverance, they are more likely to adopt these attitudes themselves. Collectively our staff have between 150-200 years of experience in working with children through all sorts of difficult academic, behavioral, and relational difficulties. That is a very valuable resource that can and should be trusted!

Embracing failure, adversity, and accountability as fundamental aspects of learning and development is imperative for developing resilient, independent, and successful individuals. Together, we must allow children to make mistakes, take responsibility for them, and learn from them, to figure out difficult relationships, and to struggle. For this approach to be effective, a strong partnership between schools and parents is essential. By working together, we can create an environment where failure is not feared but embraced as a stepping stone to growth and achievement that will sustain your student throughout their academic journey here at MPFS and beyond.

In Friendship,

Jon Hall, Ed. D.
Head of School

ANNUAL GIVING REPORT

2023-24 MPFS Fund by the Numbers

TOTAL: **$156,696** • DONORS: **233** • GIFTS: **407** • FIRST-TIME DONORS: **47**
NUMBER OF NEW DONOR GIFTS: **75**

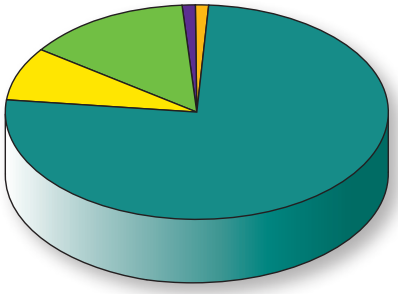
2023-24 Special Donations beyond MPFS Fund

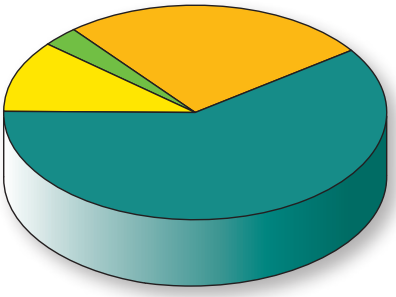
TOTAL: **$337,621** • DONORS: **98** • GIFTS: **218**

A complete list of our supporters is available at **mpfs.org/annual-report**.

INCOME

- Tuition **77%**
- Auxiliary Programs (camp, gym rentals) **8%**
- Fundraising **13%**
- Interest Income **1%**
- Other **1%**





EXPENSES

- Student Instruction & Financial Aid **60%**
- Facility **11%**
- Auxiliary Programs **3%**
- Administration **26%**

THE FRIENDS COLLABORATIVE

To view the 2023-24 Impact Report for The Friends Collaborative, visit **mpfs.org/friends-collaborative**.

A note from the Head of School, Jon Hall:

I emphasize the critical importance of The Friends Collaborative tax credit program to our school's mission and ongoing operations.

The essence of MPFS lies in its commitment to equality, diversity, and accessibility, principles that are foundational to the Friends' tradition. Through the support of The Friends Collaborative, we have been able to uphold these values by providing substantial financial aid, totaling $1,463,820 since the program's inception.

This program offers a simple yet impactful way for you to contribute. By directing your PA state tax dollars to MPFS, you support our school and benefit from a 90% tax credit — a true win-win situation.

If you or your business meets the criteria of at least $3,000 in PA state tax liability, please consider participating in this program. With The Friends Collaborative, it costs only a dime to donate a dollar, making every contribution go further in supporting our community.

To explore how you can get involved, please contact Cynthia McGoff, our Assistant Head of School for Development, at cmcgoff@mpfs.org.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to MPFS. Together, we can ensure that our school remains a beacon of educational excellence and accessibility.

Warm regards,



Jon Hall, Head of School, MPFS

New Trustees

Kelly Bradley-Dodds



A lifelong Quaker, raised on George School's campus where her parents taught, Kelly thrives in communities dedicated to Friends' education. After graduating from Newtown Friends School and George School, she earned an A.B. from Bryn Mawr College and an M.D. from Jefferson Medical College (now Sidney Kimmel Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University). Following her pediatrics residency, Kelly has spent over 20 years as a pediatrician and educator in the field. The proud parent of an MPFS graduate, she cherishes the opportunity to remain involved in the MPFS community.

Taylor Parry



Born into a Quaker family, Taylor is a member of Westfield Friends Meeting and attended Quaker schools from kindergarten through eighth grade. After two years of studying Computer Systems Engineering at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, he was hired as a principal software engineer by a startup. Following the successful growth of two startups, Taylor transitioned from software development to architecture, joining his father's firm, JRP Architects, while simultaneously founding an IT consulting company, Clear Stream Technologies. As a consultant working with the MPFS community, he witnessed firsthand the faculty's cultivation of inclusivity, equality, independent thinking, and confidence. Recognizing the importance of these values in his own early education, Taylor joined the MPFS Board in December 2023. When not at work, Taylor and his wife, Kristin, enjoy hiking and traveling with their dog, Leo.

Teachers in New Roles



T. Clare South
Reading Specialist

T. Clare enjoys building positive relationships with the children and families that she works with. As a Quaker and member of Radnor Meeting her mission is to help children let their lives speak.

Whilst in the UK, she earned a Bachelor's degree in Classical Civilization, before moving to Scotland where she completed a Postgraduate Certificate of Elementary Education from the University of Dundee, and a Postgraduate Certificate of Physical Education (3-14 years) at the University of Edinburgh. T. Clare recently completed her Wilson Reading Level 1 Certification where she worked with a practicum student under the guidance of the Delaware County Intermediate Unit which is accredited by the International Dyslexia Association.

She was an Elementary teacher in Scotland for five years before moving with her family to Pennsylvania where she has worked previously at MPFS and also for the Chaplain of the University at Eastern University. In her spare time she is a First Day teacher at Radnor, loves walking her two terrier dogs, and has three children. T. Clare is delighted to be part of the MPFS family.



T. Jenny Walker
Learning Specialist

Equipped with a MA in Education, Special Education and over a decade of global classroom experience, T. Jenny carries a zest for working with creative, asynchronous minds who yearn for meaningful learning.

T. Jenny started her career writing and facilitating Service Learning curriculum. She has gone on to teach both general and special populations in NJ, PA, CA and Australia. She infuses her passion for creativity into curated content delivery in order to build on student strengths in a fun way. As Learning Specialist, T. Jenny loves the opportunity to work with all students K-8… enhancing the way they see school and their own abilities.

When not conjuring up unique lessons, you can find T. Jenny on a camping adventure or traveling with her husband Nick and her two beautiful children, Matilda and Tasman.



T. Anna Mickle-Baker
Director of Auxiliary Programs

Teacher Anna holds a Bachelor's in Anthropology and is pursuing a Bachelor's in Computer Science. With a background in healthcare, they're dedicated to community involvement, working with Let's Go Outdoors and as a summer camp counselor. T. Anna enjoys outdoor activities, art, and travel, and animals.

As the Director of Auxiliary Programs, they look forward to contributing to academic excellence and promoting diversity and inclusivity in the Summer Friends camp program, Afterschool program, and more.

To address these challenges, MPFS has implemented a number of strategies. One key approach has been to prioritize social and emotional learning (SEL). "We believe that students need to feel safe and connected in order to be successful learners," Hall said. "By focusing on SEL, we are creating a positive and supportive learning environment."

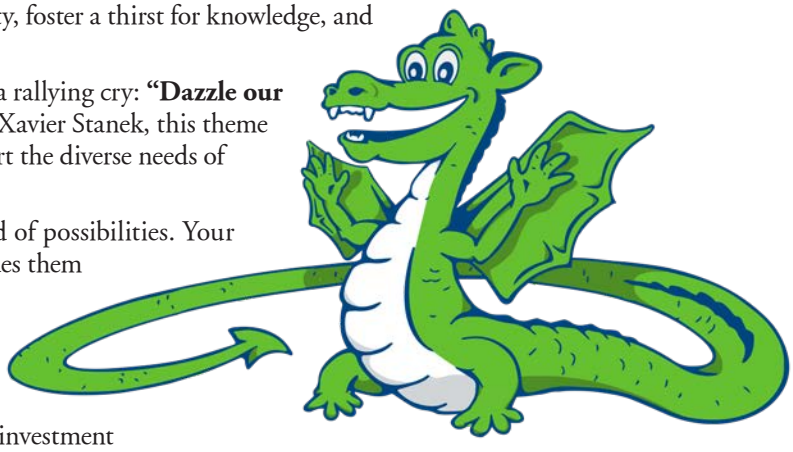
In addition to SEL, MPFS has invested in academic interventions to help students catch up on missed learning. These interventions include small-group tutoring, individualized support plans, and targeted academic support. "We are committed to providing the support that students need to succeed," Hall stated.

The school has also been mindful of the technology used to deliver instruction. "We invested early on in tools that helped to create a more engaging and interactive learning experience," Hall said. "This was particularly important during the transition to remote learning."

By focusing on SEL, academic interventions, and technology, MPFS has been able to make significant progress in closing the learning gap. "We are proud of the work that our students, teachers, and staff have done to overcome the challenges of the pandemic," Hall concluded. "We are committed to ensuring that all of our students have the opportunity to reach their full potential."

Ignite the Fire Within Our Dragons

At Media-Providence Friends School, we don't just educate students; we ignite their passion for learning. Our goal is to inspire curiosity, foster a thirst for knowledge, and empower students to reach their full potential.



This year, our annual MPFS Fund campaign has a rallying cry: **"Dazzle our Dragons."** Inspired by Head for the Day student Xavier Stanek, this theme celebrates the generosity of our donors who support the diverse needs of MPFS and its students.

When we dazzle our students, we unlock a world of possibilities. Your support is crucial in shaping their future. It provides them with the tools, experiences, and educators they need to thrive. Together, we can ensure that our students shine as beacons of knowledge, compassion, and excellence.

Your contribution is more than a donation; it's an investment in the future. By supporting MPFS, you're helping to create a brighter tomorrow for our students and the world.

Join us in this mission by making a gift to the MPFS Fund today.

Dazzle our Dragons, Ignite their Potential, and Invest in their Future.

Gifts can be made online at **mpfs.org/give** or via the remittance envelope included in this mailing.

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IMPORTANT DATES:

Dazzle our Dragons online giving campaign
October 16-18

Pizza Pumpkin Night
October 18

Speaker Series with Dr. Michael Cassano, Embracing Adversity & Building Resilience
November 13

Winter Concert: Kindergarten - Grade 5
December 12

Virtual Admissions Open Houses
December 13 & March 21

610.565.1960
mpfs.org

Please join our online giving campaign: **mpfs.org/DazzleOurDragons**









Our Summer Friends campers had another summer filled with joy, creativity, and community. Our new Director of Auxiliary Programs, T., Anna Mickle-Baker created a dynamic program by seamlessly blending structured learning with traditional camp activities, providing campers with a comprehensive experience that complements their academic journey. Learn more at **mpfs.org/camp**.







