

Living in Harmony

Each year, the faculty develops a theme, relating to one of the Quaker testimonies, that guides our thinking in sometimes explicit ways, and at other times with subtle influence. At the conclusion of the August faculty meetings, we realized that we had given no thought or specific planning to the theme this year. "Living in Harmony with the Earth and Her People," on our schedule for 2006-2007, needed our attention.

As the School year unfolds, this seems to be a perfectly wonderful theme to underlie what we are, in fact, working on at this time. Our teachers have united on the goal of helping students walk silently through the halls to demonstrate respect for those who are working in classrooms or offices nearby. We are learning that smiles and friendly waves create the same welcome feeling as a verbal greeting. Our morning safeties, clearly visible to arriving students and parents in their cars, are joined by hallway greeters inside the School House to remind us all of our intentions to create a calm and quiet environment.

Drivers on campus have been, for the most part, attentive to the clearly posted rules regarding driving slowly and with focused attention. A new sign is on order that will read "Welcome, for the safety of our students...." Like the smiles and friendly waves in the hallways, we want to communicate welcome *and* concern for safety.

These simple guidelines, articulated so that all members of the community can apprehend them, help us "live in harmony" with one another.

Our campus master planning project gives us a golden opportunity to plan how we want to live in harmony with our particular three-acre patch of earth. We are committed to good stewardship and care of the soil, grass, trees, plants, and animals that inhabit this space and the water that flows across and through. We are committed to discovering and learning about ecology and the environment through observation and hands on projects. Did you know that kindergarteners tagged and released many monarch butterflies last week?

We also are committed to designing play spaces that are especially suited to young children and that support the incredible physical growth that occurs between the ages of three and twelve. At Curriculum Night, parents had a chance to view the inspiring work that students created that day. "Design Day," organized by teachers Ann Ward and Lee Kowalski, unleashed wonderful ideas presented through carefully drawn and labeled maps, pictures, three-dimensional structures, and illustrated journal entries. Each student in the School participated in various ways in this process. Our landscape architect has all of this material and it will influence the next round of design development. While we are walking silently inside, we want to run, climb, jump, stretch, and shout for joy when we are outside!

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