

Looking Back, Looking Forward

Today in Meeting for Worship, several students spoke to the School community about the puzzling nature of time. When anticipating an event (becoming an Intermediate School student and graduation from Friends School Haverford were referenced this morning), time seems long. When one nears the long-awaited moment and is in a retrospective mood, the time leading up to the event seems to compress and move with amazing speed.

I share those thoughts and feelings as I consider my first year as head at Friends School Haverford. It has been a fast paced year, marked by significant events in all of our lives. September 11, 2001 will be permanently etched in our consciousness. I recall the vivid blue sky and crisp air early that morning. And three days later the heavens seemed to weep for all of humanity when faculty and staff gathered in the Meeting House at the hour appointed by the President for a national time of mourning. These days have receded into the past and yet remain just below the surface, subject to instant recall in sharp detail.

Other marker events that have occurred this year are happy occasions for students and teachers. Each of us has grown in ability and awareness. For some of our youngest children, the achievement might be sliding down the fire pole on Nancy's House. Others may celebrate the day when those characters on a page could be read aloud with fluency and understanding. Older children may recall the satisfying experience of completing a complex project, polishing the final draft of a poem or essay, or explaining to a partner the concepts behind the puzzling math problem. All of us have had opportunities to be problem solvers, mediators, and peacemakers.

As this year draws to a close, I am filled with gratitude for all who have helped me on this new adventure. Teachers and students have been welcoming and willing to share the way things are done at Friends School Haverford, parents have been generous in their support and dedicated involvement in School life, and the School Committee and Haverford Monthly Meeting faithfully have attended to their important responsibilities of providing oversight and stewardship for the School and its mission.

The year has flown by, and yet I feel I have been at Friends School Haverford much longer than twelve months. The rhythm of School life is familiar. Its values and mission are ones that I embrace. The community is filled with people who are interesting, creative, and resourceful. Above all else I am grateful to be part of a School that understands the importance of gathering in the Meeting House as a community – on a weekly basis and on special occasions – to reflect on our experiences and to share insights. In our fast paced world, perhaps one of the most important, unusual, and enduring habits of mind that we can instill in our students and ourselves is the capacity and desire for quiet reflection.

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June 2002