

Friends School

TEACHING INNOVATION: A Lifelong Skill

A recent study conducted by The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) reported that employers were most interested in hiring graduates who demonstrated innovation and critical thinking skills. While the workplace might seem like a world away for your student, building an innovative thinker begins in the early stages of brain development. By adolescence, children's brains are beginning to develop skills in critical thinking and problem solving: the basis for innovation. At MPFS innovation starts with our teachers who are

models of creative, critical thinkers for our students. The word innovation does not just apply to our curriculum; it is valued and taught as a life skill.

At MPFS, being an innovative thinker – a critical and creative thinker – is a skill that is demonstrated across grade levels. In our kindergarten classroom Teacher Erica models good practices for independent learners. If T. Erica's students call out "I'm done!" after finishing an assignment, she reminds them, "But you've only just begun." This signals that though they may have finished the task at hand, they have the ability as creative thinkers to go deeper or switch gears

to work on another assignment.

2nd graders started the year

learning about early

civilizations and

are challenged

This special issue includes our 2013-14 Annual Report of Giving

to communicate without speech to build tools with K'Nex to serve their community. 4th graders test boundaries and their ability to create with last year's integrated theme on inventions to protect the planet. 5th graders learn to make their own connections about language and anatomy across science, history, and art classes with last year's study of Africa and the Turkana Boy. Lower school and middle school students who completed the Peer Facilitators workshop learn critical listening and problem solving skills with real world applications. Each of these experiences have students working together across subjects, in the classroom and out, to make connections, identify problems, and brainstorm solutions.

More and more, the importance of a student's ability to *think*, rather just to *know*, is what's required for success.

"What is increasingly needed and rewarded is the ability to analyze, synthesize, apply and communicate knowledge in creative, often collaborative ways," writes William Taylor in Independent

School magazine. At MPFS, we are proud to help our students become independent learners who seek out knowledge to invent, create, and build. Nurturing connections across subjects and encouraging outside-the-box problem solving skills not only gives our students confidence in the classroom but sets them on a path to becoming the kind of innovative thinkers that are in high demand in today's competitive world.



Dear Friends of MPFS,

This special issue of Dragon Tales which features our Annual Report of generous donors is also our "innovation" issue; exploring how our teachers model innovation as a life skill, as well as spotlighting special programs and a curriculum consistently ahead of the curve in education. This got me thinking that it's not just our students and teachers that provide the school with innovation; our donors, who stand behind our mission, are also innovators. Without their support, we would not be able to provide such an impactful education for so many students.

It is my hope that our donors stay connected to the school as much as possible – through social media, our website and newsletters – so that they are able to see all the good that their support provides on a daily basis; though, nothing compares to being on campus amidst the energy, enthusiasm and purposeful activity. As an example of how this technology can keep us connected, I was recently alerted via our MPFS Facebook page of a new review that had been posted by an alumnus, which I wanted to share here:

My time at MPFS was definitely needed and appreciated, especially coming from the inner city. It gives children a different perspective than they would normally get from a traditional public school. (It also) presents to them the avenues that lead (them to) becoming the person they really feel comfortable being and connects them to all walks of life on an everyday basis. MPFS introduces children to an array of subjects that turn into possible careers, all while having a great time. When I have children, they will more than likely be going to MPFS. (Karington Corbin, '01)

It is testimonials like this, from a successful MPFS graduate, that give real insight into what a transformative experience our school provides. The values and lessons taught here will be remembered and practiced for a lifetime. We thank you for your support so that students like Karington can become stewards of the values they learned right here at Media-Providence Friends School in their own communities.

In Friendship,

W. Earl Sissell

Head of School



Annual Fund: Participation, Priorities, and Potato Salad

On July 3, Zack Brown launched an appeal on Kickstarter, a crowdfunding platform for creative projects. While some endeavors (such as the Micro 3D printer and Reading Rainbow's app accessibility) are ambitious, innovative, and uplifting, Brown's was an admittedly underwhelming undertaking.

"Basically, I'm just making potato salad," he explained. "I haven't decided what kind yet." His fundraising goal was \$10.

Yet, Brown's appeal went viral faster than bacterial growth in rancid potato salad. By July 6, he had raised \$3,000. July 7: \$10,000+. July 8: \$35,000+. Total funding after his 30-day campaign was \$55,492 – for giving the Internet a giggle.

When this story broke, we had just wrapped up our 2014 Annual Fund campaign, after appealing all year via mailings, e-mails, phone calls, visits, Dragon Tales, eNews, and social media to raise money for MPFS. We never thought to try potato salad.

At the *very* end, we exceeded our \$84,000 goal, raising nearly \$87,000. 100% of Trustees contributed. Parent participation was a record-high 74%, up from 63% in 2013 and 48% in 2012. Former parents, alumni, grandparents, Meeting members, friends, and corporate donors gave. We're tremendously grateful to our 336 donors in 2014. We point to the potato salad saga in juxtaposition with our current 2015 Annual Fund campaign:

- Early gifts can start a rolling snowball of support. This potato salad had 6,911 backers with an average donation of \$8. Every contribution mattered, just as every Annual Fund gift counts.
- Our donor pool is a miniscule subset of the social media masses. We need a large percentage of our community and friends to be active and sustained supporters.
- Donors had no reason to expect a quality product from Brown, who warned, "It might not be that good." They gave to fuel a joke. With 137 years of experience educating children, we're confident in our recipe and our outcomes. You know who we are, what we do, how we make a difference in children's lives, and how MPFS students make a difference in the world. No joke.

Note: A bowled-over Brown decided to make his campaign count. On September 28, Brown hosted "PotatoStock 2014", the proceeds of which went to non-profits to fight hunger in Central Ohio. What he did began half-baked, but ended with some a-peel!

2014 Annual Fund By the Numbers

Total: \$86,897.45

Donors: 336

Participation:

Trustees = 100%

Teachers = 97%

Parents = 74% Alumni = 10%

Help us achieve 100% participation all 'round in 2015!

INCOME



Auxiliary Programs (camp, gym rental) **5%**

Fundraising **15%**

Interest Income 0.7%

Other **4.3%**

EXPENSES

Student Instruction & Financial Aid 74%

Facilities **6%**

Auxiliary Programs 4%

Administrative **16%**





Homework on the playground during Extended Day

PROFILES IN PHILANTHROPY:

William D. Ravdin A Pro-Bono Life and Legacy

William D. "Bill" Ravdin personified pro-bono service; he worked and acted "for the good" throughout his life. A Quaker and a Friends' Central School and Swarthmore

College alumnus who became a successful businessman and banker, Bill spent much of his time and considerable talents providing primarily pro-bono consulting services to Friends schools, notably MPFS.

Bill also leaves behind a legacy that lives on for the considerable good of MPFS. After his much-mourned death on March 30, 2014, we learned of Bill's remarkable gift to us: a \$150,000 bequest to our school's Mary Herndon Ravdin Fund for the Endowment of Teacher Salaries and Professional Development. "This was a cause – and a school – very close to his heart," attests Bill's son, Glenn Ravdin. "Bill Ravdin was among the most generous people I have known," declares MPFS Head of School Earl Sissell. "His only interest was in improving the educational opportunities for all students attending Friends schools and ensuring that MPFS and other Friends schools would continue to serve students for years to come."

Bill and his wife Mary, an educator with a Master's in Library Science and a former MPFS Trustee, established a fund to endow faculty compensation at MPFS. "My parents appreciated and supported the best elements of progressive education, such as the individualized learning and community involvement, and they thought that supporting teacher salaries was one way to sustain faculty consistency at Friends schools from year to year," Glenn explains.

When Mary died in 2005, Bill named the fund for her. "To say that my father loved my mother doesn't even approach what she meant to him," Glenn emphasizes. "He revered her and respected what she did. The fund was a tribute to her as well as to MPFS." It was family first to Bill, also father to Anne and Susan.

With the \$150,000 bequest, the balance of the Mary Herndon Ravdin Fund will be more than \$240,000. In addition, the gift raises our total Endowment to \$1 million for the first time, a milestone in MPFS history, a cornerstone for our future, and a touchstone of the Ravdins' advocacy and support. That \$1 million figure is a good start: Continued, considerable Endowment growth is critical for the long-term sustainability of our school.

"Quakers frequently use the phrase 'let your life speak' when referring to what we should aspire to while being in the world," said T. Earl. "Bill let his life speak in his actions and his words every day and his life continues to speak, even in his absence."

We asked Glenn to imagine Bill reunited with Mary now and her reaction to his tremendous work and the funds he donated and raised in her name. "Dad was sure that they would meet up again," Glenn said. "Mother had no ego and was a very modest person, so she would probably be a bit chagrined that he put the fund in her name! But she would have been flattered, of course, that he wanted her to live on in the hearts of others, as well as in ours."

[MPFS also profiled Bill and Mary in the Fall 2009 edition of Dragon Tales. To access that article, download the PDF of the newsletter from the Alumni News page on our website.]

ANNUAL GIVING REPORT

We thank the following donors for their contributions – unrestricted, restricted and gifts-in-kind – received during the last academic year, between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014.

While every effort was made to include all donors, if we have omitted your name, please contact us so that we can make corrections in the next issue.

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Now that our 2010 alumni are also high-school grads, they're rising to higher education at colleges and universities up and down the East Coast – from Massachusetts down through New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and North Carolina to Florida – and a bit westward to Alabama and Texas. Their choices of schools and majors/minors: Lianabel Aguilar, Eastern University, political science and history; Isabel Barrett, Hampshire College, Spanish, German and creative

writing; Isabella Botak, Misericordia University, nursing (public health or pediatrics); Kate Bozentka, Southern Methodist University, undeclared (semester abroad in Switzerland); **Scott Collins**, University of Pittsburgh – Honors College, engineering and theater; Noah Gilford, University of Alabama, engineering; Jordan Harris, Villanova University, engineering; Billy Haviland, Washington College, environmental studies; Molly Marcus, Brandeis University, undeclared; Galen Martin, Lynn University, fashion merchandising; Blake Miller, Susquehanna University, liberal arts; Alex Mull-Dreyer, Davidson College, undeclared; Caroline Shreckengast, University of Pittsburgh, psychology; Harry Smythe, Bard College, undeclared; and Peter Subramanian, Temple University, architecture. Good luck to our young alum. They continue to make us proud!

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

Ally Adams-Alwine (Class of 1999)

MPFS teaches conflict resolution and peer mediation with the intention that students will practice those skills for a lifetime toward a more tolerant, compassionate, just, and peaceful world. In the case of Class of '99 alumna Ally Adams-Alwine, the lessons were most definitely learned. Ally is a master of those skills – literally! She earned her M.A. in Conflict Resolution from Georgetown after majoring in Political Science as an undergrad at Vanderbilt. "What I learned at MPFS really helped me later," Ally said. "That education served as a solid grounding and foundation for my studies in college and grad school and along my career path."

Ally has spent her career thus far working in government agencies and the non-profit sector in and around Washington, DC, with a particular interest in human rights and international development. "That perspective automatically takes you to public service," she said. Following four years as a Business Development Manager/Specialist at the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), in June 2013, Ally moved to her current position as New Business Development Officer for the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF).

At the international non-profit—the mission of which is to end pediatric HIV/AIDS through research, advocacy, and prevention and treatment programs—Ally manages proposals to help larger global teams develop new projects and secure funding. When we caught up to Ally, she had just returned to DC from Geneva and was heading off to

Kenya to coordinate an HIV services delivery program partnership.

Ally enjoys being in the middle of the action. "It's very motivating and exciting to be able to see the results of your work," she said.

She travels for business and pleasure, fitting in a personal layover in the mountains of France after Geneva and taking vacation time in Cambodia last summer. Her love of travel stems from one of her fondest memories of MPFS: the 8th Grade trip to Costa Rica. "I didn't know of anyone else who did that at that age. Katrina and I even went back later and stayed with the girls from the same family." An MPFS student from Kindergarten through 8th Grade, she has kept in close contact with former classmate Katrina Rogachevksy, as well as Adrian Arnett '98. "The relationships I formed with my classmates really made the school standout," she said.

Ally holds her experiences at MPFS close to her and appreciates the opportunity to grow and learn in such a tight knit community. "I always had a good foundation at home," Ally adds, "but MPFS was there to foster that."

MPFS 1990s Alumni Reunion: April 17 & 18

Here's to a time of Tomagotchis, Grunge, Doc Martens, Discman players, and Beanie Babies! If you graduated from MPFS between 1990 and 1999, reconnect with old friends to reminisce about good times - and bad trends - during our 1990s Alumni Reunion Weekend April 17 & 18, 2015. Save the dates now and stay updated by submitting your contact info via our Alumni page at mpfs.org and by joining the Media-Providence Friends School Classes 1990-1999 group on Facebook.

DIVISION FOCUS: Making Connections in Middle School

Preparing our students for the world beyond MPFS is part of our mission and it is our goal to send our graduating 8th graders onto high school with the ability to think creatively, problem solve and become leaders and innovators in an ever changing world.

Technology has certainly advanced our middle school in ways we could not have imagined a decade ago.

With our iPad 1:1 program, all students have access to their own tablet device which they use to read texts, do research and connect with their community. "Technology as a tool is a means to innovation," T. Nancy says. So, even though our middle school students have grown up with this technology, we place an importance on developing the skill set and best practices for utilizing these tools.

A new project T. Nancy has started this year is the Middle School Passion Project which allows students one period a week to research the topic of their choice. In March, each student will present a "TED Talk" on their chosen topics as "experts." The project is meant to emphasize research, information gathering, and making connections independently. Along with books and internet searches, students are also required to reach out to a real life expert on their topic by phone, email, or social media. The project also focuses on synthesizing information from varying sources. She hopes the project will spark an interest in her students that they might not have otherwise discovered, as well as giving them a jumpstart on research papers in high school and beyond, that require information gathering and reporting skills for success.

In the same vein, for the past several years, T. Karen has

focused her art class around the design process. She noticed that her students were always eager to jump right into an art project without the proper planning. Students start by identifying a problem or a design idea then work on brainstorming solutions. After choosing the best solution, the students begin working on a preliminary model or prototype

to test it, improve upon it, and finally start creating or building. This process, along with the information gathering that goes into the Passion Project, helps to solidify the benefits of being a critical, innovative

thinker.

To get middle school students thinking about making their own connections across subjects and outside of the classroom, faculty have created an integrated learning project that poses a single, open ended question for students to consider throughout the year. This year's question is: How do environments influence life and culture? Each student has a chart broken down by subject to log their thoughts and connections.

There is also a space to note any personal connections. "We're trying to get that broad stroke, that bigger perspective," says T. Daryl, which she notes can be a challenge for middle school students. The goal, however, is to organically make those connections independent of their teachers by routinely writing their observations.

With so much information available at their fingertips, it is vital for students to have the skills needed to reflect, plan, and finally connect. While being a tech-savvy learner is certainly necessary, our middle school faculty focusses on building a strong foundation in critical, reflective thinking across subjects. "It's the information - not the technology that you have to manipulate to be innovative," says T. Nancy.

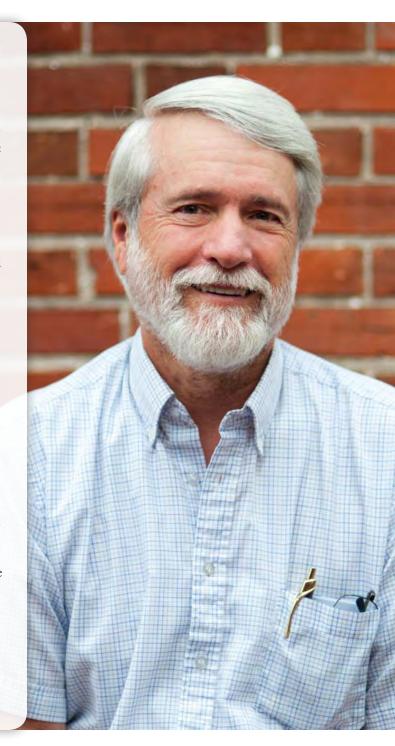
MEET Teacher David Camp, 7th & 8th Grade Quakerism

eacher David has been a Friend of MPFS since he took his first teaching job out of college in 1970. T. David is a Swarthmore College graduate who grew up Quaker and attended Friends schools. What David remembers about his own Quaker education is also what he loves about working at MPFS: great teachers who truly care about the welfare of each student. "The way (teachers) care for each student... combined with the freedom they give kids to develop their own styles of learning and behavior within guidelines. I think that's great!"

His first year teaching at Media Friends, David taught shop and was also an aid in 5th grade before they created the middle school, in which David also taught. He spent five years at MPFS before leaving to teach and get his masters from Penn. He returned to MPFS after sixteen years as our bus driver. "I've always liked driving things. Cars, motorcycles, bullock carts in India, buses, trucks. When I was driving full time I got to go see a lot of places that I wouldn't have otherwise seen." After that, he was asked to teach 8th grade Quakerism, which he has been doing for almost fourteen years!

T. David believes developing good study habits is crucial and uses the readings, homework and discussions in his Quakerism class to teach this skill to his 7th and 8th graders. "Paying attention and being an active thinker about what you are learning about are all skills that are essential, I think, to later student life," David says.

He is also passionate about service learning and tries to instill that love of helping others in his students, much like his teachers did when he was in school. David volunteers on the grounds crew three days a week at Pendle Hill, a Quaker retreat in Wallingford, where our 6th grade green thumbs also help out. He enjoys working outside and the community of people he gets to meet and work with at Pendle Hill. T. David also sings in the Pendle Hill Chorus and enjoys many other hobbies including bird watching, collecting coins and stamps ("I just like old things," he says.), and kayaking!



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