

Today I want to share with Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) the philosophy underlying Scattergood's academics. This philosophy is not mine, although I oversee the implementation of this philosophical core. Rather, what I share with you today is my understanding of the combined visions of the teaching staff and administration, following in the rich tradition that Scattergood has held for nearly 125 years.

At the most basic level Scattergood Friends School is a progressive, college preparatory school with a Quaker foundation. Defining what makes a Quaker School is a difficult endeavor. To cut to the root of this issue, Quaker education fundamentally focuses on moral and academic development¹ through study, work, sports, and worship. However, because of our strength as a Quaker institution (particularly as it relates to morals), the faculty has called for us to be thinking more critically about our role as a progressive, college preparatory school. So what does this look like at Scattergood?

The core of progressive education in general and education at Scattergood in specific is that it attends to the whole individual, focuses on building motivation through an active learning environment, favors deep understanding of content and is student-centered. Encouraging students to formulate their own learning goals is at the core of this motivation. Simply put, any learner performs better at tasks they enjoy and value. It often surprises me that it has taken teachers countless generations of students to look for the scientific evidence that supports this simple truth. In an effective learning environment students are not the passive recipients of knowledge. Rather, they play a critical and active role in their education.

One question that could be coming to your minds at this point is, "but how is this college preparatory education?" Or stated another way, "it's great to focus on student motivation but what about teaching all of the 'stuff' that students don't like but 'need to know'?" The answer to this important concern is the skilled teacher. Any topic can be fascinating or boring and we can never force someone to learn content that they don't want to or is not meaningful. Skilled teachers are masters in helping students make these connections between content and interest, in grasping the big picture.

As we progress further into the 21st century, more educators challenge the assumption that there is a set universal body of knowledge that students need to know². With incredibly easy access to information now provided through the Internet, highly effective teachers no longer are the gatekeepers of knowledge. Rather, they are guides who help students think critically, understand complex information, and apply their knowledge to solve problems. These skilled teachers

¹ FCE, *What is Friends Education?* www.friendscouncil.org

² See Grant Wiggins article, *The Futility of Trying to Teach Everything of Importance* (copies located in the back of the room).

also help their students to become accomplished at expressing their ideas and conclusions in writing and speech.

This radical change in our ideas of how best to support learning has resulted in many scholarly publications but none as widely read as Tony Wagner's, *Global Education Gap*. In his book, Wagner suggests that we look at the 21st century competencies that students need to be successful as adults and teach these skills. Skills such as flexibility, creativity, critical thinking and problem solving, effective oral and written communication, analysis of information, collaboration and entrepreneurship are becoming increasingly coveted as students that possess these are likely to succeed in college and be change agents in the world.

At the core of this argument is the assumption that colleges are not looking to cultivate good students into great ones. Rather, many schools are looking to attract students that are likely to excel outside of college and thus, make their institution look more favorable. As a result, being college-ready is increasingly changing to being "real-world ready".

Scattergood has focused on providing its students with the skills to become successful adults for nearly 125 years. The skills mentioned by Wagner are also some of the leading hallmarks of progressive education in that they favor deep analysis over rote memorization. Over the last year it has become increasingly apparent in admissions interviews that this relevancy is what students and parents are missing in their local schools and is what attracts them to Scattergood.

While I have been focusing on Scattergood, your school, as a college preparatory school, in truth we are world preparatory. We take our students' desires to be change agents seriously. We strive to create a meaningful learning environment using the important and complex problems our world is facing. This is the essence of progressive education and where our educational philosophy meets our vision statement as a college preparatory school.

What we need now is to be incredibly aware of this progressive leaning as an institution and cease to waver in any aspect with regards to this mission. We can not replicate what many other schools are doing in terms of quantity of offerings and access to fancy marble-lined hallways, nor would we want to. However, we do need to be able to demonstrate why we are one of the most authentic and relevant educational institutions that parents can send their child. This authenticity is at our core, and we should not compromise on this long tradition.

Academic Dean,
Louis Herbst