

Scattergood Friends School
July 2017 - Academic Subcommittee Report:

Scattergood is a small community that has the advantage of being very diverse. That fact is a rich asset to help us prepare our students not only for college but mostly for life. This year our Senior Class had Black, White, Asian, Latino and African students coming from the east and west coasts of North America and three other continents. Only Senior students spoke more than 7 different languages. But diversity did not stop with race, ethnicity, religion and language but also with different gender identities and different learning abilities.

Admission to a four-year college or university is one of the school's requirements and our Senior students were accepted this year at the following colleges and universities: Kalamazoo College (3), Warren Wilson College (3); University of Iowa (3), Cornell College, Knox College, Reed College, Mills College, Luther College (2), Augustana College, Purdue University, Calvin College, Graceland University, Earlham College (4), Macalaster College and Marist College

As part of our mission, we actively encourage leadership among our students, and we consciously provide opportunities for them to exercise it. As a clear example of that leadership embedded in the Quaker values of equality and social justice, this year our students led conversations about diversity that permeated our community. They helped us to talk about sensitive issues that are not necessarily part of our day-to-day conversations. One morning during Collection, a group of Black students shared their past experiences of racial inequality. The ownership and sharing of those experiences foster their need to raise awareness in our community about the the Black Lives Matter movement. These students helped us think and understand the relevance of skin color, even more in this specific historical moment of our country.

Our transgender community compelled us to rethink gender conceptions as they pushed to break the predominant binary view at the school, working with staff to make changes in policies and practices to create even a safer living environment for students facing gender identity struggles.

Moreover, a student with Down syndrome enrolled for a post-graduate year presented the school with another challenge to our assumptions of "normalcy" that kept us constantly questioning our expectations and limitations to deal with inclusion. All this healthy unrest was fuel to organize the first Eastern Iowa Diversity Conference for Independent Schools, with more than 250 participants coming from three independent schools of the area. Middle School, High School, and Staff all gathered in our campus to talk about these issues. We are hoping to continue these conversations internally and looking to involve more schools in the near future.

In order to help our students struggling with emotional and mental issues we decided to split responsibilities between a student support team (SST) and the structured study hall team (SSH). SST focused on emotional and behavioral needs, seeking professional help for our students and helping teachers navigate the impact of this issues in the classroom. The SSH team focused on learning and academic needs, developing strategies such as different situations of homework, test preparation, materials and time management. Statistics about anxiety and depression among high school students are alarming. Publications of the National Institute of Mental Health mention more than a 60 % increase in the number of students reporting these problems in the last ten years, and our community

is not an exception. All the strategies are designed to help students succeed academically. In order provide more structure for the SSH and SST teams, we developed, implemented, assessed, and adjusted different tools, processes, and procedures designed to provide more consistency and accountability. Among them is a contract for twelve hours of on-campus service each week by a licensed mental health counselor.

Our strategic plan and marketing differentiation placed the farm in a very important position. For the last two years we had at the beginning of the year the Farm Immersion Program (FIP) for our freshmen and sophomore students. Four teachers were involved designing the curriculum and implementing the program. Students' FIP feedback reflected some of their concerns missing class time in classes required for graduation and the difficulties for upperclassmen to connect with sophomores and freshmen and build stronger peer relations. The analysis of this situation, combined with the success of our May Term classes, motivated us to create a new farm term this year. All teachers are preparing interdisciplinary, hands on learning classes for the farm term which will take place in morning during the first three weeks of the first quarter. All students will attend the farm term. Math and seminar classes will be shifted to the afternoon so key subjects do not miss class time. This first term will also emphasize the development of the 21th century skills as enumerated by educator and author Tony Wagner (*Critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration across networks; agility and adaptability; initiative and entrepreneurship; effective oral, written and multimedia communication; accessing and analyzing information; curiosity and imagination*). It is clear that these skills are as Wagner explains "survival skills" to prepare students for college and their future work life, and we are working to insert them across the curriculum.

For this May term we had a Greenhouse construction class to build a structure to protect thousands of seeds that we need to transplant out into our garden every year. Students used the windows from the old sunroom. It has been a sustainable way to recycle our old farmhouse! They began the project at the design stage and finished with the actual construction of the building. Along the way they learned about design, geometry, materials, tools, teamwork, and problem solving.

Finally, another thought-provoking project this upcoming school year will be the writing of the Self-Study for our re-accreditation by the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS). Sharing only about the section of the self study report that talks about the academic program, the steering committee in consultation with faculty decided to choose a different structure to present our program that goes in tune with our movement towards an interdisciplinary, and project based learning integrated curriculum. In the Self-Study we will talk about "Developmental Stages" instead of the more standard description of our program through academic disciplines. The developmental stages included will be Intellectual, Aesthetic, Kinesthetic, Ethical/Moral and Social Practical.

I am very thankful for experience gained during this past academic year and I am ready to continue the journey and the seeding of values and ideals in the brains and hearts of the Scattergoodians that chose our community as their educational soil.

Respectfully submitted
Gabriela Delgadillo
Assistant Head of School