

Scattergood School Committee Report to IYMC 2017

*“Our initiatives should always nurture a strong learning community that develops our understanding and facility to practice our core values along with **open-mindedness, curiosity, problem-solving, and effective communication**. Together these values develop the individuals’ capacities to better understand themselves and others, and make individuals and communities ready to face the challenges of a world in constant change.”*

These are words from the school’s update of the Strategic Plan, and they speak volumes in today’s dissonant times. This spring’s graduating class of students came from various countries, a wide range of learning abilities and differing gender identities. As they accepted their diplomas to venture out into the world in this uneasy year, we are grateful for this school, which is both a strong learning community and sanctuary that has become more relevant and important than ever. We have been witness to the miracles that can unfold when people are allowed to become truly themselves. The School Committee is deeply appreciative for the dedication, creativity, and hard work given by staff and students to create and maintain this manifestation of Love.

Staying on track with both academics and these core values is a daily practice and a task that can never be finished. Internally the school is healthy and viable in its academic and spiritual life, and is blessed with strong leadership. However, to carry out our mission we must find solutions to declining enrollment or the long-term viability of the school could be jeopardized. Because we need to find new students in a competitive market, **outreach** has become more important than ever. How can we connect with others and let the world know we are here? Outreach is imperative: we all need to share with our communities the gem that is Scattergood.

To that end, outreach with alumni is being invigorated. Thomas and Ruth met with alumni in small groups across the country and recently at Scattergood, reconnecting, helping them meet each other in their local areas, asking for help with outreach in their communities, and planting the seeds of creating a self-directed alumni association.

Furthermore, a major outreach step was taken by hiring Kelsh Wilson Design, a Philadelphia based firm that has worked with other Quaker schools. Kelsh Wilson visited Scattergood in the fall and helped us develop a multi-year marketing plan and launch a new website. Their encouraging assessment stated that though there are many challenges with our location and size, what we offer is unique, needed, and very promising.

We are optimistic that this outreach work will help increase enrollment. The difficult reality is that the implementation of this marketing plan will take time and during this period our enrollment numbers will likely remain low.

Thomas continues to shepherd our school's affairs with great care and attention as Head. His budgets are sound and he and the staff have carefully kept expenditures on track even within the constraints of a tight budget. The critical issue we are facing is that we fall short of our income projections not only because of low enrollment but also because we have not met our Annual Fund goals. We are suffering the effects of not having had a development director, so we are particularly excited to have Miranda Nielson join our community as Development Coordinator. Our challenge over the next few years will be to raise the extra funds to pursue the marketing plan and continue to keep our community and programs strong without sacrificing quality during this time of fiscal hardship.

In April, Midyear Meeting invited Drew Smith from Friends Council on Education to explore with us the relevance of Quaker Education today. Drew opened with a quote from Daryl Ford of William Penn Charter School, "***I believe Friends Schools are the hope for the world,***" he said. They strive to help their students "***visualize and create an ideal society...to create good people, world citizens.***" What a gift it is that we have, right here in our midst and in our care, one of these places that is helping to create world citizens. What a gift to have the privilege of being able to nurture it, and by doing so nurture ourselves. What a gift we have in this Yearly Meeting, let us rejoice in supporting this human endeavor that each day works to practice our core values.

For the School Committee,
Ruth Hampton, clerk