

September 9, 2016

Dear Friends,

Margaret Plank has asked me to share some thoughts about why it would be beneficial for the School to continue a relationship with Bethesda Friends Meeting after the Lower School is relocated to the District. The following list is not exhaustive, but I hope that it begins to articulate how a continuing relationship with BFM will make us a better Friends school. I hope, too, that BFM has profited from this relationship.

1. **Quakerism is alive and well.** Having a Meeting affiliated with the School grounds us in our Friends heritage and helps our families, the vast majority of whom have little or no understanding of Quakerism when they arrive, better understand how faith is put into practice. Far too often Friends are misunderstood and, even worse, caricatured as some relic of the past. In addition, those who have little more than casual experience with Quakers think the Society's predominant characteristic is "niceness" or "friendliness." Respect is certainly a core tenet, but the concept "that Friends are always nice and always agree" fails to represent the fidelity to and rigor of process. It is important for our students and families to understand that the Quaker community remains vibrant and that Friends continue to bear witness to the testimonies we teach.
2. **Demonstrating Friends decision-making.** The Quaker decision-making process requires significant explanation (and re-explanation) to faculty, staff, parents and trustees, and having a sense of how decisions are made in a Meeting would be especially helpful to a School that, like all institutions, continually struggles with authority and decision-making. The School routinely contracts with Friends Council on Education and other Quaker organizations to provide training in this area, and we might pool resources with the Meeting to make these opportunities available to the broader Friends community. An affiliation with BFM also provides the School with access to a variety of experts who might counsel the School in areas of governance and Quaker practice more broadly.
3. **Provide a pool of interested and qualified trustees.** The School's by-laws require that half of the members of the Board be members of the Society of Friends, and strong relationships with the Meeting enables the School to build a deep list of potential trustees.
4. **Provide opportunities to collaborate on community engagement initiatives and other programming.** Strong relations with the meeting can amplify the impact of service learning initiatives and other programs (e.g., speaker series, films, etc.) that would be of mutual interest to members of the Meeting and School communities.

Again, I hope this modest list is helpful. But at the end of the day, the impact that our association with BFM has had on the School is greater than the sum of these parts. If I can be of any assistance as you continue to discern your path forward, please let me know. I would be

pleased to attend a Meeting for Business or the appropriate committee meeting should that be helpful.

In friendship and with gratitude,

Bryan Garman  
Head of School  
Sidwell Friends School