

Committee on Friends Education Report to the Education Standing Committee

This was a successful and very busy year for the Committee on Friends Education (CoFE) as we transitioned to a new clerk and took on tasks that a staff member in the past had provided for us. Many, many thanks to Christie Duncan-Tessmer for her ongoing support and very quick turn-around when help was needed and to Cliessa Nagle and Carol Walz for all of their patience and time in answering our many questions about grants, funding, budget-making, etc.! We could not have accomplished all we did without their help.

Program

One of our major tasks is to support the heads of Friends schools, especially new heads of school and the heads of small Friends schools by bringing them together periodically for an extended lunchtime meeting. The purpose of these informal get-togethers is to build a community of educators and provide mutual support. There is never a problem one head is facing that another head hasn't successfully resolved! Normally, we get together at the Friends Council on Education (FCE) Gathering of Heads of Friends Schools in the fall, have two lunch meetings during the winter and then gather again at the Spring FCE Gathering. Thanks to Michael Zimmerman of Friends School Haverford, we already have our dates and locations for this coming year.

A second programmatic task is to support the annual gathering of the Religious Life Committees in our schools. This year Darryl Ford welcomed us to William Penn Charter School for a wonderful evening of healthy and fine dining and terrific discussion about issues we all confront. Our co-clerk, Grace Sharples Cooke, was the point person with Penn Charter for this event.

Every other year, CoFE hosts a gathering of what we call the "Triad," which includes the head of each Friends School, the clerk of the meeting and meeting members active with the school, and the clerk and members of the School Committee. The purpose of these gatherings is to provide a forum for mutual sharing and support and to build skills in strengthening the meeting/school relationship. This year we were excited to have Glenn Ravdin as our morning consultant. Glenn led us through a process of looking at the strengths and challenges facing our meetings and schools (he had sent out a survey to meetings and schools in advance) and then shared ideas for moving ahead as a meeting/school team. The afternoon focused on small groups responding to queries

generated from the surveys. Attenders expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to build skills and understanding but also to just get to know other people engaged in the same kind of work. This gathering is funded through our budget, so there was no cost to attenders.

Grant making

CoFE has two major responsibilities in this area:

1. Grants to Quaker children who attend PYM Friends schools.

As of June 10, 2014, 235 students attending 29 Friends schools and from 52 meetings in PYM had applied for grants. This is a program administered by the Friends Council of Education (FCE), in conjunction with PYM, and funded by PYM endowments dedicated to supporting Quaker children in Friends schools and the Friends Education Fund (FEF), now under the auspices of FCE. There are a few other very small funds that support children of color in Friends schools. This year, PYM contributed approximately \$92,000 and FEF contributed \$76,000. Currently, schools are verifying for FCE the information provided by the applicants, including the family's "need." I will have a final report for the Education Standing Committee (ESC) in September about how many students received how much in funding to support their education. Many thanks to the ESC for its wonderful support of these grants!

2. Grants to small "needy" Friends schools to support the school's contribution to the teachers' retirement fund.

Five schools – Lansdowne Friends School, London Grove Friends Kindergarten, The Quaker School at Horsham, Greenwood Friends School and Wrightstown Friends Nursery School – all received \$5,359 to support the match made to the retirement fund.

Goals for next year

Because we will not have the Triad Gathering to plan for, I expect our focus will be on CoFE members reaching out to and visiting Friends schools in PYM. These visits are crucial for helping schools stay close to PYM and especially for supporting new heads of schools. In the past, the PYM staff person conducted the visits. Now that we have no assigned staff person, the responsibility will fall upon members. While this is certainly a happy task – visiting other schools – it is time-consuming and difficult for many of our

members who have full-time, demanding jobs. But, I have every confidence that we'll make it work! My personal target will be the Friends nursery schools, which rarely send their teachers to FCE or CoFE events and can get easily isolated. This spring, I facilitated a panel about Friends education for Western Quarter, which has three wonderful Quaker nursery schools in its area. The teachers seemed to love meeting other nursery teachers and I was extremely impressed by their programs. Finding a way to make it possible for teachers from these small schools to fully participate in what FCE and PYM have to offer must be a priority.

We will continue, of course, to contribute to the Education Threadletters, along with our usual work described above.

Respectfully submitted,

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