



# Moorestown Friends School

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February, 1993

Dear Lower School Parents,

I am sure most of you have heard the news about the Lower School being designated a BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL by the United States Department of Education. Although we are unable to share a specific schedule of the kind of events which follow such a designation I thought I would take a moment and bring you as up-to-date as we can with what we know.

Last fall (1991-92) Alan Craig urged the Lower School to apply for the Blue Ribbon School award because it was the alternate year in which the program recognizes elementary schools. I spoke with the faculty early in September and we all agreed to pursue the designation.

We carefully prepared the 28 page document which explained our school's philosophy, curriculum, national scores, program implementation and special areas of interest. The document was mailed to Washington, D.C. to CAPE - Council for American Private Education- the organization which screened all private school submissions.

The CAPE "readers" deemed our report worthy of further consideration and forwarded it to the US Department of Education for another panel screening to determine if the school would receive a site visit. It was at this point that the government cut the funding for the program and it looked as though all was lost. However, many of the participating schools raised such a hue and cry that the funding was restored and the program went forward - albeit off schedule. The nomination process extended into this school year rather than being finalized within the year the reports were submitted.

The site visits were made in the fall of 1992-93 (this past October for us) and the site teams' recommendations accepted in December, 1992. We had been advised we would hear of the awards in January, 1993. As I think most of you know, we received a call on Thursday, December 17, 1992 from the Office of Congressman Jim Saxton congratulating us for being awarded the designation BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL for 1991-1992.

On Tuesday, February 2, 1993, Alan Craig, Deb Binder and I went to Trenton to attend the State Board of Education meeting during which the eight New Jersey schools (six public and two private) were acknowledged for the award and presented with a certificate of recognition. It was our first official presentation regarding the Blue Ribbon and we enjoyed every moment of it.

It is our understanding that a reception will be held in the Rose Garden at the White House for representatives of the Blue Ribbon Schools in forty-six states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and a Department of Defense Dependents school in Coavordon, Holland. The date for this reception has not been released. It is after this ceremony in Washington, D.C. that we will be permitted to hold our own local ceremony and celebration. WE'LL BE IN TOUCH!

Meanwhile, great opportunities continue to flourish in our classrooms:

-ESTELLE SHARPE and LINDA KEMPLE (Kg) have a wonderful bird feeding station (one-way glass) built right into their classroom window which will help the children with their official bird survey. This survey is done in conjunction with Cornell University's "Project Feeder Watch." The students are counting birds within specific zones, tallying results in the classroom journal while also identifying similarities of markings and songs. These children have also been collecting data from their studies and illustrating their information in the style of an artist very popular with young children - Eric Carle - whose writings include The Mountain Who Loved a Bird. Their math work has included graphing their information and constructing number families (yogurt-covered peanuts in shredded-wheat nests) as well as working with number sentences and word problems.

-LISA THOMAS and SANDI FEDERICI (Kg) have been extending their involvement with a curriculum entitled "Behind the Mask" which they began as a part of the studies to celebrate the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. As the children learned about diversity, tolerance and cooperation they created a classroom book as a satirical response to a book called Meanies - which they called Nicies. They put considerable thought into ways for people to go about doing nice things and not just being people who react angrily to things they don't like.

-MAUREEN MASHER and her students have been learning about hard, old bones and finding that while they may not be able to construct genuine dinosaur skeletons they can create beautiful dinosaur pillows and hand-printed T-shirts as keepsakes from their studies. Time lines, stories, songs, math, art (and sewing!) have woven a fascinating historical trip for the children. It is a wonderful experience for the children to have power over the "terrible lizards" of prehistoric times. They delight in the ferocity of the beasts and are amazed to find out that some dinosaurs were no bigger than modern-day chickens. Although at this age it is difficult for the children to really have an understanding of time in the geologic sense - they basically know whether a tyrannosaurus would have eaten a stegosaurus because of their place on the time line! The class took a trip to the Academy of Natural Sciences where they impressed the staff with their beautiful hand-printed dinosaur shirts as well as their knowledge of dinosaurs.

-NANCY BOOTHBY doesn't have rocks in her head, but she surely has them all over her room! The investigation of land forms, rock formations, geodes, erosion, magma, lava, metamorphic rock, granite and especially mica schist has the whole class really rockin'! A wonderful day along the Wissahickon helped to bring home the concept of the forces within the earth as it was moving and heaving its way into solid land forms. One of the most exciting events on this trip was the discovery of natural garnets. The excitement was increased when, on a subsequent trip to the Academy of Natural Sciences the children were able to see magnificent garnets on display. Nancy has also been taking the children over to the earth science room in the Middle/Upper School where they have had wonderful opportunities to meet with Sarah Penniston, Middle School science teacher. With Sarah's additional guidance the children have been classifying their rocks and tracking their information just as trained scientists do.

-MARGE DAWSON and HAZEL EDWARDS (2nd) have begun their annual study of Meeting Houses which includes learning about brick patterns, architectural styles, blueprints, lifestyles in the 1600s and Quaker history in particular. One of the focal fictional characters is a young Quaker boy named Obadiah Starbuck who, along with his brothers and sisters (especially Rachel) have many adventures which highlight their colonial lifestyle. Our second grade students will write journals, read and listen to historical accounts, create time lines and consider parallel events. They will meet with architects and builders and glean information to help them design their own blueprints for their own structures. Meanwhile, these boys and girls continue to practice daily and to have weekly lessons on their violins. The successful growth the children are making in focus, discipline, skills and joy continues to transfer into the daily classroom experience.

-ANNE TONDEN's class recently took a trip to the Tyler Arboretum where they were able to observe the process of gathering sap for the making of maple syrup. This trip is part of a year-long study of trees initiated in the fall when the students began observing and recording trees on the campus. The trip offered some interesting opportunities to work with their math skills, from considering tap and circumference ratios, percentages of sugar to water and gallons of sap to syrup! This unit also integrates nicely with the themes on ecology and Native Americans which the third grades study.

-NANCY GARRISON has been providing her students with an electrifying unit of study. The children have been looking into the effects of electricity and ways to harness its energy. They have been completing circuits, avoiding lightning, considering static and flowing electricity and making a few bells ring too! The unit is moving quite naturally into the next phase which is to invent working machines (which may or may not use electricity). This has been an active and creative unit and we eagerly await the inventions!

-BEN ISAACSON is really "spacey" these days. So are his students. Outer space has become a major topic for them and you can see the room slowly "amorphosizing" into a space ship. Each student is researching a planet of choice and creating a three-dimensional model from papier mache which will most likely become a part of a solar system model for additional study. As of this writing I believe an air lock and "porthole" views of outer space are under construction. It is not certain when blast off will be but I believe Ben has already determined he will be "ground control" for all flights!

-JODY POMEROY and GEORGE THOMAS have begun the annual winter unit on linear algebra which their students really enjoy. The program is called "Hands-On Learning" and utilizes manipulatives to integrate the concepts of the "rules" in linear algebra. I especially enjoy observing during these lessons because of the "AHA!" awakenings that light up the students' faces. The fourth grade also continues to engage in the MIMI program which integrates all the disciplines so beautifully. The social studies aspect is currently involved with the Maya culture and is supported by video tapes, computer simulations and problem solving which relies on math and critical thinking skills. In addition, there is a continuing emphasis on map skills, vocabulary development and student-kept journals.

The Lower School is participating in an outreach program which will benefit children of Somalia who are in orphanages. We are working with a Quaker group in Cape May which has taken on the responsibility of coordinating the effort. On March 5, 1993, the entire school will have assemblies during which we will hear Bob Mullock who has independently taken on the challenge of travelling to Somalia as a concerned individual who wants to make a difference. There is a desperate need for T-shirts of all sizes in the orphanages and Bob is determined to take shirts over to Somalia and personally put them into the hands of those who are working in the orphanages. The Lower School is collecting T-shirts (old and new, plain or fancy and of any color) which are clean and in good repair to present to Bob Mullock on March 5, 1993.

Enclosed you will find another booklet in the series we are providing this year. Many thanks to those of you who have been giving us feedback about these booklets. MANY, MANY THANKS to all our parents for your support as we plan for and work with your children. We would not have bird feeders, dinosaur pillows, and wonderful trips to see maple-sugaring, raw garnets, Meeting Houses and the like if you were not so wonderfully supportive!

Sincerely,



Larue Evans,  
Lower School Director