

School Committee Report to IYMC 2020

***“Not everything that is faced can be changed.
But nothing can be changed until it is faced.”***

~James Baldwin

What a year, dear Friends, what a year. We have been riding the roller coaster of emotions for multiple reasons: as we deal with the losses and effects of a virus called COVID-19, and also as we must face and address the losses and effects of the devastating pandemic called racism that has nested within our systems since the beginnings of our country. At the school and on all fronts we strive to be truthful with ourselves and each other, to walk the walk in the Light, and to stay centered in Divine Love.

Re-imagining and co-creating are key words for the times, and we are grateful for good-news examples coming from our school. This spring the Scattergood staff and students adapted quickly to the pandemic and have done an amazing job of both transitioning to online learning with numerous platforms, while maintaining a sense of community by holding daily worship, community meetings and evening activities via Zoom. We are encouraged by how successful the programs have been, and grateful for the careful and hopeful work underway to safely bring students to campus in August.

Words do not suffice in expressing our gratitude to Thomas and Amy Weber. Since 2013 they have been a part of the community and have led, buoyed and nurtured both people and the school through thick and through thin. How strange to not say farewell in person, but we look towards celebrating together with them at a future Homecoming. We will miss their steady leadership and wish them well.

The other side of a farewell is a greeting to our new Head of School! We warmly welcome John Zimmerman and his family who have transplanted from Princeton Friends School in New Jersey to our campus in the fields of Iowa. We're grateful for these leaps of faith, as well as the commitment and creativity that will help usher Scattergood into its next chapter.

Along with countless organizations, Scattergood is feeling the economic impact of COVID-19. With many thanks to our business office, we received a PPP loan to assist with immediate cash flow needs for personnel expenditures. Over the next few years, however, we anticipate increased need for students' tuition assistance, so we have been working with forecasting tools to plan budget scenarios and will closely monitor the situation. These added strains have unfortunately meant reducing and restructuring some positions at the school. The School Committee is also considering additional sources of financial assistance.

Last November the School Committee, with Thomas Weber and Sam Taylor, participated in a retreat (hosted by Tracy Chaplin of Co-Nexio) to help us see the broader picture and discern direction for the school. We worshipfully considered a number of future possibilities, from small innovations to radical changes, that allowed us to hold the large questions, envision outcomes, and experience the process of intentional choice. This retreat was not meant as a place to make decisions, but rather a time to explore and consider ways that the Scattergood community might thrive and adapt to a rapidly changing world while also remaining centered.

The strong theme which came through in the retreat (and was reinforced these last few months) is that the heart of the school's mission is as important, needed, and relevant as ever, and that we are committed to continuing this Quaker educational community. We also realized there was **great** need and interest in developing deeper relationships with entities that are aligned with our mission; we can become more vibrant, relevant and enduring if we work with others to foster this mission.

The school has already been doing the work of adaptation over the last seven years, from the Farm Immersion Program, to researching a Gap Year program, to the Middle School that will be starting this fall. Our new Head, John Zimmerman, brings fresh ideas and connections that complement the work already happening. The School Committee is also adapting. In keeping with 'not wasting a crisis', as the pandemic forced us into conducting meetings online, we are opening the doors to new members who love what we do and possess skills that we need, but are geographically far away. We feel the next step is to continue and expand our visioning conversations with the wider Scattergood community to consider possible evolutions that will contribute to the school's well-being.

In these times of change (some that was unexpected and some that is long overdue) the words of Paulo Freire from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* feel especially poignant. *"Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."*

The leadership, staff, and students at the school have been walking the walk with hard work, creativity, and grace amidst these challenging and uncertain times; their resiliency and courage continues to fuel our commitment to finding ways forward. We are so grateful for their lights shining brightly, as we all grow in self-understanding while seeking a new path of justice and equity, and participating in the transformation of our world.

In peace and gratitude,
Ruth Hampton
Scattergood Friends School Committee, clerk