

# Friends School of Wilmington Parent/Guardian-Student Handbook



Friends School *of* Wilmington  
Empowering the next generation for global good

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*Friends School of Wilmington is a non-profit organization that welcomes families regardless of gender, race, creed, color, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.*

**Exhibit C of Enrollment Contract**

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# ***INTRODUCTION***

## **Mission Statement**

We prepare independent thinkers in the Quaker tradition for a global, knowledge-based future.

## **Vision Statement**

Empowering the Next Generation for Global Good.

## **Foundation**

Women and men of vision founded Friends School of Wilmington in 1994 under the care of Wilmington Friends Meeting. Founders envisioned a diverse group of adults and children working together to form an educational community based on values articulated by George Fox and Margaret Fell, the founders of The Religious Society of Friends of the Truth (Quakers), more than 300 years ago.

## **Certification, Incorporation and Memberships**

The State of North Carolina has certified Friends School of Wilmington as a non-public school. FSW is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. We hold membership in the national organization of Quaker schools called Friends Council on Education, and in the North Carolina Association of Independent Schools.

## **Philosophy**

Friends School of Wilmington continues a three hundred year Quaker educational tradition of fostering intellectual and spiritual integrity while affirming the value of each individual. We manifest Quaker values of simplicity, community, social justice, diversity, equality and peace. We guide students to incorporate these values into their lives and help them to develop an awareness of the interdependence of life that extends beyond their immediate community to the world at large.

We emphasize academic excellence; clear, respectful communication; accountable moral choices; consensus decision making; exploration of diverse viewpoints; peaceful conflict resolution; and environmental stewardship. We foster habits of respect, trust, cooperation and responsibility as cornerstones of a healthy educational community. We believe that young people who are convinced of their own value will, in turn, seek and speak to the good in others. Therefore, we work to assure students of their individual worth, helping them polish gifts that are evident and discover gifts not yet revealed. To this end we offer a well-rounded, compelling academic program, integrating both the arts and sciences and utilizing research-based, developmentally appropriate curriculum. Through challenging, relevant, hands-on learning activities, students explore and evaluate information in order to construct an increasingly sophisticated understanding of our world.

We guide students to see themselves as the primary architects of their own destiny. We empower students to take direct responsibility for their learning. We encourage them to develop and pursue personal standards of excellence. Using a flexible, yet structured, approach, we strive to meet individual needs while emphasizing collaborative learning. Because we recognize that education takes place in all learning situations, we do not separate academic from non-academic experiences. Therefore, we encourage direct experiential learning through hands-on projects and frequent learning excursions. We support students as they develop a broad range of interests and abilities, build essential knowledge and master the critical skills they will need to become lifelong learners and successful adults. We endeavor to provide an academic family where parent/guardians, students, faculty and the wider community are involved and valued.

## **Quaker Beliefs**

Friends (Quakers) believe that there is “that of God,” or an “Inner Light” or “Spirit” within every individual. Thus, we believe that every human life is sacred and should be treated with equal respect and dignity and that all conflicts should be settled in a peaceful manner. Quakers believe that cooperation rather than competition should be the dominant theme in human interactions. We value simplicity because we feel that a cluttered life can distract us from our connection with others and the Spirit or Inner Light. We believe that everyone is capable of a direct and personal relationship with God, and we strive to be open to continuing revelation. We worship in silence in order to be open to this direct divine guidance and a deeper understanding of the world. Quakers often feel led by the spirit to speak out of the silence during Meeting for Worship. Community members are encouraged to use our silent worship period for contemplation based on their own religious traditions. The spirit of Quakerism has deep respect for the religious traditions of each individual and does not seek to proselytize or convert others. Our philosophy encourages students to respect differences in cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs.

## Commitment to Diversity

From its very inception, central tenets of the Quaker Faith have been inclusion, diversity and equality. Springing from the deeply held conviction that all people have “that of God within,” Quakers have sought to include peoples of both genders and all races, classes and creeds. Quakers were among the first groups to insist that women, Native Americans, African Americans and others with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds be given freedom and equal status. This tradition continues today as Quakers actively struggle against prejudice and intolerance. At FSW we actively seek a diverse board, faculty and student body. We encourage students to respect religious and cultural differences and we therefore explore traditions and holidays from varied cultures and religious traditions. We seek to incorporate multicultural issues across the curriculum and continue the exploration of diversity so that each of us might have a better understanding of what it means to be part of a diverse community. Abstract ideas about equality and integrity are made tangible by our tradition of participating in Wilmington’s annual parade to celebrate Martin Luther King’s legacy on the federal holiday. We strive to support other organizations that share these values.

## Faculty

Friends School of Wilmington is committed to hiring and retaining student-centered faculty committed to excellence, research-based, developmentally appropriate methodology, and Quaker values. Please refer to the faculty list in our admissions packet for information about individual faculty members and their qualifications.

# ***STUDENT/PARENT-GUARDIAN HANDBOOK***

## Punctuality, Arrival and Departure

**Morning Drop-off:** Punctuality for important events is crucial and successful students view school as an important event. Late arrival impacts students’ academic success and our academic program. Students who are late miss critical announcements and academic work, and often remain out of sync for the rest of the day. Also, chronic lateness is “catching.” When students see other students arrive late on a regular basis, the problem escalates. Students who arrive more than five minutes late for school must sign in at the front office. If we notice that a pattern of lateness is developing with your family or carpool, we will send a note home urging you to solve this problem quickly. If lateness continues, a conference will be scheduled with your student’s classroom teacher to address the problem.

For supervision and safety reasons, students should arrive no earlier than fifteen minutes before the school day begins. The only exception to this policy is that parents dropping off students at both campuses may bring Primary through 2nd grade students anytime after 8:00am.

**Student Pick up:** Your consistent success in picking up your student(s) in a timely manner demonstrates respect for your student’s teachers, who also have very busy schedules. You can also demonstrate this respect by calling the school if lateness is unavoidable, so that we can arrange appropriate supervision. The cost of this impromptu supervision is \$5 for every 15-minute increment, beginning 15 minutes after the end of the student’s school day. If someone outside of the FSW community will be picking up your student, please leave us a note to that effect in the morning. Students who are leaving school early must have a note from a parent/guardian or have a parent/guardian call to alert the school. Parent/Guardians must sign students out at the reception desk before the student leaves the campus.

- ❖ **Stepping Stones I** students arrive between **8:00am and 8:30am** and depart at **11:30am** on Thursdays and Fridays.
- ❖ **Stepping Stones II** students arrive between **8:00am and 8:30am** and depart at **12:00pm** on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays.
- ❖ **Half-day Primary** students arrive by **8:30am** and depart at **12:30pm**.
- ❖ **Full day students (K-2) on the Pine Grove Campus** arrive at **8:30am** and depart at **3:00pm**.
- ❖ **3rd through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students on the Peiffer Campus** arrive at **8:00am** and depart at **2:45pm**.

## Attendance

Regular attendance is critical to success at school. Thus, students should attend school every day unless they are sick (see “Illness and Medication” below). While we understand that students must occasionally miss school for an appointment, please make every effort to schedule appointments for after-school hours. Please contact us (in advance if possible) when your student is (or will be) absent so we can coordinate make-up schoolwork.

Consistent participation in classroom activities helps students make the most of the rich curriculum FSW plans for them. At the same time, since both students and teachers work hard and play hard here at FSW, they do need periodic time away from the classroom. Please be aware that our school calendar allows for extended time off in December, late January

and April. In addition, the calendar is punctuated with opportunities for “long” weekends. We ask that you use these built-in opportunities for family vacation time, rather than using days when children should be in school. If a protracted absence from school is unavoidable, it is the parent/guardian’s responsibility to contact their student’s elementary classroom teacher or middle school advisor at least one week prior to arrange for students to do work in advance, take work with them, and plan for make-up work. Teachers will work with you as best they can, but be advised that make up work in a hands-on inquiry-based curriculum is necessarily less effective than participation in school, and therefore absences must be kept to a minimum. Students who are absent more than seven days in the first semester (without prior arrangements with the school) will be put on attendance probation. Probation will include a conference with the teachers, the parent/guardians and an administrator if needed. Students who are absent more than 12 days throughout the year may be retained and required to repeat the grade at the discretion of the Head of School in consultation with the teachers.

**Parent Conference Days:** Please note that parent conference days are included in the calendar in the spring and fall, and should not be used to schedule family vacations. These are workdays for FSW teachers, and we ask that, out of respect for faculty, you schedule and attend your parent conference on one of these scheduled days. Otherwise, teachers are required to take time from their families to reschedule conferences.

## **Dress Code and Appropriate Clothing**

Faculty and students at Friends School of Wilmington are expected to dress in clean, practical, modest clothing that is in good repair. Droopy pants, short skirts or shorts, spaghetti straps, revealing necklines and tops that expose the midriff, and clothing that is ripped or excessively worn is not appropriate at school. Women’s two piece and men’s brief-style bathing suits are not appropriate for school events. Dress should not serve to signal wealth or serve as a focal point to espouse a particular message that distracts students from their learning. Clothing that promotes smoking, drug or alcohol use, violence or horror is not appropriate for school. Clothing and shoes should be appropriate for a wide range of physical activities including PE and other outdoor activities (shoes should have backs and be suitable for running). Students should come prepared for the weather. When it is cold, students are expected to wear jackets, hats and gloves so that they will be comfortable working and playing outside. As a rule, if your student is not well enough to go outside, then s/he is not well enough to be at school. (See also: Illness and Medication, below.) If your student comes to school dressed in inappropriate clothing, s/he will be required to borrow appropriate clothing for the remainder of the day. If no appropriate clothing is available, a parent/guardian will be required to bring a change of clothes to school.

## **Break and Lunch**

**When and Where:** At the Pine Grove campus, full day students need to bring a lunch. Both snack and lunch are eaten in the classroom unless teachers decide to go outside on a nice day. At the Peiffer campus, students generally eat outside on the Garden Pavilions, unless inclement weather prevents. Sometime during the morning (depending upon the class), students are encouraged to eat a snack to help keep their energy and attention level strong until lunch. Though lunchtime varies between classes, it generally begins between 11:00am and 12:00pm. Please be sure to be aware of your child’s lunch time so that you can bring a forgotten lunch to school without disrupting our schedule.

**What to pack:** For both snack and lunch, we recommend simple, well-balanced, nutritious foods and drinks. We encourage fresh fruit or vegetables, yogurt or whole grain crackers. If your child will have both snack and lunch at school, pack a sandwich or other “main course, as well as two drinks (one for snack and one for lunch). We do not have space or Health Department clearance to refrigerate lunches, so please use ice packs or frozen drinks to keep them cool. For safety/supervision reasons, microwaves are not available to Pine Grove Campus students, so warm foods should be preheated at home and stored in a thermos.

**PTO Lunch Ordering System:** To alleviate lunch-making chores, when possible the FSW PTO offers a voluntary lunch ordering system on select days of the week. (Not available for Stepping Stones or Stargazer students.) Monthly lunch order forms will be posted via RenWeb. Be sure to respect the time and effort of our volunteer PTO Lunch order coordinators by turning in your orders on time.

**Middle School Lunch Issues:** Sometimes middle school students decide not to pack or eat a lunch for reasons ranging from concerns about body image to a desire to avoid the necessary effort/planning. The result is poor health and nutrition, and discipline problems for teachers. Hungry students often pester other students for handouts, and are grouchy and inattentive during class. It is critical that you support your student’s academic and behavioral success by ensuring that s/he has a healthy lunch. Microwaves are available for middle school student use at the Peiffer Avenue campus, though long lines can cause delays.

## After School Enrichment Programs

FSW is working to build an extensive After School and Enrichment Program. Details are provided in a brochure at the beginning of each quarter with enrollment and fee information. Parent/Guardians who do not promptly pick up their student from these after-school activities may be charged at a drop-in rate of \$5 for each 15-minute increment to compensate faculty for the inconvenience of altering their schedules to provide impromptu childcare.

## Homework

FSW's homework policy is based on current research. This research has consistently shown that homework does not have a positive impact on student achievement during the elementary years. However, a clear correlation between quality homework assignments and student achievement has been shown as students enter middle school. As a result, our approach to homework varies based on the age of the student.

**Homework in the Elementary Grades:** Daily homework in the form of worksheets is common in many elementary schools, so you may find it hard to believe that it is unnecessary. However, extensive research demonstrates that homework does not improve student achievement at the elementary level. For this reason, we carry out most important work during the school day. On the other hand, research does show that children who are read to regularly not only become better readers themselves; they experience higher academic success throughout their school careers in all areas. **Therefore, the main thing we ask across grade levels is for all parents to read with their children every night!**

To foster your child's reading development, it is very important that you listen to your child read and that you encourage him/her to read independently on a daily basis. It is also important that you continue reading aloud to your child. When listening, children can usually comprehend books that are several levels beyond their independent reading ability. Hearing these books read aloud helps your child become familiar with more complex sentence structure and also helps develop vocabulary, especially if you check regularly to see that your child understands. ("Remind me what was going on when we left off last night?" or "What do you think is going to happen next?" or "That's a big word; do you know what it means?")

If you observe your student carefully, you will probably find that s/he engages in school-inspired, spontaneous "homework" as s/he "plays" at home by singing, drawing, painting, building, writing, looking at/reading books, recreating classroom experiments, etc. Spontaneous, self-directed work is a sign that a student is becoming intrinsically motivated to learn and explore the world--this is our ultimate goal! If your child is so inspired, one of the most important things you can do is to provide him/her appropriate materials, support and enthusiastic encouragement. However, do not be concerned if your child is not doing this all the time—we assure you that FSW students maximize their school day and work very hard. Also remember to look at the FSW weekly newsletter, which will keep you apprised of classroom activities to extend and reinforce at home.

It is also important to remember that young children do not have the planning and organizational skills required to bring work home, plan time to do it around busy family schedules, and then remember to bring it back on the date it is due. As students move through the elementary grades they mature developmentally and demonstrate an increasing ability to be organized and responsible. Therefore, teachers will gradually assign more homework, but they will keep it to a reasonable, developmentally appropriate level, and make it worthwhile. When students are assigned homework they will need support and assistance. Support can take many forms: provide a time and place for keeping and doing at-home projects, help your child brainstorm ideas and strategies, provide the appropriate materials, and, by all means, when things aren't going well, help your child engage in strategic problem-solving. However, please do not do the work for him/her. When you do the work, then teachers don't get an accurate picture of what your child can and can't do, which impacts their ability to assign appropriate next steps. (Also, remember that learning what happens when you do not meet a deadline is a very important life lesson...)

**Homework in Middle School:** Research is quite clear that middle school students benefit from a manageable amount of homework. Teachers are careful to assign meaningful homework, and we consider every assignment very important. Parent/guardians are expected to support their students by checking their assignment books on a regular basis (on a nightly basis, if necessary). Though the amount of homework each student will have on a given day will vary from 1-2 hours or more, the following is a guideline we normally use when assigning homework: 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders, 1-1.5 hours per/night; 7<sup>th</sup> graders 1-2 hours per/night; 8<sup>th</sup> graders 1-2.5 hours per night. Because some students work faster than others, these numbers will vary from student to student. Also, these guidelines do not necessarily include the time needed to prepare for quizzes, tests, or to complete long term projects (such as research papers) that may require regular periods of work over several weeks. Teachers will work hard to try to stagger the due dates of tests and long-term projects to avoid overload. However, it is critical that parent/guardians support us by helping students get started on long term projects as soon as they are assigned, in order to help students avoid homework overload just before the due date.

**Late Work in Middle School:** The responsibility for ensuring that work is turned in on time falls primarily to the student, and secondarily to parent/guardians. Teachers will aid students and parent/guardians in this responsibility by maintaining the following notification system: When a student fails to turn in an assignment on time, the teacher will fill out a slip in the late-work log. When the student turns in the assignment, it will be noted on the slip. All late work slips will be sent home in the Friday folder so that parent/guardians will be able to address the issue over the weekend, helping students complete the late work, and/or administering consequences. Students who fail to turn in late work on the following Monday will lose privileges at school until the work is complete. If your student develops a pattern of turning in assignments late, we will contact you about instituting a daily homework monitoring system that will help you to stay informed about assignments on a daily basis. Late work loses credit for every weekday that it is late. **Any assignment that is not turned in by the end of the quarter will result in a decrease of one letter grade in the final grade for that subject for that quarter.**

**Parent Supervision of Student Reading Materials:** Our society and media often rush children toward adulthood by exposing them too early to adult themes and topics. As fluent readers, students may be technically proficient at reading young adult and adult level books and magazines, but the content may well be developmentally inappropriate. It is very important for parents to monitor their student(s)' choice of reading materials. This may involve reading these materials yourself to ensure their suitability and to discuss issues that may arise if your student has already read them. If you have any questions about the suitability of some books or magazines, check with your child's teachers. If you become aware of the sudden popularity of unsuitable material, please help us by alerting teachers.

## Evaluation

At FSW we give a great deal of time, thought and care to evaluation. Students are given continual feedback about their areas of strength and their next steps throughout the school day. Formal evaluations by teachers are completed by teachers and shared with parents on a periodic basis. The timing and format of these evaluations varies based on the age of the student. Either parents or teachers may schedule additional conference appointments as needed to address questions or concerns.

**Montessori Preschool Growth Records:** Parent/guardians and teachers meet twice per year to review and discuss student growth records. These written records include a rubric to track developmental progress and written comments to provide more detailed information on student growth. Parents and teachers collaborate in developing a plan to address any areas of concern. If needed, teachers may make specific recommendations for further evaluation by a specialist.

**Parent/Teacher Conferences in Elementary and Middle School:** Teachers and parent/guardians meet to discuss student progress at the end of the first quarter (mid-October). Teachers share base-line student assessments with parent/guardians, discuss areas of significant strength or concern, and report on student social adjustment at school. Parents and teachers collaborate in developing a plan to address any areas of concern. If needed, teachers may make specific recommendations for further evaluation by a specialist.

**Portfolios in Elementary School:** FSW elementary teachers generally use a portfolio system; teachers accumulate and review student work on an ongoing basis to track student progress. Periodically teachers will select representative samples of student work to add to their portfolio and then send the rest of their work home. If you wish to see your student's class work on a regular basis, you may stop in and look through his or her portfolio at any time; just check in with the classroom teacher about where portfolios are kept.

**Narrative Evaluations and Developmental Rubrics in Elementary School:** There is significant agreement among educational researchers that report cards with simple letter grades do not foster, nor even accurately reflect, student learning. In fact, there is evidence that bad grades can contribute to a cycle of defeat in elementary-school-aged children, who aren't developmentally ready to understand grades because they don't always have a firm grasp on concepts of cause and effect or the meaning of letter grades, much less the ability to grasp how grades are calculated. Therefore, teachers use a highly detailed process to give you a more accurate understanding of your early elementary student's progress. A few weeks after the end of each semester, parent/guardians will receive this detailed assessment. These reports will track the student's developmental progress on a wide variety of capabilities. They will also include a narrative assessment characterizing the student's social adjustment and overall development as a learner. At any time during the semester, if a teacher or a parent/guardian has a concern about a student's progress at school, either party may initiate a conference to address the issue.

**Letter Grades Introduced in 5<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Fifth graders are maturing cognitively and are more able to understand the cause and effect relationship between hard work and good grades. They also begin to compare their performance to that of peers and set goals and standards for themselves. For these reasons, we find that adding letter grades to detailed narratives gives parents and students the best of both worlds; a basis for comparison with peers and teacher expectations, and a detailed analysis of areas of excellence and needed growth. Therefore, in addition to portfolios and narrative evaluations, fifth graders will make the transition into receiving grades. During the first nine-week period, the teacher will guide them to understand the rationale for grades and to identify the requirements and the numeric values that will comprise their grades. They will receive their first "practice" grades at the end of the first nine weeks and will reflect upon and discuss the process their

reactions, and strategies for improving grades in the future. Thenceforth, grades, in addition to their portfolios and narrative evaluations, will be used to evaluate their progress for the remainder of the year.

**Middle School Grade Reports:** At the end of the first and third quarters, parent/guardians receive letter grades and a simple performance rubric. At the end of the second and fourth quarters, students receive letter grades and detailed narrative evaluations in each core subject area. These reports include course descriptions, cumulative course grades, grades on important assignments and a paragraph characterizing your student's academic efforts and achievements, social adjustment, attitudes, productivity and class contributions.

As a safety net, parent/guardians will be notified shortly after mid-term each quarter if their student is earning a "C-" or less in any core subject. This warning report will describe the student's performance thus far, and offer specific suggestions for how that student can improve. Parent/guardians should respond to warning reports by discussing the problem and their expectations with their student, providing more academic support for their student on studying and homework, and setting up a conference with the teacher(s) as needed.

A final year-end grade report is sent home in June. Grade reports are forwarded with standardized test scores and health records to your student's next school when we receive a records request form from the registrar.

## Standardized Testing

FSW administers a standardized test for grades 3-8 toward the end of every school year. The scores from this test are included in your student's academic records and are available for parent review by setting up a short appointment with the classroom teacher at the beginning of the new school year. FSW administers the **Iowa Test of Basic Skills** (ITBS or IOWA). The IOWA is one of the best-researched standardized tests available. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> graders take the core battery of tests: Reading, Writing and Mathematics. Our 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> graders add Science, Social Studies and Sources of Information to the core battery. Please note that the IOWA is a more challenging test than the End of Grade (EOG) tests administered by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and adjust your performance expectations accordingly.

## Supporting Your Student's Adjustment and Achievement at School

**Adjustment Anxiety:** Though the vast majority of students find it relatively easy to adjust to our warm, caring school community, all students experience some adjustment anxiety on their first few days, weeks or even months in a new school. This can be a difficult time for parents as students may express this anxiety with tears, resistance or even refusal to go to school. Please alert us immediately about such issues and inform us about the specifics of your child's discomfort. Teachers can ease this process considerably if they are kept informed about any difficulties.

**Student Conflicts and Problem Solving at School:** From the "peace rose" used in the Montessori Primary classroom to peer mediation at the middle school, we try to teach students positive strategies for solving problems that occur with their classmates. Over time children get better and better at becoming peacemakers for themselves and for others. However, these student efforts are not always successful, and FSW students are encouraged to come to teachers when they need help solving problems or conflicts, or when they witness harmful behavior. Our school wide policy regarding "tattling" is "be sure you are not telling a teacher to get back at or harm another student." When FSW students need help or witness harmful behavior, we **do** want to hear about it – immediately – so that we can address the issue with the student(s) involved and help those students learn about our high expectations (and that unkind behavior will have consequences). If we don't hear about it right away, memories get fuzzy, witnesses are hard to find, and as a result, consequences are weaker and transgressors can get the idea that such behavior is acceptable if they are sneaky enough. Children, especially older children who are very peer focused, will often ask parents not to report a problem for fear of being labeled a tattletale. Issues of meanness and bullying are best addressed with direct mediation between the parties; however, when students observe something dangerous or destructive to the school community, every effort will be made to address the issue while "protecting the source." Please help us close the loop; encourage your child to speak to faculty or tell us yourself with a quick note when your child reports a concern. We will take it from there. We want this to be the kind of school where students feel safe from meanness, not safe from consequences. Occasionally students will overdo it because they thrive on the drama of reporting problems – please let us make these judgments. We will address this issue when the problem arises.

**Peer Mediation in Middle School:** By the time students are in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, they are often able to help each other sort out minor conflicts and insensitivities through peer mediation. Students who have felt slighted, had their feelings hurt by another student, or been involved in a dispute can fill out a mediation form and put it in the designated box. The peer mediator will then set up mediation during break or lunch. Mediators have been trained in a set protocol for helping students resolve conflicts in a respectful and non-violent manner. If this doesn't resolve the problem, the student should ask his or her advisor for additional help in mediating the conflict.

**Avoiding the "Interview for Pain":** When a student has difficulty at school, whether it is social adjustment, academic difficulty, or difficulty with another student, it often seems natural to focus our parental concern and attention on these negative experiences. However, repeated focused attention to these difficulties can unwittingly result in a vicious

cycle. Sometimes students discover that the best way to get focused attention from a parent/guardian is to dwell on these negative feelings, while ignoring or minimizing the generally positive experiences that they have at school. The typical interview for pain begins with simple, seemingly neutral questions like: “How did things go with Johnny today?” or “Did things go better in Social Studies class today?” or “Who did you eat with at lunch today?” Subtly or otherwise, questions of concern can imply to the student that we expect that something went wrong at school. Sometimes even our tone of concern in an innocuous question like “How was school today?” can begin an interview for pain. Before long, students get the message and will launch into a litany of complaints as soon as they enter the car at the end of the day. While this can provide a powerful emotional focus between parent and child, the result of this process is a very distorted view of the school day for both the student and the parent/guardian. A simple visit to school to see your student in action will usually set the record straight.

**Connecting Positively with Your Student about Their School Day:** A positive, upbeat tone can go a long way in ensuring that your student shares their joys and triumphs as well as their difficulties. “What was your favorite part of the school day?” or “What school work were you most proud of today?” This second question is particularly useful as it reminds students of their responsibility to make the most of their opportunities in this rich learning environment. If you are getting the old “Nothing” response to the question of “What did you do in school today?” – be sure to ask specific questions about what students did during a specific time of the day, center or subject. E.g., “What did you do at choice time, work time, teacher time, or math time today?”

## **Learning Excursions – Day Trips and Overnight Trips for Older Students**

At FSW we believe in engaging student interest in the world around them. To that end, we schedule a variety of developmentally appropriate learning excursions throughout the year to take advantage of the rich local and regional educational resources. We may host a guest speaker or visit a museum, historical site, or ecosystem. Learning excursions may also be focused on community building; we might go roller-skating, bowling or just have a fun-filled day at the beach! Each class schedules its own learning excursions on various days of the week. Parent/guardians are invited to volunteer as chaperones on all excursions (unless space is limited). Though the Wilmington area is rich in resources, some of the best learning excursion destinations are not in our own back yard. Thus, for upper elementary and middle school students we also plan multi-day, overnight learning excursions for each grade, which are usually related to our integrated theme units. On these learning excursions students are able to gain valuable first-hand experience that reinforces and enhances the curriculum; a trip to an important historic site can help make past events come alive. Because shared experience is the foundation upon which lasting friendships are built, these overnight learning excursions also have a very important function in building a close, cohesive school community. The student who misses a trip misses a vital opportunity to bond with peers and faculty. Students are, therefore, expected to take part unless there are compelling (medical) reasons that prevent their participation. In addition, all of our learning excursions are a vital part of the curriculum and opting out of learning excursions will have a negative impact on student academic performance. When special circumstances arise making it impossible to participate, it is the responsibility of parent/guardians to initiate a dialogue with each teacher to come up with suitable alternative assignments. If students arrive late for a learning excursion, we may be forced to leave without them, and it will be the parent/guardian's responsibility to reconnect their student with the group. In the future we plan to develop a program of longer trips for middle school students that will serve as a review and enrichment of all of our units of study for the year.

**Seating Assignments for Volunteer Drivers:** When their parents are driving, students often wish to choose the students who will ride in “their” car. This comes out of a natural desire to spend time with friends. However, this is problematic for several reasons: 1) It limits our flexibility in spreading out students who might need to be separated for the trip; 2) It often wastes time as students change plans and try to move from car to car; 3) And most problematic, it leads to feelings of exclusion for the kids who are “picked last.” Therefore, though we can usually arrange for the children of the volunteer driver to travel with their parents, the remaining seats will be assigned by teachers, who are responsible for balancing all of these factors.

## **Learning Excursions are Critical to our Curriculum**

Occasionally students, and sometimes parents have reservations about overnight learning excursions. If you are considering allowing your student to opt out of one of our learning excursions, you should consider that these learning excursions are an integral part of our curriculum and are essential to your student’s Friends School of Wilmington experience. Just as you would not support your student in opting out of math class, you should not support your student in opting out of a learning excursion except in true cases of illness.

The central goals of these learning excursions are to:

1. **Achieve community building with peers and teachers through shared experience, adventure and even hardship** (such as sleeping in tents, not having daily showers, etc.). Students will get wet, dirty, and occasionally

uncomfortable and will be encouraged to “carry on.” They will also come to truly appreciate being warm, dry and comfortable! Our trips are the single most effective way that we break down cliques and ensure that students reach out to other students they do not yet know well. It’s hard to act “too cool for school” when you wake up with “bed head” like everyone else;-).

2. **Help your student to mature and think beyond their own immediate needs or desires.** We carefully build an expectation that students begin to move beyond the self-focused mindset that they occupy as children and start to think about what is best for the group as a whole.
3. **Help your student to achieve a developmentally appropriate level of autonomy in a safe environment and become a confident, competent, capable inhabitant of the planet.** In order to develop autonomy it is important for students to stretch their comfort zones with appropriate safety and supervision. Students return from our trips far more confident that they can handle the challenging situations that will come up in life, like getting temporarily stranded due to a car breakdown on the way home from college, without panic. From long experience, our trips are planned to include developmentally appropriate levels of challenge while observing established safety protocols. We use a “challenge by choice” format, which ensures that students will be encouraged to stretch their personal boundaries through participation in challenging activities, but not be required to do things that make them deeply uncomfortable. Please remember that your personal fears and discomforts are often transmitted to your student. If you are at all concerned, please be sure that you contact the teachers and trip planners, and if needed, the Head of School, so that we can address your concerns. Though we of course take all reasonable safety precautions, it is often possible to make simple additional safety accommodations, such as providing life jackets for swimming opportunities, etc. We also hope that students will learn that they can create a safe, stimulating, mini-adventure any time they wish.

### **Outcomes and Consequences of Opting Out**

If your student misses a learning excursion, most of the consequences are “natural consequences.”

1. Your student misses out on crucial bonding opportunities with their peers and teachers. The camaraderie established on trips is not easy to establish in other ways. Your student also experiences disappointment after the other students return from the trip having had a wonderful experience together
2. Your student misses important learning opportunities and academic content, which must be made up just like any other absence. Teachers spend a great deal of time planning learning excursions, so planning additional make-up assignments is an extra burden for faculty.
3. Perhaps most importantly, your student misses out on critical personal growth opportunities which cannot be made up.

The faculty members understand that a student will occasionally be unable to attend a learning excursion due to illness, etc. However, if a pattern of opting out of learning excursions or other curriculum becomes apparent, the School will question the appropriateness of the student’s placement at FSW, and ultimately may choose not to offer the student continued enrollment.

### **Bringing Friends to School**

A friend of a student may visit the school after obtaining prior permission from the teachers. Friends may not visit during off-campus excursions, unless prior permission is obtained from the appropriate administrator and the visitor’s parent completes a Health Assessment Form.

### **Bringing Possessions to School**

If a student is willing to share in an inclusive manner, s/he may bring balls and other sports equipment to share at school. Middle school students may bring and use skates and skateboards at school provided they wear an appropriately fastened helmet and safety pads, and sign our permission form for these activities. Toys, including music and video players, radios and electronic games, must stay at home. If they are brought to school, these objects will be held for the student until a parent retrieves them at the end of the day. If such items are brought to school again, they will be held for the student until the end of the school year. Due to the likelihood of damage and loss, and the difficulty of screening personal music players for appropriate content, these devices will no longer be allowed on school learning excursions. However, to enhance the experience for all, students are encouraged to make mix CD’s which will be played for all to enjoy on the bus stereo system. CD’s containing school inappropriate language and/or content will be confiscated and appropriate consequences administered. Songs should contain only language you would use with your grandparents! When in doubt, leave it out!

## Student Internet Use Policy

Students may only use the Internet when there is a teacher present in the same room. Students may not install any software on school computers without direct permission of a teacher. Logical consequences for violating this policy will include chores to equal the time it takes to restore the computers to their original state, parent conferences and suspensions.

**Parent/guardian Supervision of Internet Use and Video Games:** Our society and media often rush children toward adulthood by exposing them too early to adult themes and topics. Students need close adult supervision in their use of the Internet at home. It is also crucial that parents/guardians monitor their student(s)' use of video games—both in terms of content and extent of use. This may involve reading reviews and/or playing these games yourself to ensure their suitability for children and to discuss issues that may arise if your student has already been exposed to inappropriately graphic, violent or sexual content. It is also important to set limits to their use, in order to encourage students to engage in other, physically active, hands-on activities, hobbies and nature experiences. If you become aware of the sudden popularity of unsuitable material, please help us by alerting teachers.

## Birthdays

Please refer to your student's class handbook for details about celebrating birthdays at school. Parent/guardians are encouraged to send edible birthday treats, but please be sure to send enough treats and utensils for all the students. Healthy treats, and treats that are easy to distribute such as fruit, popsicles, muffins, cupcakes, doughnuts and cookies are preferred. Please do NOT send toys or party favors. Students and parents should be sensitive to exclusion/inclusion issues when planning birthday parties. **Invitations should be extended by mail or phone, not at school, unless all students in the class are invited.**

## Severe Weather Policy

In order to simplify and clarify announcements regarding school delays or closures due to severe weather, FSW will follow the decisions made by the county for New Hanover public schools: if the New Hanover County schools are delayed, then FSW is delayed; if the New Hanover County schools are closed, then FSW is closed. Please watch or listen to local TV and radio stations for New Hanover County school announcements. If we are having school and you believe that the roads you travel are not safe, please call to inform us of your plans. If severe weather conditions begin during school and we are forced to close early, we will contact you so you can pick up your student as soon as possible.

## Force Majeure

FSW reserves the right to make adjustments to the school calendar to complete an academic year, as necessary, due to forces beyond its control, necessitating a temporary closure in order to perform its obligations under the enrollment contract. Such forces beyond the School's control include, but are not limited to closures due to pandemic virus in the School or community, destruction of facilities due to fire, weather or other factors, other threats to the safety of students, national emergencies, and other issues that cause the School to decide that a temporary closure is in the best interest of the students and/or School. Adjustments to the School calendar may include requiring students to make up missed days on planned breaks from School or by extending the school year into the summer months. The School reserves the right to determine how and by what method educational instruction will be provided to students. Educational instruction may be provided through non-traditional methods including, but not limited to, web-based teaching. It is expected that all students will have access to a computer with internet access in their homes or other reasonably available locations to facilitate web-based learning in the event of School closure due to forces beyond the School's control. We further acknowledge and agree that the sole financial remedy for a force majeure event is future service delivery and not a tuition refund.

## Service Learning

Every week students engage in some form of service learning. In 1652 following a "Leading from God," Quakerism's co-founder, Margaret Fell, began a centuries-long tradition of service. At great personal risk, she began visiting and caring for condemned children in the Lancaster County jail. From that point on, Quakers have had an unbroken commitment to helping those in need. All major religious traditions recognize the inherent value of service, both to the giver and to the receiver. In keeping with these traditions, and in order to develop the spirit of giving within each student, Friends School of Wilmington spends time each week engaged in service work. Service projects may take place either on or off campus and can encompass a wide variety of activities. Students may collect food at local grocery stores for Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, make sandwiches for the Good Shepherd House, or spend time working with young children at Head Start or the Child Development Center. Younger students may stay on campus to work on landscaping projects, or clean up trash around the campus and surrounding properties. Students rotate through a series of service learning groups. Through

this service learning program we work to instill a sense of responsibility for our fellow human beings, a sense of stewardship for the Earth and a desire to act with kindness, generosity and integrity toward others.

## Meeting for Worship

In the tradition of Friends, students, faculty and visitors engage in a period of silent worship and vocal ministry, called Meeting for Worship, once per week. All community members are welcome and each person's spiritual journey and personal beliefs are respected as we reflect and attend the inner voice of the Spirit. The Head of School, a teacher, or even a student will set the tone for Meeting by reading a story or poem, or simply by posing a question or "query" to help students focus on issues of deep significance. The presenter might read a story about the loss of a family member, or a poem about giving, or simply tell a short story from personal experience and then pose a query such as "What does it mean to be a good friend?" Participants are encouraged to speak out of the silence when they feel "led" to do so. Following silence, students have a period of community singing. These songs are generally favorites that students have been learning in their classrooms. These are not hymns, though a few songs may contain a moral or spiritual message. However, in the tradition of North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative and Friends General Conference, Friends School of Wilmington does not seek to proselytize or convert others to follow the Quaker faith. Rather, it is our goal to encourage each student to seek "that of God within" however that may manifest. In the context of silent worship and our focus on universally held religious values, students with a wide variety of religious backgrounds will feel honored and respected at FSW.

## The Social Curriculum and Logical Consequences

FSW has adopted a comprehensive social curriculum that helps us create a safe, warm, productive, academically challenging school environment. Our social curriculum and the following explanation flow directly from a book written by Ruth Sidney Charney called *Teaching Children to Care: Classroom Management for Ethical and Academic Growth, K-8*.

**Making Our Rules:** Rather than handing our students a set of rules created by teachers or administrators, students at FSW participate in a comprehensive rule-making process under faculty guidance. The benefit of this process is that students will better understand and be more willing to follow rules that they help create. In addition, students who have worked on this process daily for the first several weeks of school (and beyond) are kept more consciously aware of their own behavior and capacity for self-control. During this rule-making process, students make strong progress in becoming ethical thinkers as they learn to interact successfully in the school environment.

**Assume Nothing, Model Everything:** Even after the rule-making is complete, the work of creating a wonderful, safe, productive learning environment is not finished. Students must then be taught how to follow their rules successfully through proactive modeling. FSW teachers start with the assumption that we can assume almost nothing about what students do or do not know about how to interact with their school environment. Instead, the students are taught the skills they will need to be able to function as caring, self-responsible school citizens. We achieve this by discussing, modeling and practicing appropriate ways to accomplish all of the procedures needed for our learning to proceed smoothly, with minimal interruption.

**Reinforcing, Reminding, Redirecting:** Both during and after the making, modeling and practicing of our classroom procedures, teachers keep up a continual stream of positive, affirming feedback. We work to "catch students being good," and reinforce that behavior. Teachers also remind students when their behavior begins to be distracting or unproductive. When necessary, students are firmly redirected when their behavior becomes problematic.

**Logical Consequences:** After the rules have been made and discussed, and procedures have been thoroughly practiced, it is time to trust that students DO understand the rules and expectations. At this point students receive "logical consequences" which include making reparations, going to "the watching chair," "time out" or "centering," or even going home for the remainder of the day, when they engage in inappropriate behaviors.

**Reparations:** At FSW, students hear a clear message about taking responsibility: if you offend someone, you make a sincere apology; if you break something, you must fix it; if it is beyond repair, you must replace it; and, if it is not practical to repair or replace, you must find a way to make up the loss to the owner. This principle of restorative justice helps student prepare to live in a world where thoughtlessness and carelessness have consequences.

**The Watching Chair or Centering:** These are essentially interchangeable terms for "time out" that are used at different age levels to indicate that a child needs to take some time apart from the group to bring their behavior back in line with the expectations that have been so carefully outlined. Unfortunately, "time out" has been (mis)used in many settings as a punitive way for adults to get children out of sight for a few minutes. At FSW, we go to great lengths to de-emphasize time apart from the group as punitive, and emphasize it as a time to regain self-awareness and self-control and prepare oneself to return to a group or activity fully ready to participate positively and productively. To this end, we role-play several situations, first with teachers and then with volunteers, in which someone might be asked to go to the watching chair or centering. When a teacher sends a student to the watching chair or centering, they are to go quickly and quietly for a period of about 4-7 minutes. When the teacher has a free moment, the student will be asked why s/he was required to spend time

apart from the group. In order to be able to return to the group and active participation, the students must take full responsibility for their actions and state their readiness to return to the group and behave appropriately. If a student chooses not to take responsibility for his or her behavior, s/he would remain until the teacher has a chance to come back a few minutes later. The entire process takes place as quietly and unobtrusively as possible, both for the sake of the learning taking place in the classroom and for the sake of the student's dignity. If a student refuses to go to the watching chair or centering quickly and quietly or does not behave appropriately when asked to sit apart from the group, another teacher is summoned and the student is required to spend their time apart from the group in another class.

**Going Home:** If a student needs to go to the watching chair or centering for a fourth time in one day, we require that a parent/guardian take their student home for the remainder of the day. If this happens during the last hour of the day, the student may be required to miss the first 1/3 of the next day. When a student is sent home, this is because we have made the judgment that s/he is not sufficiently "in control" to remain at school. To allow students to indefinitely divert teachers' attention from teaching is unfair to teachers and to other students who are prepared to focus on their academics. Parent/guardians are expected to reinforce our social curriculum by making it clear that cooperative behavior at school is required. This may include the temporary loss of a privilege (favorite activities, phone use, TV, etc.) Time spent away from school due to a fourth time out should be spent working on missed schoolwork and/or reading. Students are responsible for returning to school having completed all work and assignments due during their absence.

**Maintaining High Standards of Behavior:** After an initial period of testing the rules, it is rarely necessary to send most students home more than once. Through the implementation of the social curriculum we have learned that only by nipping apparently small incidents in the bud with a low-key use of time apart from the group, do we keep minor incidents truly minor. Thus, we can generally avoid letting major incidents develop, and we can maintain the watching chair or centering as simply a short time apart to regain control rather than a punitive exclusion from the group. Allowing for their developmental capabilities, we have found that when students are provided with clear, high, firm and consistent expectations, their behavior will generally rise to the level of the expectations modeled around them. Just as students are held to high standards, so, too, is the faculty. FSW does not use or support corporal punishment, verbal abuse or humiliation when interacting with or disciplining students.

**Behavior Contracts:** Students who are sent home repeatedly, or who go to time out more than once on most days, will be placed on a behavior contract so that they receive more consistent feedback to help them maintain appropriate behavior at school. This is intended to be a temporary measure, and if inappropriate/distracting behavior continues, the family will be asked to enroll their student at a different school, or the student will be dismissed.

**Town Meetings and Student Committees:** On an as-needed basis, time is set aside to hear students' ideas and concerns. The goal of this experience is to allow the students to discuss issues, help problem-solve, and learn about the process of coming to consensus on issues that involve the whole school community. At the middle school we have established student committees to further empower older students. Middle school committees help to plan dances or social events, create meaningful queries for Meeting for Worship, undergo training as student mediators, and develop ideas for problem-solving role-plays or activities for whole school Morning Meeting.

## Standards of Behavior

We believe in the ability of students to act responsibly and one of our primary aims is to develop and enhance this ability. At FSW, each individual is supported in his/her search for inward authority and conviction, personal integrity and guiding values, and a healthy self-esteem. We want our students to become the foremost agents of their own learning, relying more and more on inner conviction and judgment and less and less on the opinions of others or the fashion of the day. FSW is committed to building a safe, healthy learning community where cooperation, trust and respect are the dominant themes. There is an assumption that older students will assist and support younger students, and returning students will assist new students. As a community, we engage in a process of rule-making at the beginning of the year (see Social Curriculum above). There are two "Universal Rules" that remain constant in spirit, though their wording may change from year to year. 1.) The Golden Rule: "Treat others the way you want to be treated." (Stated in the Montessori Primary classes as "Be gentle with yourself and with others." 2.) The Stop rule: "Stop when someone asks you to stop." Underlying our rules are certain assumed standards of behavior that are common to most caring school environments. Students should:

1. Be in class, with all the necessary materials, ready to work when class begins.
2. Be attentive and involved in class activities.
3. Attend class unless excused by illness or unavoidable family circumstances.
4. Turn in assigned work on time and take responsibility for turning in assignments if absent.
5. Work without disturbing others.
6. Put forth their best effort to improve academic, physical, artistic and social/emotional skills.
7. Care for the school and all personal property and participate in maintaining the best possible appearance of our school.
8. Set a good behavioral example and encourage others to do the same.

9. Be inclusive and considerate of other's feelings and maintain a positive, supportive tone.
10. Respect each person's point of view.
11. Try to work out problems through discussion and, if that fails, seek adult help.
12. Take an active role in community decision-making.
13. Treat everyone with respect and tolerance for differences.

**Learning from Mistakes:** The adults in the FSW community are responsible for the care of the students during the school day and at any school-sponsored activity. They know that students are engaged in a search for identity, purpose, and a sense of empowerment. Occasionally this exploration leads students to make poor choices affecting themselves and others. Because we understand that individuals are not bad, but that an individual's decisions can be harmful, the emphasis of the school's response will focus on learning how to approach the situation more constructively the next time it arises. Learning from mistakes is a high priority. Because every student is entitled to learn in a nurturing environment, any student action that threatens anyone's physical or mental well-being will result in logical consequences.

**Consequences for more serious infractions:** It is our goal that most issues of behavior and management will be handled by faculty on an on-going basis using the principles outlined in the Social Curriculum section of this handbook. However, behaviors such as lying, cheating, harassment, \*sexual harassment, vandalism, stealing, fighting and physical or verbal abuse (including racial, gender-based or other "jokes" or slurs) are very destructive to the community and will need to be addressed through parent/guardian conferences, suspension, behavioral probation, and in some cases, expulsion. The Head of School, generally after consulting with the faculty, retains the right to make decisions for immediate suspension or expulsion on a case-by-case basis. More serious infractions will result in more serious consequences as outlined below.

- ❖ Behaviors that will result in a parent/guardian-faculty-student **conference** include but are not restricted to: use of degrading or exploitative language; refusing to adhere to the classroom guidelines or school rules; defiance, disrespect, or disruptive behavior; verbal abuse or \*\*threatening behavior; petty theft or vandalism; lying.
- ❖ Behaviors that will result in at-home **suspension** include but are not restricted to: repeated incidents of the above listed behavior; behaving such that going to the watching chair or time out is necessary four times in one school day; theft or intentional/negligent damage to valuable personal or school property. For all suspensions, students must complete their homework/makeup work before returning to school.
- ❖ Behaviors that will result in **behavioral probation** include but are not restricted to: repeated incidents of the above listed behavior.
- ❖ Behaviors that will result in **expulsion** include but are not restricted to: repeated incidents of the above-listed behavior; multiple incidents necessitating a parent/guardian conference; multiple suspensions; violation of the terms of a behavior contract; sexual harassment or misconduct; physical violence - involvement in an avoidable violent incident; threats of physical violence; possession or use of weapons, illegal drugs or alcohol during school-related events or on school grounds; parent/guardian refusal to cooperate with FSW in discipline matters.

*\*Sexual harassment is defined as sexually oriented or gender related behavior that is unwelcome, unwanted and/or uninvited by the recipient. It can be verbal, non-verbal and/or physical as in sexual comments, jokes, gestures, or looks, as well as inappropriate touching.*

*\*\*Threatening behavior is defined as an implicit or explicit threat of violence or retribution. This can include body language, verbal language, or establishing a pattern of or reputation for intimidation or retribution.*

**Use of Illicit Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco Products:** In order to provide a safe and healthy community, FSW must remain alcohol and drug free. In order to remain enrolled at FSW students must not be under the influence of, or have in their possession, any illicit drugs, alcohol or tobacco products. Any student found in violation of this policy will be suspended or expelled from school. Prescription medications needed by students during the school day must be turned over to a teacher upon arrival on campus. **All** members of the FSW community should be drug free, alcohol free and tobacco free while participating in any FSW community events involving students on or off campus.

**Inappropriate Public Display of Affection:** During the middle school years students are dealing with issues of burgeoning sexuality. Part of this awkward time of increased awareness and exploration is the public display of affection (PDA) toward other students. Although quite natural, PDA can be quite distracting and disruptive in a school community. When and if this issue arises, we will discuss comfort levels and boundaries with the students and the school will require students to adhere to the specific limits the school community places on such behavior. Generally speaking, PDA beyond that signifying friendly camaraderie is not appropriate at school.

**Weapons Policy:** To ensure the safety of all community members, FSW has a zero tolerance policy regarding the possession of lethal weapons on campus or at school-sponsored events. Any student or adult in possession of such weapons will be required to leave campus or the school-sponsored event immediately. The matter will be brought to the attention of law enforcement officials. The individual, and possibly their family members, will be required to leave the school community permanently. Law enforcement officials who are on duty are exempted from this policy.

# ***PARENT-GUARDIAN HANDBOOK***

## **Traffic Flow**

In order to keep the traffic flow moving smoothly on both campuses, it is critical that you observe a few simple rules. **1. Do not leave your vehicle while it is in a traffic lane: if you need to leave your vehicle, please park in a safe location out of the traffic flow. 2. Do not approach a vehicle to talk to the driver while it is in a traffic lane: if you need to talk, ask the driver to park first. 3. Do not clog Pine Grove Drive waiting for the stacking lanes to clear. Please circle the block if you are unable to pull completely off of Pine Grove Drive.**

## **Learning Groups**

FSW does NOT have “Combination” classes; we have “Multi-age” class groupings – and there is a significant difference between these two approaches. In “combination” classes, teachers run back and fourth between two separate groups of students teaching two entirely separate curriculums. At FSW, we design our curriculum around large themes (which cover the same material as the NC Standard Course of Study and more) and then each activity is “scalable.” That is, each activity has a base level (on grade or even slightly below), a challenge (at grade level or above) and a super challenge (above grade level, sometimes by two or more grades). With this approach students can all engage in every activity and students who are able, can extend their learning well beyond the traditional grade level. Students who are initially less able see those around them working on the challenges and super challenges and will often follow suit as quickly as they are able. Older students are usually required to do the challenge work and even the super challenge work as the teacher recognizes that they are ready for more difficult work. We use multi-age groupings for a variety of other important reasons. 1. Students and teachers get to build a multi-year relationship, which means that teachers can track a child’s development and growth more accurately and thoroughly. 2. Students benefit both from being the “older leader” and the “younger learner.” This is especially true for shyer students who would not normally gravitate to a leadership role, but are led to provide a model and guidance for younger students. 3. There are huge academic benefits for all students; clearly younger students get pulled along by the modeling of older students. Less obviously, research shows that older students benefit even more from this “teacher-like” role as they solidify knowledge in the process of expressing it to others. 4. Multi-aging requires teachers to approach each child from a developmental perspective, focusing on his/her specific “next steps.”

## **Academic Curriculum**

FSW offers an innovative, effective curriculum that exceeds the standards set forth in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. Students study the core subjects of Math, Language Arts, Social Studies and Science on a daily basis in conjunction with enrichment courses and activities such as Physical Education, Spanish, Art, Music, Service Learning and Meeting for Worship. In middle school enrichment opportunities are expanded to include electives such as Yearbook, Drama, Dance, Chorus, Keyboarding, Essential Computer Skills, Student Newspaper, Quakerism, Health, and Study Skills. Our curriculum is relevant, research-based, developmentally appropriate, process-oriented and emphasizes social justice and personal responsibility. For more detailed information about our curriculum, please refer to the FSW Prospectus.

## **Parent/Guardian Visitors and Volunteers**

As a small, community-based school, FSW depends on volunteers to carry out many critical functions. We need parent/guardians to: help in the classroom; chaperone learning excursions; help with service learning, school projects, maintenance, board committees; and share special expertise by substituting for a teacher or being a guest lecturer. Parent/guardians are also encouraged to observe classes, make an on-campus lunch date with their student, or help with PTO sponsored events and activities. Despite the fact that older students sometimes give their parent/guardians a clear message to stay away, research shows that students whose parent/guardians volunteer and attend school events take school more seriously and perform better academically. The only times we might discourage parent involvement are those rare occasions when a parent’s presence causes teacher/parent authority confusion at school. Usually this is a temporary issue that can be sorted out by asking the parent to step back and allow the child to recognize that the teachers are in charge at school. With the parent’s assistance, this is quickly resolved and the parent is invited back into the classroom.

If you are volunteering as a learning excursion chaperone, or helping with service learning, etc., teacher-status extends to you while you are helping. Students should listen to you and respond in the same way that they would to a teacher. This includes your responsibility to use our social curriculum and logical consequences such as “the watching chair” or “centering.” If you fail to use these tools while helping, you are not providing students with appropriate boundaries.

## Community Workdays and Volunteer Obligations

The FSW faculty and PTO depend on volunteer support from every family. When school begins, the PTO publishes a list of volunteer opportunities.; we need all FSW families to volunteer in some capacity for approximately 30 hours per year. Part of what makes FSW a community school is that we all pitch in to keep tuition down by helping to maintain our school. You can help by coordinating a fundraiser, our lunch ordering system or a weekly service-learning project. Alternatively, you could serve on the FSW Board, an FSW Board committee, or help with our Annual Fund drive or Capital Campaign. **The PTO also expects that each family will send an adult representative to at least one of the two workdays.** In order to accommodate those who can volunteer extensively during the week but have difficulty attending weekend workdays, the PTO has decided that 40 hours of volunteer service (the normal 30 plus 10 more) exempts a family from one workday, and a total of 50 hours exempts a family from the second workday.

## FSW Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

### Functions:

#### **Fundraising**

The PTO raises funds for Financial Aid (minimum goal \$8,000 for '07-'08), for the school's operating budget (minimum goal \$15,000 for '07-'08), and additional funds toward special projects identified by faculty and parents.

#### **Volunteer Coordination**

The PTO enriches our student's experience by promoting participation in the life of the school by every family and ensures that volunteer positions are promoted and filled in the beginning of the school year.

#### **Support for Faculty and Administration**

The PTO supports the faculty by ensuring that their hard work with our children is appreciated. This includes organizing teacher appreciation at the X-mas holiday, and appreciation luncheons in the Spring and Fall.

#### **Promoter and Booster**

The PTO promotes and supports the school, the faculty, and school functions within the parent community and in the wider Wilmington community.

**When, Who & Roles:** The PTO meetings are listed on the school calendar, and are sometimes associated with a student performance or community potluck. Students and siblings are encouraged to attend if there is close supervision by a parent. Please help support this important organization by attending meetings and all school events as often as possible. The official roles of the officers are listed below.

#### ***Co-Clerks***

1. Reviews the school calendar and coordinates event/meeting dates with administration in January/February.
2. Consults with administration to generate the agenda for PTO meetings two weeks before meetings and events.
3. Serve as ambassador to outside community — attends school functions and open houses.
4. Serve as contact person(s) to start phone tree. Call room parents, who will contact families in their class.
5. Serve as ambassador/community builder – Promotes the school informally within the parent community, and works proactively to curtail and/or eliminate negative/destructive gossip.
6. Oversee all PTO fundraising events for the year and help to ensure their success.

#### ***Clerk Elect***

1. Takes on the duties of the Clerk when Clerk is unavailable and trains into the role of Clerk for the following year.

#### ***Treasurer***

1. Monitors/collects monies from all PTO fundraising – in coordination with FSW Business Manager.
2. Report to PTO meeting on funds raised and current status of PTO budget – with assistance from FSW Business Manager.

#### ***Secretary***

1. Attends all PTO meetings/events and take minutes as appropriate.
2. Distribute typed minutes by email to administration for distribution to the parent community.
3. Prepare PTO publications/correspondence as necessary.

### ***Volunteer Coordinators***

1. Solicit volunteers and committee heads for the next school year through use of the July mailing with follow up at Curriculum Night to fill in volunteer slots.
2. Be contact person for all volunteer activities.
3. Secure supervision for students at PTO meetings.
4. Workday coordination - Generate list of families who have signed up for workdays from signup sheets (summer mailing and Curriculum Night). It may be necessary to call people to get them to sign up for workdays. At least one week before each workday, provide newsletter editor with list of families signed up to include in the newsletter. Set up sign-in sheet at each workday and give it to an Administrator at the end of the workday.

### ***Fundraising Coordinator***

1. Assist with planning fundraisers for the year in conjunction with the Director of Development, PTO clerks and Event Chairs.
2. Serve as primary support for all PTO fundraisers.

### ***Social Coordinators (Primary Campus, Elementary/ Middle School)***

1. Be available to coordinate school social events and to provide assistance in advance planning along with grade parents and/or teachers and staff as needed.
2. PTO Meetings: Coordinate and organize food & drinks for PTO meetings, Curriculum Night, community potlucks, and Quaker Café. Make sure paper plates, utensils, etc. are provided.
3. Teacher Appreciation Lunch: Coordinate and organize during conference workdays with grade parents (2 times a year).
4. Open Houses: Staffing 3-4 a year with several parents as hosts and ambassadors. Coordinate and organize refreshments (including set up and clean up), decorations and signage.
5. Work on MS Graduation preparations.

### ***Grade or Advisory Parent***

1. Contact person for events concerning your child's grade or advisory
2. Responsible for calling class parents, as needed, to provide food, rides, decorations, chaperones, etc., for classroom or advisory events.
3. Be prepared to assist the Social Coordinator to plan and staff events.
4. Contact for phone tree, ensures that all parents in class get called.
5. Assist Social Coordinator with teacher appreciation lunches on a grading period workday.

## **Parent/Guardian Supervision**

Before arrival and after students are dismissed to parent/guardians in the afternoon, the supervision and safety of each student and their siblings is the responsibility of the parent/guardian. If parent/guardians have students on campus during these times, they must be in close physical proximity so that they can monitor and supervise students' actions. While on campus, parent/guardians must maintain the same rules and standards for student behavior that teachers maintain during the school day. Rude or physically or /verbally aggressive behavior is not allowed. If you have questions about specific behaviors, please contact a faculty member.

## **Student Records and Forms**

Your student's academic and health records are confidential and are generally viewed by faculty, administrative personnel (and responsible volunteers and board members when appropriate). The following forms are part of every student's records and must be turned in to the office before your student may attend FSW:

- ❖ Health Assessment Record – we are required by law to maintain health records on all students.
- ❖ Learning excursion Release/Emergency Medical Care Permission Form – we must have this form on file before your student can participate in school sponsored off-campus events.
- ❖ Medication Permission Form – we must have this form on file if you wish us to administer any over-the-counter medication to your student.

## **Illness, Medication and Vaccinations**

If your student is ill or contracts a communicable disease, parent/guardians should notify FSW as soon as possible and keep the student at home until the illness is no longer contagious. Sending sick students to school causes other students

and faculty to fall ill and miss school. It is also important to note that symptom suppressants may mask the signs of infection while the student is still capable of spreading infection to others. Physicians advise us to require a 24-hour period of normal temperature (unaided by medication) before a student may return to school. Students who have been ill should not return until they are completely well and fully able to participate in school activities. For extended illnesses or if a student is unable to participate in certain activities at school, a note from a physician may be required. If your student has had lice, s/he may not return to school until s/he is free of all nits. Parent/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their student makes up any missed assignments.

If your student needs medication during the school day, please send it in with a note signed by a parent/guardian indicating dosage amounts and a dosage schedule. All medications must be in the original bottle with the student's name, prescription number, dosage and date. If a student complains of a headache or other minor discomfort during the school day, we will dispense pain relievers and other over-the-counter medications if parent/guardians have given their permission on the Medication Permission Form. Non-prescription medication cannot be given for more than three days without a doctor's order. We will not administer any medication without written permission.

All FSW families must complete and return a Health Record Assessment form and a learning excursion Release/Emergency Medical Treatment/Medication Permission form before the first day of school. If a student becomes ill or injured during school hours, parent/guardians will be notified as soon as possible and the student should be picked up within two hours. If a medical emergency arises and a guardian cannot be reached, an ambulance will be called and a faculty member will accompany the student until a parent/guardian arrives. Please also be aware that it is FSW's moral and legal obligation to report suspicions of child abuse, neglect, deprivation or exploitation to the county Department of Social Services.

**In order to enroll your student in any North Carolina school you are required by law to provide us with proof of required vaccinations.** Proof of vaccination is required of all kindergarten students by the first day of school. The law allows non-kindergarten students 30 calendar days from the first day of attendance to produce a satisfactory certificate of immunization. In addition, the law requires that, beginning the 31st calendar day, the student be suspended from school until proof of immunization is presented. Proof of vaccination must include the dates that the vaccinations were administered. {A physician's diagnosis is not considered acceptable evidence that a student has had measles or rubella. *By law, the student must either be immunized or a laboratory blood test must be completed which indicates satisfactory immunity (titer of 1:8 or greater). Immunizations must be repeated when a student's records are lost, misplaced or otherwise unavailable. A parent/guardian's verbal statement is not legally sufficient. Individuals who receive the first booster dose of diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough vaccine on or after the fourth birthday shall not be required to have a second booster dose. Individuals who receive the third dose of oral poliomyelitis vaccine on or after the fourth birthday shall not be required to receive the fourth dose. The following immunizations are required by law: five DPT (diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus) shots, four oral polio vaccine doses, one measles (rubella) shot after age one, one German measles shot, one mumps shot (Measles, mumps and rubella are usually given as one immunization).}* The school immunization law is not without its complications and exceptions (for medical and religious reasons, for example). If these specifics raise questions for you, please call the Head of School to discuss the possible exceptions.

## Admissions

FSW actively seeks to enroll students of every race, creed, nationality and social or economic background. Scholarship assistance is available so that we may open enrollment to anyone, regardless of financial circumstances. After calling to receive an admissions packet, parent/guardians should make application to FSW by:

1. Returning the completed **parent/guardian section** of the application and the **student questionnaire or writing/drawing sample**, as appropriate, accompanied by the non-refundable **application fee**.
2. Ensuring that FSW receives a **teacher recommendation form**. The teacher who has had the most recent responsibility for the student's educational progress should complete these forms.
3. Signing and delivering the enclosed **records release form** to the student's current school. It is the parent/guardians' responsibility to ensure that complete school records (including all health records, grade reports, standardized test scores and evaluations by specialists) are forwarded to FSW.
4. Ensuring that we receive any other relevant information including **evaluations** by specialists that are not included in school records. (Withholding such material will result in the student's immediate dismissal and a forfeiture of tuition.)
5. Elementary and middle school applicants should contact FSW to schedule a **daylong student visit** (or student interview if school is not in session.) During a visit, a student "buddy" is assigned to help the visiting student feel at ease.

Admission is based on faculty evaluation of the written application, the student questionnaire or writing/drawing sample, teacher recommendations, school records, standardized test scores and school visits and/or interviews that will include academic and social assessment. If the student is accepted, the family will receive a notification letter, an enrollment contract and a payment schedule. In order to retain an enrollment position, the parent/guardians must return a signed copy of

the contract, the full deposit and any other fees due at that time. Financial aid applicants may hold their enrollment position while awaiting a financial aid determination by remitting \$100 per month until the Financial Aid determination is made. If the student is not admitted, the family will receive a letter denying admission. If there are no barriers to admission, but a given class is full, parent/guardians will be notified that the application will be placed in a “wait pool.” When an enrollment position is available, the school will offer admission to the most qualified applicant in the wait pool. Assuming timely application to the school, priority consideration will be given to siblings of students currently attending FSW, Quaker students, faculty children, students who represent diversity, and students of alumni. We also take into consideration gender and age/grade level balance in each classroom.

Students with special needs will be admitted to FSW only if the faculty feels that the school can adequately serve that student’s needs while meeting the needs of students already enrolled in the school. Students with special needs may be placed in a separate waiting pool in order to ensure that FSW maintains an appropriate ratio of faculty to students with special needs. All acceptances are probationary to ensure the appropriateness of placement at FSW.

## How Independent Schools are Financed

It is often surprising to families who are new to independent education when they are asked to give generously to an Annual Fund and a Capital Campaign in addition to paying tuition and participating in PTO fundraising events. Every year, educating each student costs more than the tuition covers and this differential is subsidized by Annual Fund dollars. We strive to maintain competitive rates, yet desire to pay our faculty and staff competitive salaries, keep the student/teacher ratio small, and provide the support services necessary to ensure that each student has a rigorous, challenging, and broad academic program. To make up the difference, the School must raise additional funds through the Annual Fund, facility rentals, and ancillary programs. We count on 100% participation from our entire constituency to help us develop excellent facilities, buy safe, reliable transportation, and fund the arts and other enrichment programs. Each family will be invited to provide tax-deductible gifts to both the Annual Fund on a yearly basis and a Capital Campaign if the school is undertaking a facilities improvement or land acquisition.

## Tuition, Fees and Financial Aid

The prompt payment of tuition is essential to the proper functioning of the school. When you sign the enrollment contract you are agreeing “to pay the tuition for the entire academic year and that no portion of the tuition will be forgiven or refunded on account of absences, suspension, expulsion or withdrawal of the student before or during the academic year.” You are also agreeing “to pay any legal fees and collection fees incurred by the Friends School of Wilmington in the course of defending or enforcing the terms” of the enrollment contract. It is also stated in the contract that you may cancel the enrollment contract by “giving written notice stating the reasons for withdrawal to the Friends School of Wilmington by May 5th of the enrollment year. If this agreement is cancelled in this manner, no payments beyond the Reservation Fee and Application Fee will be required. The Reservation Fee and Application Fee will be retained by the school and are not refundable. Failure to pay tuition in a timely manner will result in late charges and may result in dismissal if tuition payments are more than 1 month overdue. Your financial obligation to FSW is not altered by dismissal. If you encounter unexpected financial hardship, please notify us in writing as soon as possible so that we can explore possibilities of financial aid or rescheduling tuition payments.

**Tuition and Fees:** An enrollment position is secured with a non-refundable Reservation Fee, which is due when you return an enrollment contract. For families new to FSW, a separate “one time per family” Enrollment Fee is due March 5 of the enrollment year or with the completed contract for later enrollees. This one-time fee need not be paid again when enrolling a sibling. Families who choose the Full Prepay Discount Plan on their enrollment contract (and are not receiving financial aid) receive a significant discount on tuition and will be billed by our Business Manager. Families who choose the Monthly Plan must enroll in the FACTS Tuition Management Program at a cost of approximately \$38 per year.

Full-Prepay Plan	Monthly Plan
Entire tuition & fees are due May 5th.	The FACTS Tuition Management Co. will draft equal payments from the account of your choice on the 5th of each month. The first draft will occur on April 5 <sup>th</sup> and the last draft will occur on January 5 <sup>th</sup> . A \$25 late penalty is charged by FACTS if a payment is missed due to insufficient funds and the draft will be re-attempted on the 20 <sup>th</sup> of the month.
Remember, for either payment plan, late charges of 4 % will apply if these payments are more than 30 days overdue, unless arrangements have been made in advance.	

**Financial Aid:** Financial aid at FSW is based on need as principally determined through an assessment provided by an independent company, and an application form requesting a specific amount of assistance. Application for financial aid is required on a yearly basis. Families who are already enrolled at FSW receive priority for Financial Aid if they apply before the first Financial Aid Application Deadline.

**Families who are already enrolled who need financial assistance with tuition should:**

1. Request the appropriate Grant & Aid Assessment forms from the Business Manager.
2. Complete the application paper form or apply online by January 15<sup>th</sup>.
3. Submit the **“Friends School of Wilmington Financial Aid Request”** form to the Business Manager.
4. Send the following directly to FACTS: the original Grant & Aid Assessment Application form (if you did not apply online); copies of your most recent IRS Federal Form 1040 or 1040A U.S. Individual Income Tax Return (2 pages), including all supporting tax schedules (C, E & F). copies of your Wage and Tax statements, supporting documentation for household Social Security income, welfare, child support, food stamps, worker’s compensation and TANE and the nonrefundable processing fee.
5. If you are a returning family and this deadline is met for all supporting documentation, your financial aid determination will receive priority. Financial aid applicants may secure an enrollment position by returning a signed enrollment contract with a \$100 deposit by the normal deadline of the last business day of January.. Arrangements for paying the remainder of the deposit and the upcoming year’s tuition will be detailed in your Financial Aid Award letter. If a returning family misses the January 15<sup>th</sup> deadline their request for financial aid will be considered with the requests of newly enrolling families. To maintain an enrollment position after February 1<sup>st</sup>, payments of \$100 per month must be made toward the deposit.

Your request will be considered and you will receive a letter informing you the amount of financial aid FSW is able to offer. In order to receive the award, you must sign and return a copy accepting the award by the deadline stated in that letter. If you do not accept the award by the stated deadline, the funds will be awarded to another applicant. If financial need should change during the year you should contact the Business Manager immediately. Depending on the availability of funds, FSW may be able to supply Financial Aid or adjust your award.

## Re-enrollment Policy

Each January FSW will evaluate student progress and offer enrollment contracts to all students (and families) who have demonstrated that they are a good match for Friends School of Wilmington. FSW retains the right to withhold enrollment contracts from students and parent/guardians, at the discretion of the Head of School. Reasons for withholding reenrollment may include, but are not limited to, behavioral or academic problems, failure of parent/guardian to demonstrate clear and consistent support for school policies, failure of parent/guardian to obtain diagnostic testing and/or support services recommended by the school, etc. Once offered re-enrollment, the parent/guardian must return the enrollment contract and Reservation Fee by the date stipulated on the contract in order to reserve an enrollment position for the student at FSW. After that date, vacancies will be filled from the waiting pool. Any late or delinquent tuition for the current school year must be paid in full before a student may be enrolled for the coming year.

## Special Needs: Learning Styles, Learning Differences, Counseling and Diagnostic Evaluation

The faculty at FSW recognizes that students learn differently. Teachers reference current scientific research to seek understanding of student’s learning styles and make an effort to present material in a variety of ways in order to tap into the strengths of all learners. Hands-on activities and cooperative projects utilize multiple senses and address a variety of learning styles.

However, there are limits to the number, nature and severity of special learning needs we can serve effectively, based on both faculty training and time available for individualized attention. In order to make the necessary judgments concerning special needs, faculty and students are best served when parent/guardians share whatever assessment information they possess at the time of admission. Failure to disclose information related to special needs could result in your being required to withdraw your student(s) and forfeit tuition.

In the event that FSW faculty observe student behaviors that are indicative of a developmental delay, learning difference, behavioral or emotional problem, or other special need, we may recommend or require that the student be given a diagnostic evaluation by specialists. The results of any evaluations must be shared with the faculty so that we may ascertain whether we can address the student’s needs within our program, and if so, how best to meet those needs. As with all student records, results of developmental assessments will be kept confidential. Failure to disclose information related to special needs or diagnostic evaluation after admission can result in your being required to withdraw your student(s) and forfeit tuition.

Though FSW can make some adjustments to accommodate a variety of learning styles, we do not specialize in meeting the needs of students diagnosed with learning differences or behavioral/emotional problems, and we do not provide specialized resource services as part of our daily academic program. Students with behavioral/emotional problems that impinge on the comfort of other students or distract teachers from their responsibilities to other students may not remain

enrolled at FSW. Students with special needs may remain enrolled at FSW only when the HOS and faculty feel confident that FSW can appropriately address that student's special needs **and** when parent/guardians agree to pay any and all associated additional fees for services as set by the administration.

## Communication Systems

Communication in our information-rich world provides a significant challenge. Parent/guardians and FSW must work together to keep each other informed. FSW works to facilitate communication by:

1. Sending home important notices, order forms and a weekly newsletter—via email when appropriate.
2. Publishing a detailed calendar.
3. Publishing this handbook to clarify school policies and procedures.
4. Publishing a school directory, which includes the home phone numbers of faculty so that you can contact them directly with questions or concerns. Please feel free to call to set up a time to talk between 3:30-8pm. Teachers will not be able to speak with you during the school day when they are engaged in teaching and supervising students. We also request that you do not call faculty later than 8 pm unless it is an emergency.
5. Hosting a curriculum night, student presentations and performances, community potlucks and regular PTO meetings.
6. Sending out warning reports to middle school students earning a "C-" or less in any class at mid-term and grade reports on a quarterly basis.
7. Scheduling fall parent/guardian-teacher conferences to inform parents about student adjustment and progress.
8. Scheduling behavioral or academic parent/guardian-teacher conferences on an "as needed" basis throughout the year. Parent/guardians are encouraged to schedule conferences when they have concerns.
9. Providing middle school students with a standard assignment book.
10. Distributing time-sensitive information via phone or email.

### **In return we ask that parent/guardians:**

1. Pine Grove Parents: Ask your student for the envelope on Friday afternoon, read the enclosed material, fill-out and enclose any forms, sign and date the envelope and put it back in your student's back-pack so that it will be returned to school on Monday morning.
2. Peiffer Ave Parents: Check with your student about keeping up with their homework by reviewing their assignment book and logging on to RenWeb as needed to keep updated on your student's homework assignments.
3. Read this handbook, the weekly newsletter, and all other material we send home.
4. Attend the community potlucks and as many classroom or student presentations and PTO events/meetings as possible.
5. Talk with us if you have unanswered questions, concerns, worries, or confusion, or if your student is concerned or unhappy about something that is happening at school. (Positive feedback is welcome too!) The only way we'll know what's on your mind is if you tell us. We want you to know what's going on at school, so if you feel that you don't, please ask! It is critical that you adhere to the communications policy outlined below when communicating with faculty or other community members.

## Communications Policy

Building, maintaining, and protecting a beloved community such as Friends School of Wilmington is difficult and ongoing work. Just as teachers develop rules and expectations for student interaction, there are certain expectations for how adults will interact in our community. We have adapted these policies from the work of Carolyn R. Shaffer & Kristin Anundsen, *Creating Community Anywhere*.

### **All community members are expected to:**

1. **Communicate in a Timely Manner** – To address problems effectively, time is of the essence. If your child is having any problem at school, it is critical that you inform us in a calm and professional manner the first time, and every time that you hear about the problem, so that we can help you and your child address the issue effectively. Email works especially well to convey this information, because teachers will not be available to speak with you while they are preparing to teach or are supervising students. Please allow for a 36 hour response time, due to the volume of emails teachers typically receive. It is not appropriate to allow problems or incidents such as relational bullying or intimidation to go unmentioned for days, weeks or months, as happens in many school settings. If you fail to inform us of the problem in a timely manner, you are contributing to the problem.
2. **Communicate Directly and Privately** – Share any concern that you have directly with that person in the spirit of kindness in a timely manner, in a private space. Be especially mindful not to have adult conversations discussing concerns around students (i.e. carpool, service learning, parking lot, halls, etc.) Do not work through go-betweens

or serve as a go-between for others. If someone asks you for information or advice about an issue in which you are not directly involved, do not offer advice or information unless you are in the role of supervisor for one or both of the parties involved. In any event, remind him or her to go directly to the proper source.

3. During Your Communication You Should:

- *State your position or concern before asking how others feel about it.* Do not set someone up to give a "wrong" answer. Be courageous and put yourself on the spot first.
- *Practice active listening.* Listen silently and with your whole self until the speaker has finished speaking. Then restate what the speaker has said and wait for confirmation.
- *Respect and validate others' feelings.* If you do not agree or do not support another's statement, acknowledge what has been said, then make your point.
- *Provide continual feedback.* Do not allow resentments to build up and do not forget to give positive feedback.
- *Use humor softly, not sharply.*

4. Do Not Engage in Gossip or Rumoring – It is critical to refrain from gossiping, rumoring, “stirring the pot,” coalition building, speaking critically about, threatening, or in any way disparaging the character or integrity of, or denigrating other community members. This includes electronic communication such as email, web pages, text messages, etc. Comparing feelings on a given concern about someone not present causes unfair and inaccurate bias in others, which only compounds problems, and causes unfair damage to that person’s reputation and ability to participate in the community. It also damages our community as a whole. Engaging in such destructive communication, or direct or implied threats of litigation, can result in separation from the school.

5. Maintain a Calm, Respectful Tone – It is critical to refrain from yelling, or using a disrespectful tone or body language when sharing a concern. It is natural to be upset when you are concerned about your child, but it is counterproductive to approach a professional educator or other community member if you are too upset to express yourself calmly and rationally. It is advisable to allow yourself sufficient time to calm down before you make contact. Often taking time to write and carefully edit your message expressing your concern will help a great deal. It is also very wise to have a co-parent or supervisor read over your message before it is sent so that you can avoid loaded language or an unprofessional tone. Engaging in disrespectful communication can result in a separation from the school.

6. Offer Your Suggestions and Ideas Respectfully – Some of our best ideas and traditions have come from parents and children within our school! However, it is important to recognize when offering suggestions or ideas that professional educators are in the continual process of developing and honing their best practices. When bringing an idea or suggestion forward, be aware that your idea may have already been considered, tried and then moved away from based on results. Please also be aware that time is limited – by pursuing one virtue, another is neglected. Professional educators are paid to use their judgment on how to achieve the most effective balance of time management during school hours. Consider, too, when making a suggestion that will add to the workload or time commitment of an already overworked educator that you should volunteer to take a leadership role in implementing and funding the suggestion. Please be assured that your idea will be considered, but may not be acted upon due to other curricular priorities, limited personnel, energy, time and financial resources.

7. All communications through school sponsored channels, such as our newsletter, Friday folders, website, RenWeb, etc. must be approved by the appropriate school employee. Use of our FSW directories as a mailing list for purposes not directly approved by the appropriate school employee is not allowed. The creation of unauthorized communication channels or venues, or calling unauthorized meetings without the knowledge and permission of school personnel with other community members may result in separation from the community.

**What should community members expect in response to sharing a concern with the Head of School?**

Depending on the circumstances, the Head of School may engage in fact finding conversations with others, call a meeting of any and all parties deemed necessary (which often includes students), and/or have a supervisory conversation with an employee. While it may be frustrating not to understand all actions that are taken by the Head, parents should understand that the content of supervisory meetings, and meetings held with other students or parents are confidential and will not be shared. The Head will make any appropriate and necessary decisions in keeping with the best interest of the students and FSW.

**What if my student says that he/she doesn’t like his/her teacher?**

While FSW is committed to hiring the best teachers available and then training them continually on the job to maintain excellence, there will be times when your child will complain about his or her teacher. The best way to handle this is to set up a conference with the teacher and your child to explore and resolve these feelings. This will help you avoid falling into the trap of “Interviewing for Pain” or being manipulated by your child when they wish to blame their shortcomings on their teacher. Reflecting on all the times you have had to make decisions for the good of your child that were unpopular should help you gain perspective. It is important to recognize that teachers need your support in guiding your child through the process of developing self-discipline in order to attain academic excellence. In short, you need to keep in mind that the most effective teachers are not always the most popular. If the problem persists, contact the Division Head or Head of School for help.

### **Procedure for Addressing Concerns:**

1. Address your concern(s) in a spirit of kindness to the person(s) directly involved in a timely manner. The person(s) you are addressing should work with you to resolve your concern(s) in a timely manner.
2. If the concern is not resolved, or if you feel the issue is so sensitive that it cannot be broached without help, speak with the Division Head, who will share your name and concern with those directly involved, setting up meetings as needed. The Division Head will work with all parties to address the concern in a timely manner.
3. If the concern is still not resolved, speak with the Head of School, who will share your name and concern with those directly involved, setting up meetings as needed. The Head of School will work with all parties to address the concern in a timely manner.
4. If your concern is with the Head of School and the issue is so sensitive that you are unable to share your concern directly, you must put your concern in writing and share it with the Clerk of the FSW Board with the understanding that your name and concern will be shared with the Head of School, and that the Clerk will call meetings to resolve the issue as needed. The Clerk of the FSW Board and the Head of School will address your concern in a timely manner.

**Person(s) who demonstrate that they are unwilling or unable to follow the Communications Policy, The Procedure for Addressing Concerns, and/or the Whistleblower Policy and/or abide by the decisions of the Head of School and/or the FSW Board will be prohibited from further participation in the Friends School of Wilmington Community.**

### **Whistleblower Policy**

The Whistleblower Policy of Friends School of Wilmington (FSW): (1) encourages anyone with credible information on illegal practices or serious violations of adopted policies of the school to come forward; (2) specifies that FSW will protect the person from retaliation; and (3) identifies where such information should be reported.

1. **Encouragement of reporting.** FSW encourages complaints, reports or inquiries about illegal practices or serious violations of the school’s policies, including illegal or improper conduct by FSW itself, by its leadership, employees, parents, or students, or by others on its behalf. Appropriate subjects to raise under this policy would include financial improprieties, accounting or audit matters, ethical violations, or other similar illegal or improper practices or policies. Other subjects for which FSW has existing complaint mechanisms should be addressed under those mechanisms, such as raising matters of alleged discrimination or harassment via FSW’s human resources channels (Head of School or Business Manager), unless those parties are themselves implicated in the wrongdoing. This policy is not intended to provide a means of appeal from outcomes in those other mechanisms.

Reference should be made to the Parent/Guardian-Student Handbook, Communication Policy or the Employment Handbook, Employee Grievance Procedures.

2. **Protection from retaliation.** FSW prohibits retaliation by or on behalf of the school against staff, parents, trustees, students, or others for making good faith complaints, reports or inquiries under this policy or for participating in a review or investigation under this policy. This protection extends to those whose allegations are made in good faith but prove to be mistaken. The Board realizes that intentional filing of a false report can have a serious effect on innocent community members and reserves the right to discipline persons who make bad faith, knowingly false, or vexatious complaints, reports or inquiries or who otherwise abuse this policy.

3. **Procedure for reporting.** A good faith report would be described as “a reasonable person would reach the conclusion that suspicious, malicious, or illegal activity is occurring.” All good faith reports should contain the following, at a minimum.

1. A clear allegation containing as much specific information as possible such as dates, locations, and any other pertinent information, written or verbal.

2. The name(s) of the person filing the complaint. Because the school will protect the accuser, the policy does not allow for “anonymous” reports. The reporter’s confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible within the limitations of law and the need to conduct a competent investigation.
3. **Where to report.** Complaints, reports or inquiries made under this policy should describe in detail the specific facts demonstrating the basis for the complaints, reports or inquiries. They should be directed to the Head of School or Clerk of the Board of Trustees. If both of those persons are implicated in the complaint, report or inquiry, it should be directed to Charles L. Earney, CPA., PO Box 410, Wrightsville Beach, NC 28480. The school will conduct a prompt, discreet, and objective review or investigation.
4. **Follow up.** The Head of School, the Clerk of the Board or Mr. Earney will report back to the accuser that they will/will not be investigating their report, stating a reason for their decision. The actual results and/or findings of any investigation will be handled appropriately and will not necessarily be separately reported back to the original accuser.
5. **Complaints of Retaliation.** Any retaliatory acts to or toward an accuser must be immediately reported to the Head of School, or the Clerk of the Board if the Head of School is implicated, or Charles L. Earney if a Board Member is implicated.

## Administration

**Responsibilities and Authority of the Head.** The Head is the School's chief administrative officer. His responsibilities and authority include those typically associated with the administration of an independent school including, but not limited to, direction and oversight of the following:

- the School’s mission and policies;
- academic, athletic, and extracurricular activities;
- hiring, supervising, and terminating, as necessary, all other employees and volunteers; the Head shall have the authority to hire and fire any School employee or volunteer unless otherwise restricted by the Board;
- external operations, such as admissions and recruitment, marketing, fund-raising, and relations with constituents;
- financial, administrative, and maintenance operations;
- student disciplinary measures, including dismissal;
- parent disciplinary measures, including dismissal following appropriate notice and consultation with the Executive Committee.
- strategic planning and assessment.

The Head of School provides leadership for the school and articulates and promotes the mission, vision and philosophy to FSW families and the wider community. S/he works actively to build a close-knit, supportive educational community and is responsive to resolving concerns. The Head of School monitors the overall tone and success of the school program, guides and develops school policies, and promotes review and development of the curriculum. The Head of School selects, evaluates, supervises, and dismisses all employees of the school. The Head is responsible for final decisions about student and community member discipline, and dismissal of students, faculty and parents in keeping with school policy. S/he attends FSW Board meetings, presents regular reports, and is responsible to the FSW Board for the financial administration of the school. The Head of School delegates major responsibilities to the Administrative Team as follows:

**Business Manager:** Responsible for the financial operation of the school, personnel and HR functions, campus maintenance and the safety of all students, employees and visitors.

**Development and Marketing Director:** Responsible for all marketing and development activities of the school.

**Admissions Director:** Responsible for all recruiting and admissions related activities and shares responsibility with Marketing Director for school Marketing initiatives and serves as PTO Activities and Events Liaison.

**Division Head(s):** Responsible for selection, support, professional growth, evaluation, and recommendations regarding dismissal of faculty, and taking a leadership role in curriculum development.

## Relationship between Wilmington Friends Meeting and FSW

The relationship between Friends School of Wilmington and Wilmington Friends Meeting is formally defined as follows. FSW is committed “to run the school according to Quaker Principles as described in the mission statement, to expose young people and their families to Quaker values.” WFM originally committed to “serving as a spiritual resource to the school, with the primary purpose of providing spiritual guidance.” The Friends School of Wilmington and Wilmington Friends Meeting are separate corporate entities. Each is responsible for its own financial decisions and conducting its own business. Wilmington Friends Meeting does not make school policy, or seek to run the school financially or operationally.

## Quaker Business Process and Consensus

In the tradition of Friends, the FSW Board, faculty and other entities within the FSW community use Quaker business process when conducting meetings and making decisions. Through this process all participants are expected to seek guidance from the Spirit by listening respectfully, sharing insights and concerns and sharing in the responsibility for decisions. The Clerk serves as the facilitator, seeking an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect as s/he guides the decision-making process. When the Clerk senses unity among the participants s/he will restate “Sense of the Meeting” and ask for approval. No votes are taken, and a majority is not sufficient for a decision. If consensus is reached, the decision will be noted in the minutes that serve as the official record of the meeting. If unity cannot be reached, the matter is tabled for further exploration. In this case, the status quo is maintained until a consensual decision can be reached.

## THE FRIENDS SCHOOL OF WILMINGTON BOARD

The FSW Board is the governing body of FSW. It functions out of a deep religious concern that flows from the belief that there is that of God in every person. It operates under the principles of consensus. The Chair of the FSW Board is referred to as the Clerk. The FSW Board makes a special effort to include as many Members or Attenders of the Religious Society of Friends as possible, given the small size of Wilmington’s Quaker community. The other members may be parent/guardians of students and members of the larger community. All members are appointed by a consensus of the FSW Board, either from a list supplied by Wilmington Friends Meeting or a list maintained by the Committee on Trustees. FSW Board members may serve for up to three three-year terms before rotating off of the FSW Board for a minimum of one year. FSW Board meetings generally occur every other month and are open to the school community, though portions of a meeting may be closed when confidential or sensitive issues are discussed.

The FSW Board is responsible for financial stewardship and operational oversight of Friends School of Wilmington. The FSW Board hires the Head of School and oversees his/her operation and management of the school, and evaluates his/her performance in reference to the Mission Statement, his/her job description and school policies. If necessary, the FSW Board is responsible for terminating the Head of School. While the Head of School (in consultation with the faculty and the FSW Board, as appropriate) is responsible for establishing and maintaining day-to-day operational policies, the FSW Board (in consultation with the Head of School and faculty) establishes broad school-wide policies that bear on the faculty or the school community as a whole.

Parent/guardians and community members are invited to serve on the subcommittees that aid the FSW Board in fulfilling its responsibilities. An FSW Board member convenes each subcommittee. Ad hoc subcommittees may be formed by the FSW Board to carry out special tasks. Subcommittees are made up of non-Board members from the FSW community and the wider community. A (non-exhaustive) list and description of the roles of typical FSW Board committees follows:

- ❖ **Building and Grounds** – Oversees the maintenance of the physical plant and grounds, assists with conformity with safety and legal requirements, organizes work days, assists Head of School in maintaining janitorial services and campus improvements.
- ❖ **Finance** – Assists Business Manager and Head of School in preparation of annual budgets and projected budgets for future years. Makes recommendations to the Business Manager and Head of School regarding scholarship assistance. Assists the Business Manager and Head of School with faculty/staff contracts for the coming year. Works with the Business Manager and Head of School to develop plans and timetables for improving faculty/staff benefits.
- ❖ **Development** – Assists the Development Director and Head of School with the establishment and facilitation of a development program. Assists with long range planning, creation and maintenance of a scholarship assistance endowment fund. Assists with annual fund drive and capital campaigns with help from the parent/guardian community.
- ❖ **Marketing** – Assists the Development Director and Head of School in developing a marketing plan and marketing materials such as brochures, ads and a web page. Assists the Development Director in identifying opportunities to promote the school at local events and occasions.
- ❖ **Committee on Trustees** – Recruits new board members, recruits/identifies board officers for annual meeting, orients new board members, clarifies committee assignments, encourages board involvement in school activities, plans joint faculty-board activities and board evaluation.
- ❖ **Long Range Planning** – Researches and recommends to the FSW Board the direction and speed of growth for the school. The committee is responsible for researching the market and developing five and ten year plans for the school. This would include a description of grade levels, numbers of students, projected space needs, time lines and the financial impact of plans.
- ❖ **Diversity** – Works to build an inclusive, diverse curriculum, a diverse faculty, board and student body. Works to strengthen and enrich the school by actively recognizing and respecting our differences as well as our commonalities.