



VIRGINIA BEACH FRIENDS SCHOOL

Knowledge. Character. Community.

Head of School Report

School Committee Meeting – December 11, 2019

Overall Summary:

November came and went with a blur. The highlight of the month was an incredible Grand Friends Day the day before leaving for Thanksgiving break. The attendance for the event was stellar. All grandparents and friends in attendance enjoyed a wonderful morning learning more about Friends School and what their grandchildren do on a daily basis.

Friends students continue to make an impact in and out of the school environment. JJV middle school basketball started the first week of December. The small Friends team of 6 athletes have played against Suffolk Christian School and Yeshiva Aish Kodesh Academy. While both games ended up being losses by 11 and 10 points, the level of play was outstanding. Particularly, as the Friends team only has three experienced basketball players (one of which is a fourth grader playing up a grade) and three out of the six players never played organized basketball up until four weeks ago. Danny Grondin (Head Coach), along with Thomas Joseph and Gabby Adams (Assistant Coaches), has done an outstanding job coaching the JJV basketball players. The next game is Thursday, December 12 at 4:30 against Rock Church of Franklin County. All are welcome to attend.

Friends alumni continue to return to campus on a regular basis sharing their fondness for the time at the School. Alex Dworetzky and Nina Ruffin have agreed to split the duties of School Committee Alumni Representative. They are working with Jason Weast, Athletics and Special Program Director, to coordinate an Alumni Basketball game on Saturday, December 21 with a social at a local restaurant to follow.

As VBFS continues to rebuild, we are seeing enthusiasm in every corner of our school. From an engaged and active Parent's Association to excited teachers bring learning to life to students making an impact in the classroom, on the court, and outside the school throughout Hampton Roads. Friends students are big fish in a small pond all learning and growing at paces that work for them while doing and experiencing moments that large schools can't provide. *This is Friends!*

Admissions and Social Outreach Update:

Currently, the School sits at 103 total students, down from 106 students having lost three students to mid-year moves. However, there is a strong likelihood of being at 116 students by February 2020.

- 13 new students to be enrolled and added by February 2020.
- 3 students for immediate enrollment before December break (1 cottage, 1 pre-k, 1 11th grade),
- 8 students for January enrollment (1 K, 3, pre-K, and 4 cottage)

- 2 February (2 cottage)

Friends will be now doing Evening Open Houses tied to Library Nights starting Wednesday, December 11.

New advertising promos for open house via Facebook ads and Google ads, as well as Panera, Starbucks and YMCA.

The VBFS admissions application has completely been updated. This will next be interconnected to our Student Information System, SchoolCues. It will be available online by holiday break.

Academics:

This month we organized a successful Grandparents day program before heading out for Thanksgiving. Students had the opportunity to share two classes with their grandparents as well as a community feast and recess. Megan Murphy, Middle School English and History, teacher took the lead on organizing an impressive community program based on the recent study of Immigration in the Middle School. This musical play couple with silent worship ended the day together. Thomas Joseph, Music teacher, had taught each grade a song that they shared with grandparents at this special event.

Faculty have been encouraged to continue to offer our students hands on experiences within the community, and they have responded. At the beginning of the month the National Theatre Company came and performed a play on the importance of water conservation for our Lower and Middle School. Mobile Dairy came and introduced our Lower School Students to Elsie Mae the Jersey Cow and shared with them education about dairy products and cows. This month Megan took 7th/8th graders to Richmond to see the Confederate cemetery and statues and discuss their relevance and presence in today's society. Devin Arriaza, MS/US Spanish teacher, took 7th-12th graders to Norfolk for a Latin Dance lesson followed by ordering and eating at a Mexican restaurant this week to practice Spanish. Megan took 7th/8th graders to the Forensics competition at Norfolk Academy where they delivered rehearsed monologues ranging from prose to poetry to short stories. Danny Grondin, US History teacher, will be taking our 11th grade to Richmond to a history museum for further learning in their US History Course. Barbara Murphy, US Science teacher, will be taking her Marine Biology students to the Aquarium to create a guided tour of the animals to be shared with our younger students. James O'Connor, Art teacher, will be handing an exhibit of student art at the Norfolk Airport at the end of this month.

Galen has been working with Kristyn Brown Moore, Kindergarten/Early Kindergarten teacher, and Morgan Hart, Early Childhood ages 3.5/5 teacher, to identify the needs of our youngest students. They recognized that some children in Morgan's classroom could use more challenge and have invited 6 students to move to the Early K classroom with Kristyn in January. They are meeting individually with each family to discuss this opportunity and plan move up visit days. Galen is working to secure an afternoon assistant teacher with this addition of students in the Kindergarten classroom. They also have been evaluating the current reading and writing program for the 4-year-olds to ensure alignment between 4-year-olds in Early Childhood and 4-year-olds in Early K.

Cottage has finally moved to their new home in the Cottage!

After observing Early and Lower school classes, Galen realized teachers were not fully implementing the Responsive Classroom Model of Morning Meeting with their students. She is in the process of designing a professional development workshop on this method for the faculty to ensure they have the tools to design a successful morning meeting for each classroom! This method puts emphasis on student voice and community building is in alignment with our identity as a Friends School.

Galen continues to believe professional development is crucial for the growth of our teachers and in turn the success of our students. She has identified several priorities for the coming years in addition to annual conferences: Early Childhood training in Reggio Emilia and Montessori methods, continued Singapore Math training for Dafna, 3rd/4th grade teacher, and Katie, 1st/2nd grade teacher, Lucy Calkins/Columbia Teachers College Reading and Writing Institutes for 3rd/4th grade teacher and 5-8 English teachers, multi-age/multi-grade training for all teacher, Orton Gillingham Training (specialized reading assistance program) for Learning Specialist. The Admin. Team is working to determine how we can meet these needs in the next 1-3 years.

Finally, our 1st/2nd grade teacher, Katie, has shared that she is expecting a child in May. We are beginning to share this news with families this week and will begin the search for a substitute for the end of year in this classroom in the coming weeks.

Development:

Results as of 12.1.19:

Raised to-date: \$204K

Budget is: \$270,000, but stretching to \$324K

% to Budget: 76% to goal, 63% to stretch goal

Annual Fund:

- Friendsgiving off to a great start - as of 12/4 we are at 36% total participation for faculty/staff, school committee, and parents. We have raised \$5K so far in the first 3 days.
- Mail appeal to be sent to larger list next week.

Founders & Alumni Day:

- The Whites and Garland Waller are honored and have accepted.
- Preparation in full swing.
- Invite lists being tweaked, will share with School Committee by Monday, December 9 for review and comment.
- *Save the Date* going out with Annual Fund mail appeal week of December 9.
- All School Committee members have confirmed Feb 22nd is open and will be attending.

Advancement Committee:

- Advancement Meetings continue - we held meetings on Nov 1st and Nov 22nd.
- Focus has been on raising money to help with operating delta, annual fund, and Founders Day.
- George Polizos hosted lunch for Mike and Kristin with Kay Stine, Vice President of Development for the Hampton Roads Community Foundation. It was a wonderful meeting, and she learned a lot about our

school and its path forward. She shared many pieces of advice on fundraising and planned-giving, but grant opportunities are not viable as we are a private institution.

- Continuation of multiple meetings with individuals who may be able to help us have taken place, led by Mike Barclay - Vince Thomas, the YMCA, Norfolk Christian, etc.

Buildings and Grounds and Technology:

1. The fiber optic cabling project for internet/phone connectivity is now 100% complete as of 11/27/19 and all networks are functioning as expected.
2. A new fire alarm system, access control system, and camera system have been installed in the cottage as part of the school's safety and security upgrade.
3. The school has been visited by the VBPD's 2nd Precinct Captain and the School Resource Officer Sergeant on 11/25 as part of a continuing effort to ensure the school stays informed of all the latest recommendations on school safety and security from a law enforcement prospective. A threat assessment was done for the school two weeks prior to this by Officer Nieves and recommendations were provided for consideration.

School and College Counseling

All seniors are continuing to prepare for college admission. Three of the four seniors will be retaking the SAT on December 7th. All have selected their top two colleges that they would like to attend. If they have not submitted the applications already, they are aware of any approaching deadlines. Dee Talbert, School/College Counselor, has been able to secure fee waivers for our students to cut down or eliminate the financial burden of application submission. She will begin meeting with the Junior class parents in January to get started on their college process.

Quaker Youth Leaders attended a conference on the Portsmouth campus of Tidewater Community College in November. The conference, "Unmasking Hampton Roads", addressed the history of racism in the Hampton Roads community. The students enjoyed it and represented the school very well.

Quaker Youth Leaders will also be working with alumni, Nina Ruffin, to arrange our annual alumni event that will take place on the 19th of this month. Alumni will speak with the Upper school students about life after Friends School. Currently, 12 alumni students have confirmed. In conjunction with Jason Weast, they are also working to arrange an alumni basketball game on the December 21st. Additionally, QYL has set up boxes in the Upper School and are encouraging participation in donations of non-perishable items to be given to the Mattaponi for the holiday season, and they will begin decorating the Wilson Center lobby for the holiday season.

Dee continues to work with our students to appropriately manage and balance social relationships, and academic issues. Students impacted by mental health disturbances, depression, anxiety, etc., or academic concerns are supported daily. PEP's (personalized education plans) are a continued focus to this end.

Lastly, there has been one disciplinary issue arising to the level of being referred to the Honor Council. The student in question will be required to meet with the Honor Council on December 3rd. The disciplinary incident involved racial insensitivity.