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# How Quaker is a Quaker school? : looking for evidence of Quaker practice

Diane Brown McDougall  
*Bank Street College of Education*

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Running Head: HOW QUAKER IS A QUAKER SCHOOL?

How Quaker Is A Quaker School?

*Looking for Evidence of Quaker Practice*

By

Diane Brown McDougall

Mentor:

Denise Prince

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Diane McDougall

## How Quaker is a Quaker School?

### **Abstract**

Quaker schools are often surrounded by an aura of mystique filled with myths and misconceptions. People wonder: what is different about a Quaker School? In an attempt to answer that question, this research study examines the evidence that a Quaker school embodies the basic tenets of Quakerism and weaves Quaker practice into the curriculum and daily life of the students.

A review of the literature written on Quakerism in Quaker Schools by members of the Religious Society of Friends offers background information and insight into the elements that converge to create a Quaker pedagogy. The goals of a Quaker education, the practice of attending Meeting for Worship and the use of Queries as an educational community building tool are also investigated.

This paper explores how a solid foundation for the vibrant practice of Quakerism in schools is created by the principles that underlie the Quaker Testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship. The manner in which teachers implement the Quaker Testimonies and embrace Quaker practice in their teaching is revealed through personal interviews with teachers. The results of a survey given to all teachers about their comfort level with using Quaker practice, teaching Quaker Testimonies and speaking to their students about “that of God in everyone” provides rich information for discussion and identifies opportunities for growth as a Quaker School.

*Keywords:* Quaker School, Quaker Practice, Teaching Quaker Testimonies

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Description of Organization.....	5
Method.....	12
Literature Review.....	13
Meeting for Worship.....	13
Goals of a Quaker Education.....	15
Quaker Pedagogy.....	16
Queries.....	21
Testimonies.....	22
Mission Statements at Non-Quaker Schools	27
Forward Thoughts.....	29
The Current Study	
Theme One: Quaker Testimonies.....	31
Interviews with Teachers.....	44
Theme Two: Quaker Practice.....	47
Interviews with Teachers.....	53
Interviews on Search for Truth.....	57
Visibility of Quakerism.....	58
Theme Three: That of God in Everyone.....	63
Interviews with Teachers.....	67
Conclusion.....	69

Bibliography.....	72
Appendix.....	75
Faculty Survey Questions.....	75
Faculty Interview Questions.....	78
Posters of Quaker Testimonies.....	79
Peace Tree in the fall.....	81
Peace Tree in the spring.....	83

## How Quaker is a Quaker School?

### **Introduction**

Quaker schools are often surrounded by an aura of mystique filled with myths and misconceptions. People wonder: what is different about a Quaker School? What happens in the classroom? How do children behave? What makes a Quaker School ... Quaker? Is it the name that carries a long and rich history of high quality education for all? Is it the practice of the Quaker tenets and Quaker Testimonies? Is it the attitudes of the people who come to the school to teach and to learn? These questions have danced around my consciousness for years. I decided to investigate and look for evidence of Quaker practice in a Quaker school.

The Acme School is a good example to use for this research. It states that it is a Quaker School. The School philosophy statement reflects the tenets of Quakerism: a belief in "That of God" in everyone, seeking Truth and using the Testimonies – Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship – as a guide for living. But to those who teach in the school, Quaker practice can seem elusive and invisible. When children and teachers are asked to name the Testimonies, they cannot. When children at an all-school assembly are asked why we sit in silence, only 3 hands go up. One child responds: "It's a Quaker thing." Another adds, "So we can be quiet." These vague answers reflect the general lack of knowledge in the school about Quaker faith and practice.

It seemed to me - from years of observation and participation in the life of the school - that perhaps the words in the philosophy statement on paper did not translate into

real practice in the life of the school. I knew there were several instances of corporate behavior and policies that were unethical and dishonest, not to mention being “un-Quakerly”. I wondered how consistent is the practice of the Quaker Testimonies in the life of the school. How is the education of children impacted if Quaker schools don't adhere to their principles and practice what they preach? Children learn more from actions than words. If there is no modeling of Quaker practice then how can children make sense of attending a Quaker school? I wondered how often teachers use Quaker practice and Quaker Testimonies in their lessons and daily interactions with students.

### **Description of Organization and Social-Cultural Context**

The Acme School is a prestigious independent school located in the suburbs of a southern cosmopolitan area. The K thru 12 school serves an “academically talented” population of over one thousand students who are mostly privileged and white. Although the school refused to admit Black children until 1961, today Black students comprise between 10 to 24 percent of each classroom.

The school has a good reputation in the eyes of the public and is known for providing students with an excellent education. Getting into the school is considered impressive for the admissions process is highly competitive with 10 applicants for every opening. Admission to the school is like admission to a country club - it elevates a family's social status to an elite level. Students also gain invaluable social and employment connections for life. The elite status of the school fuels an uneasy tension between the written formal philosophy of the school – which is grounded in the principles of simplicity and seeing God in everyone – and the informal everyday practices of the

privileged members in the school community who drive expensive cars, take their kids out of school to watch daytime professional baseball games and flaunt their wealth with extravagant vacations. While many parents say they choose the school because of the Quaker influence and emphasis on service and kindness, only a small minority of the parent and student body are Quakers who seriously adhere to the Quaker values.

The adult school community is comprised of people who are similar yet dissimilar. All members – parents, faculty and administration – are highly educated in one form or another and value a good education. All parents want their children to have a superb education and to be competitive in the quest for the best colleges and jobs. Some parents are hard wired for proven results – high grades and SAT scores, AP classes – while others are more interested in the process of learning and encourage their children to have a love of learning. They tend to focus on the whole child's development and are accepting of non-traditional choices.

People are dissimilar in their racial and ethnic backgrounds, access to privilege, economic resources, and styles of parenting. The parent community is comprised of a range of personality types: the type-A high-achieving wealthy parents, the intellectually curious parents, the social-climbing parents, the high-status professional parents, the middle-class parents seeking a better chance for their children, the Quaker value seeking parents, the faculty parents seeking a quality education for their own children.

An equal number of parents live in the city and the suburbs. Most parents are wealthy and can easily afford the 35K tuition per year. About 20% of the families – both white and Black – receive some financial assistance from the school. The school does have a large number of wealthy Black families, which they didn't have 24 years ago.



The children's community is reflective of their parents' economic status. Many children in the school community have access to unusual opportunities and to extraordinary tangible gifts. At times the children are over-scheduled with lessons and sports commitments that are driven by parental anxiety over success. However, the children in the community who don't have access to the plethora of opportunities can feel left out and inadequate. Some teachers have met that challenge of classroom economic inequality by setting boundaries and guidelines for conversations about vacations so that each child can feel valued. Middle class parents find creative ways to handle issues of economic disparity. One parent and child take virtual vacations, using the web and local restaurants as resources.

The faculty community was comprised of mostly white women who have been teaching at the school for decades, some for over 30 years. It had been difficult for new teachers to break into the inner circle of that old-time power. The old guard judged the new teachers heavily and made them feel inadequate. Recently several have retired and younger multiracial teachers have been hired. Teachers, old and new, are now developing a workable system of collaborative norms and expectations. There is new dialogue about real interdisciplinary curriculums.

The external character of the school is friendly, welcoming and relaxed. Children dress very informally and can be seen walking or running casually around both campuses. Scenes with students sitting on the floor, lounging in the halls and chatting in the classroom are commonly seen throughout the day. Because it is a Friends school, that is grounded in the belief of "that of God" and an "inner Light" in everyone, all students participate in Meeting for Worship and begin lunch and each day with a moment of

silence. The faculty, administrators and parents are inspired to put their best selves forward when greeting new people at the school. The parents association, which is heavily involved in continuing the traditions of the school and the unwritten curriculum, does a superb job of welcoming new students and families into the school community. New parents are teamed with a buddy family that helps them navigate all the expectations of the school community.

The relaxed character of the school makes it warm and comfortable on the surface layers. Most teachers are called by their last names with a Mrs., Mr. or Ms. in front of it, but some teachers who desire to be addressed by their first name are called that way too. The informal nature of personal exchanges can be witnessed by the casual conversations that occur between teachers, who are passing by the common area, and parents, who are there setting up for a cooking session with their child's class. Parents are abundantly present in the school. They help paint scenery for the class play, help set up for lunch, help with community service, help with a field trip, come in and read a special book or tell their family's roots story to the class.

A Parent's Association member once computed the number of volunteer hours donated by the parents to the school. It was astounding and amounted to an entire additional work force – and lucky for the school, it is a free source of labor and energy. The school could not operate without the support and commitment of the dedicated parents who love it. Parents often joke that they pay big money so they can come in and work for free.

An important element of the school's character is built around a weekly Meeting for Worship where all members of the school community stop their activities and come

together in a shared space – often the sacred Meeting House – to sit in silence. These weekly – and daily in some classrooms – opportunities to sit quietly and reflect are precious to all members of the school community. Parents are always invited to join their children during Meeting for Worship in the classroom or in the Meeting House.

The schools character is also shaped by its reputation for academic excellence. Children who attend are viewed as very smart and destined for success. Parents of children attending the school gain a higher status in the wider community.

Many parents report the school entices them with promises of peaceful times for their children because the publications state that the school is motivated by the values of Friends and directed by knowing there is "that of God" in everyone. The school seems to fly a lofty banner proclaiming, "We see the Light in every person, and therefore children are always kind and good in our school". Many parents are drawn to this idealistic peaceful, hopeful description of the school community. They imagine that all children are sweet and don't hit or tease. So when these normal childhood behaviors do occur, many new parents and children are shocked. Teachers have to explain that although the school has these wonderful ideals, the children are regular children who exhibit the range of normal behavior.

It can take parents a lot of time to accept the reality of the school environment. After removing the school from its "perfect, idealistic, Quaker pedestal" parents evolve to accept that their dreams of a totally peaceful and kind place are not true. Acceptance and adjustment to reality grow as parents focus on the good education their child is receiving.

But when a crisis arises, the school community does draw together and rely upon its core principles of "that of God" in everyone, "Let your Life Speak" and the

Testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship. The Quaker philosophy is like a safety net that wraps around the school and holds it together, especially in times of stress and grief.

The school has a formal structure with several levels. The Board of Trustees, which controls the school, sits at the top. A majority of the Board's members are Quakers because the school is led by the values of the Religious Society of Friends. The Head of School implements the directives and policies of the Board and reports to them.

Although the school has never been affiliated with a church, like other schools, it depends on strong Quaker leadership to shape the character of the school. The Head of School, always a male, is required to be a Quaker.

Under the Head of School are the three Principals for each division of the school - Elementary, Middle and High School. Also directly reporting to the Head of School are the Chief Financial Officer, The Admissions Director, The Athletics Director, The Information Technology Director, The Diversity Coordinator, The Institutional Advancement Director and The Associate Head of School.

The informal social structure of the school is heavily influenced by the relationships that the people have with each other, by their roles and expectations and by their personalities and their needs. These connections can go back twenty or thirty-five years and be inter-familial too – almost incestuous. The informal leaders in the school, who carry vital institutional knowledge as well as personal knowledge of the main characters, define the social structure. There are some teachers who have been teaching at the school for their entire work lives and never known any other work place. They have many years of teaching experience and social connections with the parents and families

in the school community. With a cadre of veteran teachers comes an accepted way of doing things, fixed opinions which are judgmental and solid friendships which don't always expand to include new teachers. Especially when the older teachers are all white and some newcomers are progressive thinkers or Black.

It's important to add that all of the teachers except one were hired by a very beloved Principal who wanted to please everyone and made individual arrangements with each teacher to suit her taste. This Principal hated conflict and avoided making tough decisions. He was famous for agreeing to one thing in a faculty meeting and then upon having a demanding teacher – the squeaky wheel – yell at him for not making the decision she wanted, he would capitulate and force everyone to go along, even though it was in conflict with the decision made by the group after lengthy discussions. Thus one of the most valuable social connections a teacher could have was a good friendly relationship with the Principal who loved to tell stories. Needless to say, there was a great deal of tension, distrust and dysfunction seething below the surface in the faculty community.

The informal social structure also holds a great deal of competitive anxiety, which adversely effects the dynamics of teacher work groups. Given the high expectations of teachers at a prestigious school, there is a self-guided pressure to be excellent and perfect. But several teachers assume an unhealthy, highly competitive stance, which can be surprising in a non-competitive Friends school that purports to see "that of God" in each person. This is a huge contradiction between philosophy and practice. The competitive teachers are very judgmental and harsh on each other.

A new teacher detected the tension in the environment. "There's a lot of competition here" she said. "People are fighting for praise, for admiration, for resources and for support. People have been allowed to feel insecure here. But people I speak to, do want things to change. They want it to be more collaborative, more trusting and warmer. People do want to have fun and feel happy. There's no reason why a teacher here should not feel happy. We all want the same thing really. We all want to be inspired, intellectually stimulated, connected and happy. Everyone wants to do a good job. I can't be somebody else, I can only be my best self."

There is a lot of insecurity in the underbelly of the social structure of the school. If teachers were confident and secure, would they fight to climb to the perceived top? I wonder.

In addition, the character elements of Inclusion and Exclusion hold proverbial court in the social arena of the school. Their powerful threads weave in and out of the social fabric of the school upsetting the social dynamics between students, parents and faculty.

### **Method**

To explore the evidence that the Acme school is in fact truly a Quaker school I conducted qualitative research and examined the ways teachers weave Quakerism into their daily curriculum and into the culture of their classroom. Faculty members completed detailed surveys about their use of Quaker tenets and Testimonies, which yielded a bounty of information for analysis. Through individual interviews with teachers, I also sought answers to the question: what in their pedagogy is particularly Quaker?

To discern what members of the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers as they are commonly known, think should be good practice in a Quaker school I read many books by Quakers. The primary tenet of Quakerism is the certainty of "That of God" in everyone and that people are lead by the Light of God to find Truth and connect with the Spirit. To practice Quakerism is to be in the process of seeking a continuing revelation of Truth. This is another main tenet of Quakerism. Quakers believe Truth is revealed when people seek it. Quakerism has no dogma or high religious officials who dictate orders for behavior – as in Catholicism and other religions. Thus there is a wide range of practices and beliefs among Friends but central is the belief that each person has "That of God" inside them.

### **Literature Review**

In reviewing the literature, several areas emerged from the writings on Friends education, including the following topics: Meeting for Worship, the Goals of a Quaker education, Quaker Pedagogy, Queries, Testimonies, and Mission Statement Impact.

#### **Meeting for Worship**

Primary in the life of a Friends school is the role of Meeting for Worship. This fact highlights the true, unique quality of a Quaker Education. In Meeting for Worship the community comes together by sitting in a sacred silence and children "turn to their Inner Light for guidance in living their lives" (Friends Council on Education, 2008, p. 3).

Most people do not think children can sit in sacred silence for 20 minutes or more. But they do! What children think about and how they connect with the divine energy in the Meeting

can only be speculated. Friends expect that children in a Quaker school will attend a weekly Meeting for Worship, even though some schools - such as Acme Friends - were late to establish that practice.

Although a Friends School does not direct students to believe in a proscribed religious creed, sitting in silence with peers and waiting upon the Spirit in Meeting for Worship can lead students to experience the "connection between the inward and outward life that is unique in Quaker education" (Friends Council on Education, p.3).

A "weekly education of the heart" is how Robert Smith, former Head of Sidwell Friends School describes Meeting for Worship in his book *A Quaker Book of Wisdom* (1998, p. 153). It is a "great source of strength and solace for a student body.... It is in shared silence that we can try to open our minds and listen to our best inner selves. It's a time when human beings can uncover their best selves" (Smith, 1998, p. 152-153).

Meeting is "also a time for introspection and community thinking, a time when a student can work on forming fair and good goals and plans for uses of time" (Smith, p. 153).

Paul Lacey (1998) elaborates on the importance of Meeting for Worship in *Growing into Goodness - Essays on Quaker Education*.

"Friends take it as a defining condition that a Quaker School hold a regular and required Meeting for Worship for the whole school community. We believe that Meeting for Worship is central to the life of the school and many expect the worship to take the form of silent waiting. What validates and *in-forms* Meeting for Worship and the practice of silence, however, are two fundamental convictions which Quaker faith and practice affirm: that God, the ultimate source of the sacred, exists, and that human beings can know and



respond to God's leadings... In the presence of the sacred, we want to be better, more deliberate in our actions, more careful, and reflective" (p. 1, 2 ).

A Quaker Friend told me that the late Earl Harrison, who served as Head of Sidwell Friends School for twenty years, once said "Meeting for Worship is our resurrection." What that means is open to discussion. My own interpretation of this statement, is that Meeting for Worship saves us; Meeting for Worship gives us another chance to be who we truly are, people with 'that of God' inside us and with our Inner Light shining. Meeting can be a time when students and teachers search for their true selves and separate from the external world. During Meeting for Worship, Light from God "streams down to the waiting group", creating unity, knowledge and power writes Howard Brinton in his 1952 book *Friends for Three Hundred Years* (as cited in Lacey, 1998, p. 58).

### **Goals of Quaker Education**

One of the goals of Quaker Education is to create communities of people who carry "a hunger for worship, a passion for truth and the experience of growth in the Light". (Friends Council on Education, 2008, p. 2). Historically, Friends have worked to provide a quality education for everyone - girls and boys, Blacks and poor whites. The emphasis on developing strong cognitive skills in children gave Quaker schools a good reputation in the community. They are known today for academic achievement in addition to a focus on 'that of God' in everyone. Members of a Friends community are encouraged to develop and seek their true potential through the practice of paying attention to the Inner Light in everyone.

As in many good schools, the curriculum in a Quaker school focuses on developing critical thinking skills in students. Stemming from the Quaker belief that “truth is continuously revealed and is accessible to the seeker” teachers in Quaker schools are invited to participate in creating curriculum and policies (Friends Council on Education, 2008, p. 2). One of the spiritual foundations of Quaker education is that people can sit and be open to truth.

Paul Lacey (1998) believes that a Quaker education is “rooted in spiritual strengths” (p. 81). It enhances a student’s ability to envision “new opportunities, new richness and new styles of fellowship” (p. 81). The spiritual purpose of a Quaker school is “to help prepare us to be open to the sacred, to learn how to recognize the sacred when people encounter it, and to discover their most appropriate responses to it” (Lacey, p. 3). The aims of Quaker education are “to encourage people to make the world better, to become informed, skilled agents of positive social, political, economic and educational change and to help our students learn to make their contributions from lives which are spiritually centered, fulfilled and happy” (Lacey, p. 80).

London Yearly Meeting describes graduates of a Quaker school as being able to develop “a strong sense of social understanding with tolerance and respect for others so that they have the power to succeed” (Friends Council, 2008, p. 2).

### **Quaker Pedagogy**

William Penn (1644-1718), a member of the Religious Society of Friends who founded Pennsylvania, believed in the connection between love and learning. “Let us then see what love can do” is one of his famous quotes. A Quaker curriculum is richer when the information is coupled with love. In addition to love, the habits of silence and

attention can inform the teaching-learning process when silence becomes an invitation for a student to enter a space where time is created to notice things and "to see and hear more fully" (Lacey, 1998, p. 8).

William Penn wrote centuries ago: "Delight to step home, within yourselves, I mean, and commune with your own hearts and be still..." (as cited in Lacey, p. 8).

Quaker schools offer a pedagogy that is more a fundamental attitude rather than a visible outcome (Dalken & McNaughton, 2004). Many parents whose children attend Quaker schools can testify to this fact.

The mission statements of most Quaker schools affirm the belief that there is "that of God" in everyone and that teachers are dedicated to seeing the Inner Light in each individual student. This involves a centering of spirit and an approach to students and colleagues alike. There is a certainty that the teacher is an instrument, not an authority.

Steve Smith (2004) asked some probing questions in an essay on "The Spiritual Roots of Quaker Pedagogy." Where is the authority of knowledge to be found? What is the connection between classroom learning and the rest of life? If there is "that of God" in everyone, then what does this realization mean for the relationship of teacher and student?

Quaker pedagogy flows from the Quaker faith and practice of knowing through experience rather than knowing through an external authority. The radical egalitarianism of early Friends challenged authorities and hierarchies. Including all in the community of learning and inviting all voices is important. If true education awakens, empowers and liberates then a teachers' role is to facilitate this process (Smith, S., 2004, p. 13).

Although the teacher offers information to invite the student to have insight, it is only when students themselves awaken to that insight and make it their own has true learning taken place (Smith, R., 1998, p.10).

Parker Palmer (1976) believes "the important question is not what the text says, but what it says that can be validated by you.... The test is always experiential (or experimental).... The central moment of teaching and learning is not a mechanical transfer of that information from one data bank to another but a personal intimate realization of truth when the light of consciousness flares and expands in insight, and one can say, 'Oh, I see!'" that the central moment of teaching and learning occurs (Palmer, p. 3).

The priority of experience is a main component of Quaker pedagogy (Smith, S., 2004). It is a common belief of Quaker and progressive educators alike, for Quakerism is experiential and progressive education revolves around the premise that children learn by doing, that children learn by having experiences. John Dewey (1932), one of the pioneers of progressive education, felt that democratic civil societies are dependent on children developing curiosity, a sense of social justice and the ability to think critically. These characteristics are in alignment with the qualities Quakers seek to encourage in children by experiencing the truth of a lesson. Children are participants in their learning process; the teacher does not hold all the knowledge. There is a partnership between the children and teachers in the search for knowledge, which can be revealed to the community of learners at any moment.

"Quaker faith and practice rely primarily upon experience rather than authorities for guidance and veracity. Friends have found they come to know truth experientially"

(Holliday, 2006, p. 2). Having experienced God's inward and outward presence Friends realize that revelation is continuing, that God's presence is universally available to all people.

Truth seeking is also primary in Quaker education. To promote the search for truth, Friends practice honesty and integrity. They also practice simplicity to allow more time and space in their lives for the search for truth (Holliday, 2006).

To cultivate these moments of enlightenment, the teacher and learner are well served by faith that they are indeed possible – in Thoreau's phrase "an infinite expectation of the dawn."

Teachers should believe in a student's potential for insight, growth and productivity.

Friends believe that lived experience is the basis of true knowledge and Friends have an extraordinary commitment to consistency: living day to day in accord with one's experiential conviction of truth. The pedagogical implications of consistency in word and action are many and profound: Can my claim be validated by what I actually experience?

The expectation that our behavior be in accord with our convictions speaks to the issue of character and personal integrity: what goes on inside a school shouldn't be divorced from what goes on outside. Responsible pedagogy connects the academic with the rest of life by taking an environmental class to the bank of a polluted river and doing service by picking up trash. Community service at Quaker schools is integral to the curriculum and vital for a moral education (Smith, R., p. 154). Nonviolence is practiced at some Quaker schools by eliminating grades.

In a chapter entitled "A Quaker legacy", Robert Smith (1998) offers suggestions for life. He encourages people to "Have the patience to be silent and listen for truth. Then

have the courage to let the best that is in you direct your actions. Recognize that your true identity is nothing more or less than the way in which you conduct your public and private affairs – the way in which, for good or for ill, you let your life speak” (p. 190). A simple phrase that speaks volumes about the goals of Quaker pedagogy – “Let your lives speak” – was coined by the man who founded Quakerism in the 17th century, George Fox.

Quakers hold Meetings for Worship, Meetings with a Concern for Business, Meetings for Marriage and Meetings for Learning. In a book, titled *Meeting for Learning: Education in a Quaker Context*, Parker Palmer (1976) lists two main elements of a Meeting for Learning - the absence of formal authority and the presence of group trust that is held by all participants. In this type of learning environment the teacher actually has to work harder because of the need to nurture the students and encourage their expertise. In addition, a trusting environment needs to be created and held together by the teacher. The search for truth is also present in a Meeting for Learning and hopefully is revealed.

Most communities of Friends have a Sunday school program for children that is called First Day School. It is instructive to consider the subjects covered in First Day School because it uses an intentional curriculum that teaches Quaker faith and practice to children. Although Quaker schools have an academic purpose underlying their curriculum that is not required in the First Day Schools, perhaps some of these subjects could be helpful to teachers in Quaker schools. Each unit in the First Day School curriculum shares stories from the bible as well as stories about Quakers letting their life speak. In addition, there are activities and guiding questions to help children understand

the Quaker testimonies. Marsha Holliday (2002) wrote *Quaker Values: a first day school curriculum for children ages 9 to 11*.

The units for study and discussion are the following: There is that of God in Everyone, There is that of God in everything, God is always with us, Friends try to tell the truth and keep their word, We are called to be kind considerate and compassionate, We are called to befriend people who are different from us, Our meeting is like a growing family, We are called to answer or respond to that of God in everyone, We are called to serve others, The service project, Service is love made visible, Worship helps us love and forgive, The Holy Spirit leads us.

### **Queries**

Quakers have a practice of designing queries to help the community think about important issues. Queries are more exact than questions for they aim to keep us awake and aware about the alignment of our daily activities with our values. Queries produce reflective self-examination or community examination. Friends use queries to reflect upon the way we live our lives based on the Quaker testimonies. Queries remind Friends of the ideals we seek to attain – queries help Friends assess their faith and practice.

Students in Quaker schools often develop their own queries that speak to their condition and the environment in the school community. These monthly queries are shared in each classroom during weekly Meeting for Worship.

In *Toward a Quaker Pedagogy* Nancy Starmer (2004), the former head of George School, wrote about the value of having students ask reflective and thoughtful queries. She also described how a visitor to her school, named Jim Baucom - a professor of Educational Psychology at Landmark College, made a connection between neuroscience

and Quaker practice. He shared research that discovered how “asking questions actually opens up new synapses and connections in the brain, connections that make the brain more receptive to new and different points of view” (Starmer, p. 26). Now that is affirming!

An example of a query to affirm the Quaker practice of “speaking to the condition of others or learning from those on the margin” could be “How can we put conscious attention to the voices on the margin and the condition of the other?” Nancy Starmer points out that it is not just the rich and powerful who ignore others who are foreign to them but that “we all have a tendency to marginalize those whose perspectives are most alienating or threatening to our own” (p. 30). How can Quakers embrace the political conservatives in our environment? Is an example of another challenging Query.

Coming full circle, a discussion of Quaker use of queries returns to collective truth seeking. All scholarship can be described as a search for that which is true, but for Quakers truth seeking is a process that begins with Quaker values and testimonies (Starmer, p. 31).

### **Testimonies**

Friends Testimonies are outward expressions of God's leadings. Testimonies are the application of Friends values to situations in personal lives and in corporate life of the Religious Society of Friends. Paul Lacey (1998) writes that the main objective of Friends schools, initially, was to “preserve the testimonies...and to inculcate them in each new generation” (p. 57). However there are not many new generations of Quakers today. Quakers are few in number and certainly there are not many attending Quaker schools, for the tuition is very expensive.



A testimony is different from a secular value. It describes a “witness to the living truth within the human heart as it is acted out in everyday life” (Dale, 2000 as cited in SFS Testimony booklet). A Testimony is not a creed; it is a way of life based on knowing that there is that of God in everybody. How do Friends live based on the Quaker testimonies? “Walk cheerfully over the world answering that of God in every one” proscribed George Fox in 1656.

The Testimonies have become fewer from the original twelve listed by William Penn in 1694 when he wrote the book called the *Rise and Progress of the People called Quakers*. A very thoughtful Quaker writing about the testimonies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is Howard Brinton. In his book, *Quaker Education in Theory and Practice* (1940), Brinton lists “four social doctrines” – community, harmony, equality and simplicity – as core testimonies (p. 15).

Different Quaker schools seem to emphasize some testimonies over others or use different terminology. The main testimonies can be easily remembered by the word “spices”. Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship are the testimonies represented in “spices”. This technique helps both children and adults.

The Sidwell Friends School Testimonies Committee (2002) published a booklet on the Testimonies and included the following:

*That of God in Everyone* The Light within, Truth, Love

*Integrity* Honesty Sincerity Truth Trust

*Peace* Harmony Understanding Reconciliation Nonviolence Serenity

*Compassion* Caring Love Kindness Empathy

*Simplicity* Balance Priority Clearness – Do you clear away the clutter in your life so that you can more readily hear the ‘still small voice of God’?

*Stewardship* Responsibility Conservation Protection Nurturing

*Justice* Fairness Respect Equality Action

*Service* Serving Sharing Helping Respect

*Learning* Teaching Questioning, Discovering, Creating Truth-seeking

*Community* Caring Inclusion Interdependence Welcoming

*Meeting for Worship* Silence Listening Sharing Reflection Gathered” (pp. 2-12).

The Testimonies booklet lists these queries for Meeting for Worship: “Do you come to meeting with heart and mind prepared for the silence? Do you listen openly and expectantly in the silence and to vocal messages? Do we feel the power of the community drawing us together in the meeting?” (p. 12).

The Friends School of Baltimore, founded in 1784, states that it is guided by Quaker values of Truth, Equality, Simplicity, Community and Peaceful resolution of conflict. The school published a book on Faith and Practice to clarify the beliefs, practices and philosophy of that Quaker school for members of the community. The book begins with a definitive section on the Quaker spirit, which makes plain the basic tenets of Quakerism.

"The Religious Society of Friends is guided by the understanding that there is that of God in each human being and by the importance of a continuous search by each individual for increasing knowledge and wisdom. From these understandings the values of speaking truth, treating all human beings with respect, living simply,

striving for community and resolving conflicts through peaceful means can naturally unfold. These values known as testimonies when lived through ones life form the foundation of the philosophy of the Quaker Spirit at Friends school.”

The Friends School of Baltimore *Faith and Practice* covers the following topics and includes meaningful queries to help the reader:

*The Quaker Spirit*

*Meeting for Worship* – How can we make Meeting for Worship in the school community meaningful for everyone?

*Truth and Continuing Revelation* – In what ways am I open to knowledge and to the ideas and beliefs of others? How do I promote a climate of respect among others for considering the ideas of all? (Note: The principle of being open to new truths is termed 'continuing revelation').

*Nurturing the Gifts in Each Person* – Do I listen to and respect the light within each person?

*The Responsibilities of the Individual* – Do I try always to speak the truth? Do I listen carefully, deeply and respectfully to what others have to say? Do I willingly engage in community service?

*Equality* – Do I treat every member of the Friends School community with dignity and respect? How do I take actions that encourage tolerance and acceptance? How do I speak out against prejudice and discrimination?

*Simplicity* – Do I let my possessions and the desire for things dictate how I live? Do I cultivate healthful and moderate habits? Am I aware that my

words as well as my actions contribute to the climate of the school community?

*Peace* – How do I strive to live in harmony with those around me? When I disagree with someone or become angry, how do I handle the various levels of conflict? How can I maintain an attitude of peace in times of turmoil and conflict?

*Decision Making* – Do I understand that as we make decisions we are seeking the divine will for Friends School? As we seek sense of the Meeting, do I listen with respect and genuine interest to each person's point of view whether I agree or not?

*Cooperation and Competition* – How can my individual light combine with others to create a greater light rather than trying to outshine others?

*Friends School as a Caring Community* – How do we find ways to let our lives speak on issues of social civic and environmental responsibility in our community?

The Testimony of Community is frequently combined with the idea of caring for the dignity of each individual in many school mission statements, writes Paul Lacey (1998). The primary importance of community is demonstrated through use of consensus as a decision-making process and by student participation in community service (p. 60).

Robert Smith (1998) lists some life lessons that relate to the Quaker testimonies.

"Make your love visible in the world through your work."

"Seek justice in the world, but not in your own life."

"Look for the light of God in every person."

"Let your life speak."

In discussing the teaching-learning process, Lacey (1998) acknowledges the difficulty of “discovering how to teach, model and reinforce the habits which express the testimonies and how to encourage people not only to learn about testimonies but to make them their own” (p. 61). He asks vital queries. “How can we best conceptualize, express and teach the Quaker Testimonies to school-age people today? What are the pedagogical problems in teaching the testimonies?” (p. 61).

### **Mission Statements at Non-Quaker Schools**

After seeking to understand how the Quaker values and philosophy are manifested in the life and curriculum of a Quaker school, I felt compelled to look at the impact of mission statements at non-Quaker schools. I examined how their particular philosophy connects to the performance of teachers and children in the classroom.

A mission statement begins with identifying the core values that explain the direction of the school and provide a foundation for understanding actions taken in the operation of the school. “Missions explain the curricular focus of a school. Missions depict the ”*what* “ of student learning” (Frumkin, Manno, Edgington, 2011). The mission of a school grows from a set of values that reflect the schools view of the purpose of education and how to best implement its educational program. A mission statement “provides the context for governance decision making and the way the school is managed” (Boerema, 2006, p. 182).

Faith based schools promote religious development. Public schools promote equality of opportunity. Elite private schools promote social advantages for better careers with status.

Private schools are often known for their particular mission, which in addition to touting its academic virtues promotes social connections and advantages for its graduates. “The mission of private schools is based on beliefs about the nature of the good life, the human task, and the role that education should play in preparing for that life and task” (Boerema, 2006, p. 183).

The greatest schools are the ones that “constantly look for better ways to live their respective missions” (Olverson and Vives, 2012, p. 102). A mission statement should be “a constant call to arms” (p. 102). It should be more than a description of the school’s purpose.

A mission statement matters. The Head of School can use the mission statement “to hold the school accountable and inspire its constituencies to new and greater heights” (p. 102). One study that compared the mission statements with student achievement discovered how words matter and impact student performance. Mission statements that highlight academic success and a challenging environment produce a school population where students actually do perform well. (Alexander, J., Jones, C., Saenz, T., Slate, J.R., Wiesman, K., 2008). Words do matter. If you say it, attention is focused for the child and the words shape the reality.

Mission statements should inspire and should be an invitation to hold the schools feet to the proverbial fire. They should ensure that the school lives up to its ideals and goals (Olverson and Vives, 2012). But some mission statements mean nothing to the teachers in the school because they are so bland and predictable. Even the admissions directors at some private schools could not reconstruct their own mission statement when given a line from it, because they were so non-descriptive and commonplace.

How does a mission statement manifest in the life of the school and impact the curriculum? When a schools' mission statement includes clear religious foundations and declares adherence to a biblical curriculum, does that get reflected in the daily lessons and classroom practice? A study of two Christian schools in New Zealand found that there was little difference between the daily classroom life in biblical schools and the daily classroom life in secular schools. The mission statement did not become visible in the active life of the school. While most teachers could express the school's goals and mission, only one could speak to how the biblical vision was manifested in her teaching practice and impacted her own pedagogy (Scouller, 2012).

### **Forward Thoughts**

To what degree does a school live its mission? How does the mission align with the daily operation and culture of the school? How does a school's marketing plan align with or detract from the mission of the school? What is the real difference between a Quaker School and a good non-Quaker school?

Project Zero at Harvard University empowers teachers with thinking strategies to enhance their students understanding. One thinking strategy - See, Think, Wonder - seems appropriate for me to employ in this review of literature for my Masters thesis.

What do I see?

I see a Friends school that is known as an excellent Quaker School.

What do I think?

I think it may be a very unusual place that is led by all the uplifting, peaceful and caring values that I associate with Quakers.

What do I wonder?

I wonder how they get all those good Quaker values into the daily curriculum.

I wonder how the teachers speak to children. I wonder how the children speak to each other? I wonder how it is different from a regular good school?

I wonder what role “that of God” plays in the teaching and the curriculum? I wonder how the Testimonies are woven into the daily life of the school. I wonder how Quaker practices show up in the classroom.

I wonder how Quaker is a Quaker school?



## **The Current Study**

### **Theme One: Quaker Testimonies**

Friends are lead by the Quaker Testimonies, principles to live by and guide actions in the world. The Testimonies are Simplicity, Peace or Harmony, Integrity, Community, Equality or Justice, Stewardship. Depending on the group of Quakers or the author of a text, Equality is used instead of Justice because equality infers justice although the deeper meaning of each term unveils some contradictions. Some Friends use the term 'Harmony' instead of 'Peace' because if you have harmony, there is peace. Again a deeper examination of each term uncovers some contradictions. If you have peace, there may not be harmony. How do you get to or create peace? Creating harmony seems a bit more personal and accessible to many people.

The First Day school programs at many Quaker Meeting Houses use the acronym or term SPICES to help young children learn the Testimonies. S is for Simplicity, P is for Peace, I is for Integrity, C is for community, E is for Equality and S is for Stewardship. If the words justice and harmony were used in the acronym, it wouldn't work.

The Friends (Quaker) Testimonies are used in this research as a barometer of Quaker practice for they are a main foundation of the Religious Society of Friends. The way teachers use the Testimonies with students offers clarity about the Quaker character of the school and demonstrates how Quakerism lives in the community. Use of the Testimonies is a tangible yardstick that I can use to measure the evidence of Quakerism in a classroom and the school.

The survey was given to 35 teachers (not including myself) in the Elementary School. Thirty surveys were returned for the research study.

**Results**

**Question 1.** The first question on the survey asked the teachers, “How often do you discuss the Quaker Testimonies with your class?” Teachers were given the choice of daily, weekly, bi-monthly, monthly, rarely and never for reporting the frequency of their actions. Of the thirty survey respondents, twelve faculty members (40%) reported they discuss the Quaker Testimonies monthly. Two faculty members, 7%, reported they discuss them twice a month or bi-weekly. Six faculty members (20%) responded they discuss the Quaker Testimonies weekly, while two faculty members (7%) responded they discuss them daily. Six faculty members (20%) responded they discuss them rarely, and two faculty members (7%) report they never discuss the Quaker Testimonies.

Table 1. How often do you discuss the Quaker Testimonies with your class?						
	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Frequency	2	6	12	2	6	2
Percentage	7	20	40	7	20	7

Note: Resource teachers who do not have a formal daily class were included in this survey. It is possible that they reported never discussing the testimonies with their class, because they don't have a class and the question doesn't apply to their situation.

Discussion of Question 1 Findings:

These findings indicate that the Quaker Testimonies are being discussed at least weekly by 27% of the teachers (Daily (2), Weekly (6). This is reflective of the general ambiance in the school as well as the ambivalence towards sharing the tenets of Quakerism with students. A positive figure of 27% shows that one forth of the faculty has

embraced use of the Testimonies. However, the converse suggests that 73% are not discussing the testimonies often.

I think the differences in frequency reflect the honest comfort-level disparities among the faculty. Many faculty members had never heard of the Testimonies before or never thought of teaching them as a way to enhance the Quaker character of the school.

This past fall a poster that listed the names of the Testimonies under the acronym SPICES (Simplicity-Peace-Integrity-Community-Equality-Stewardship), was created and made available to all teachers. Everyone loved the posters and each classroom now has a big one hanging on the wall. Teachers report that the poster helps them remember to connect the Testimonies to children's behavior and it also helps the children to be mindful of the Testimonies even though they don't understand each concept fully yet.

The majority of the children have monthly exposure to the testimonies, often when the new query is written and available. On opposite ends of the scale, 8 teachers discuss them weekly or daily and 6 teachers rarely discuss them. Again, this is reflective of the great autonomy the teachers have in deciding what to do with their class and include in their classroom culture and practice. If a teacher is not comfortable or familiar with the Quaker Testimonies, then she or he can choose to not discuss them.

This practice reflects the absence of a clear policy about what is to be taught about Quakerism in this Quaker school. When teachers are hired, their professional credentials and teaching experience and personality are considered. No teacher has ever been asked about his or her knowledge of Quakerism or Quaker practice. The school sends teachers to a one or two day workshop about Quakerism in their first year where they are given a crash course but when they return, there is no follow up or coach to help

them discern the best way to "be" in this Quaker school. Many teachers do wonder what they should be doing that is unlike what they did in their previous "good" school. New teachers speculate and ponder deeply "What is this Quaker piece"? Teachers are earnest in wanting to fulfill the Quaker philosophic and spiritual mission. But without support or even opportunities to discuss their teaching practice and Quaker tenets, teachers gradually stop seeking and just do what they know how to do, teach in a good manner.

When asked in the survey how well the school prepares faculty to teach the Quaker Testimonies, (Question 20 in the survey) 50% of teachers report that the school prepares them poorly or somewhat poorly. When teachers were asked in the survey if they know enough about Quakerism in order to implement Quaker practice in their classroom and their teaching practice, only 30% reported 'yes'. Teachers reporting that they 'somewhat' know enough were 40%. Teachers reporting they don't know enough and 'need support' were 20%.

At Quaker Life Committee meetings these questions often arise; What should teachers be expected to know and share about Quakerism? Is the opportunity to share the spirit of Quakerism lost when only 5% (2 out of 36) of the teachers are Quaker?

When a Catholic school expects its teachers to be knowledgeable enough to communicate the Catholic doctrine and values is it unreasonable to expect the teachers in a Quaker school to do the same with the Quaker tenets?

These questions are slowly becoming a part of the School consciousness-raising process as the new Principal looks at all aspects of Quaker school life with new eyes.

**Question 2.** The second question asked teachers to respond to the statement, "I refer to the Quaker Testimonies in classroom discussions". Teachers were given the

choice of daily, weekly, bi-monthly, monthly, rarely and never for reporting the frequency of their actions.

It is interesting that both ends of the response spectrum carry the same percentage. Thirty four percent responded daily or weekly and thirty percent responded rarely or never. Two teachers (7%) refer to the Quaker Testimonies daily while eight teachers (27%) refer to them weekly. Three teachers (10%) refer to them bi-weekly, eight teachers (27%) refer to them monthly, seven teachers (23%) rarely refer to them, and two teachers (7%) never refer to the Quaker Testimonies. See Table 2 below for data.

Table 2. I refer to the Quaker Testimonies in classroom discussions						
	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Frequency	2	7	8	3	8	2
Percentage	7	23	27	10	27	7

Discussion of Question 2 Findings:

The findings from Question 2 indicate that there are more teachers referring to the Quaker Testimonies weekly and daily, 34%, than those who discuss the testimonies, 27%. While this question could be interpreted to mean the same thing but asked different ways, there is a distinction between referring and discussing. Teachers can refer to something by including it in their general comments to the class, as in “Friends be sure to recycle your paper so we can be good stewards of our mother earth”. Teachers require more time and planning for a discussion, so they can delve into the topic with substance, as in “Today Friends, I’ve noticed some very hurt feelings because of the games played at recess. We know that our class is our community. I wonder how we can help members of

our community feel safe and welcome.” That could open the way for a meaningful discussion of the Quaker Testimonies of community and peace.

One third of the teachers never or rarely refer to the Quaker Testimonies. This is significant for the teachers are the messengers of information about the schools Quaker foundation and Quaker practice in the school community. Questions arise as to the feasibility of this expectation when only 5% teachers are Quaker. Should teachers be expected to embrace and enhance Quakerism for the children?

**Question 3.** The third question asked teachers to respond to the statement "I weave the Quaker Testimonies into my lessons". Again, teachers were given the choice of daily, weekly, bi-monthly, monthly, rarely and never for reporting the frequency of their actions.

These findings show that six teachers (20%) reported they weave them in daily and four teachers (13%) reported they weave them in weekly. Thus, 33% of teachers connected the Testimonies to lessons weekly or daily. Four teachers (13%) reported they weave them in bi-weekly. Ten teachers (33%) responded they weave them into lessons monthly, while 8 teachers (27%) responded they rarely weave the Testimonies into lessons. The never category had no respondents. See Table 3 below for data.

Table 3. I weave the Quaker Testimonies into my lessons						
	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Frequency	0	8	10	4	4	6
Percentage	0	27	33	13	13	20

**Interviews with Teachers about the Testimonies**

The topic of the Testimonies was also discussed during individual interviews.

Eight teachers were interviewed for this research project and asked "How do you weave the Quaker Testimonies into your lessons"? The answers revealed how new and unfamiliar the Testimonies are to most teachers, who were not able to easily state a direct answer to the question. Below is a sampling of comments from teachers.

"It's hard to make it a living part of our classroom. It's seldom a planned activity."

"I feel we live them but don't name them and that's a drawback for children".

"I've been exploring this with my partner but it's something we don't do well... yet."

"We need to be explicit about language of testimonies. We talk during community meeting but that is only once a week."

Teachers indicated they felt badly about not using the Testimonies in their lessons. Several teachers said, "I need to be more intentional" about connecting the Testimonies to classroom life. Several teachers seemed to be aware of this void in their practice and indicated they want to do a better job.

The faculty Quaker Life Committee created and distributed posters that list the SPICES - six of the Quaker Testimonies. Many teachers interviewed mentioned how helpful they are in reminding them to highlight the Testimonies when a situation arises.

"The poster helps, we can point to them and say that's what those words say and this is what you are doing right now so it connects actions to testimonies. We are noticing and naming behaviors, being more intentional than before."

"The poster reminds me. One opportunity to talk about the Testimonies came up organically. Some children were gossiping and I reminded them about the word

community on the poster and that's not the way to build this. It's nice to have legs – Quaker Testimony legs - to stand on when I talk to children about choices and behavior."

"My own awareness has not been very high. The posters have heightened my awareness. Testimony words are new for children – I'm thinking of ways to bring that vocabulary in slowly so children will get comfortable with the words."

"I don't mention the Testimonies as much as I could. The posters help me remember, but I still don't do as much as I could. I need to be more intentional."

There are some teachers who have found ways to weave the Testimonies into their lessons. One teacher uses the celebration of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in January to discuss the Testimonies of justice, peace, integrity and community. Another teacher created a Quaker cupboard to use when talking about the SPICES and "make them concrete enough for little children."

Teachers reported they regularly use storybooks to introduce a topic and initiate a discussion. "We talk about integrity in community meeting and with books we read." Teachable moments can also emerge at any time with children. One teacher said, "We have lessons in the moments, when things rise up and surface, when things emerge and we connect the testimonies to those moments."

Other teachers report the Testimonies are present in their classroom community by placing an emphasis on integrity, stewardship and respectful behavior. "It weaves in with how we treat one another." "We talk a lot about integrity during conflict resolution with friendships and taking turns." "Integrity and respect are interwoven in our social skill building." "We model equality – we all learn from each other."



### Discussion of Question 3 Findings:

These figures reflect the teachers' earnest desire to embrace and share the Quaker Testimonies with their students. They show that 33% connect the Testimonies to lessons weekly or daily and 46% connect them to lessons monthly or bi-monthly. The 27% who rarely weave them into lessons is cause for concern and invites further study.

The comments from the interviews reflect the growing awareness and interest that teachers have in knowing and sharing the Quaker Testimonies with their students. There is a desire to be more intentional about them.

Teachers were honest about the fragility of their current practice with the Testimonies. The Testimonies most frequently mentioned as being weaved into the lessons were Integrity, Community, Equality, Simplicity and Stewardship.

Teachers also reported the spontaneous moments when the Testimonies were woven into classroom life and talks designed to make sense of behavior. "Lessons in the moment" was how one teacher described it. "When things emerge we work to connect the Testimonies to those moments". "We are noticing and naming behaviors, being more intentional than before." It's the "way we treat each other" and the "way we talk to each other".

This reflects an awareness that the core and essence of Quaker Testimonies are universal and not just held in the arena of Quaker practice. Community is created by the way we take care of each other and by the tone we have when speaking to each other and resolving disagreements. "Quakers do not hold a monopoly on good values" one teacher reported.

As part of their good teaching practice most teachers do discuss, model and weave integrity, community, equality, peace and stewardship into their lessons without ever naming them as Quaker Testimonies. Simplicity as a Testimony appears to be less mentioned and accessible to teachers, especially with the very busy and rushed schedule that controls their day.

So the good news is that the SPICES are alive and breathing in the air of the classrooms. Posters, created by the heads of the faculty Quaker Life committee, that artistically display the Testimonies have been enthusiastically embraced by all the teachers. One version of the poster features the Testimonies as bright orange carrots, emerging from the ground. Another version uses trees to illustrate the Testimonies. Positive statements from faculty members such as, "they help me remember to name behaviors" and "they help me be more intentional about mentioning the Testimonies" are indicative of their high value in the school.

The bad news is that the Testimonies are not frequently being named and noticed and brought into the consciousness of children and teachers. The importance of the Quaker Testimonies in a Quaker school that desires to have a vital and visible Quaker practice cannot be underestimated. Hopefully the discussions and new awareness this year about the Testimonies will move them forward into the curriculum and practice of teachers next year.

**Question 4.** Teachers were asked to respond to the statement, "I use the Quaker Testimonies for guidance in relating to students." Teachers were given the choice of daily, weekly, bi-monthly, monthly, rarely and never for reporting the frequency of their actions.

Teachers reported the following on the survey. Almost half the teachers (43%) reported daily use of the Quaker Testimonies for guidance in relating to students. Thirteen percent responded weekly, 13% responded bi-weekly, while 16% responded monthly. Thirteen percent reported they rarely use the Testimonies for guidance and 0% reported never using them. See Table 4 below for data.

Table 4. I use the Quaker Testimonies for guidance in relating to students						
	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Frequency	0	4	5	4	4	13
Percentage	0	13	16	13	13	43

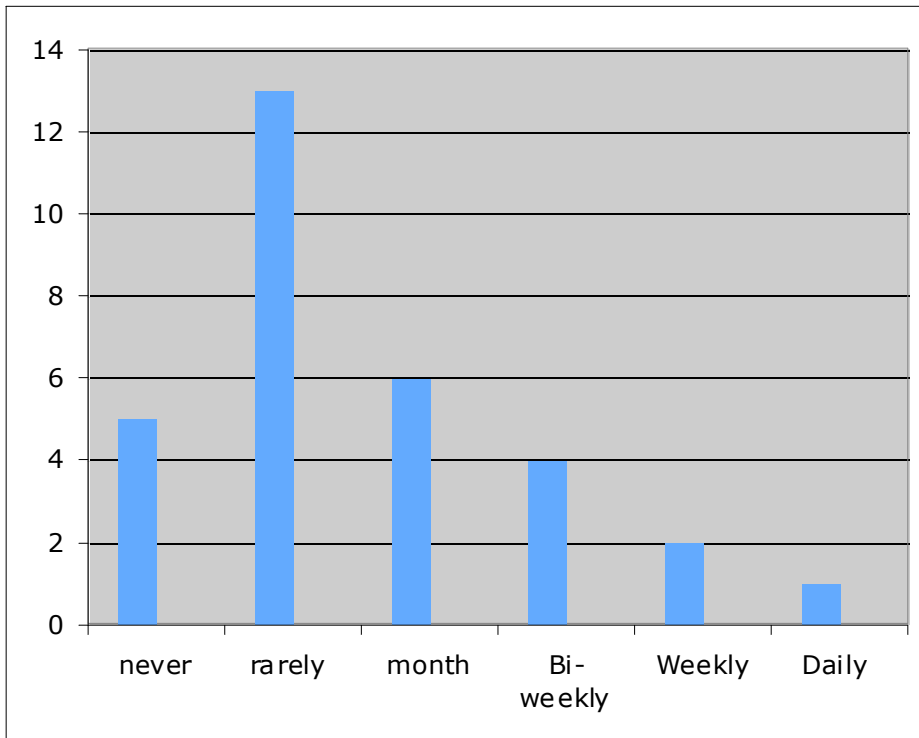
Discussion of Question 4 Findings:

It is encouraging that so many teachers, 56%, actually make the Testimonies part of their tool kit for relating to students every day or weekly. This is one way the school can build on its Quaker practice and character. If the school will create a safe space for teachers to discuss how certain testimonies speak to them and offer ways they can embrace them in their practice, the entire community would benefit.

**Question 5.** Teachers were asked to respond to the statement, "I hear students talking about the Quaker Testimonies." As indicated before, teachers were given the choice of daily, weekly, bi-monthly, monthly, rarely and never for reporting the frequency.

More than half the teachers (60%) reported they rarely or never hear students talk about the Testimonies. Twenty percent reported they hear talk monthly while 13% report bi-weekly and 7% report weekly. No teacher (0%) reported daily. See Table 5 below for data.

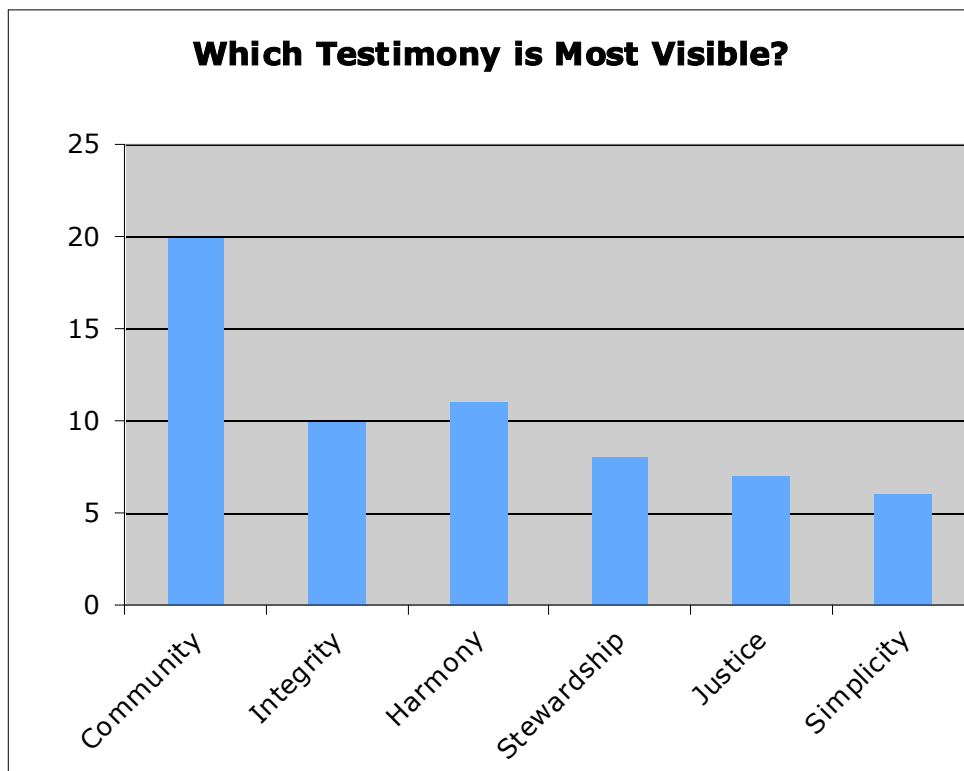
Table 5. How often do you hear students talking about a Quaker Testimony?						
	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Frequency	5	13	6	4	2	0
Percentage	17	43	20	13	7	0



Discussion of Question 5 Findings:

These findings are reflective of the reality at the school. Fifty percent of teachers report they never or rarely hear students talking about the Testimonies. They say the proof is in the pudding - in this case the students who are learning and absorbing in the school community. The evidence of a vibrant Quakerism will be in the children. If the children are not talking about the testimonies, they are not real or present for them. Are they getting the message? Are teachers not passing it on?

**Question 6.** Teachers were asked to "rank the order in which each Quaker Testimony is visible in their class." Teachers reported the following order on the survey. Community was reported to be the most visible Testimony. Harmony was second, Integrity was third, Stewardship was fourth, Justice was fifth, and Simplicity was ranked sixth most visible. The term Harmony is often used as a substitute for the word Peace and Justice is similarly used as an umbrella term for Equality. See chart below for data.



### Interviews with Teachers

During the interviews teachers were asked, "Can you share an example of how Friends Testimonies are expressed in your class?" Teachers gave examples of how the Quaker Testimonies of Stewardship, Community, Equality, Integrity, and Simplicity are expressed in their classes. It is intriguing that the Peace Testimony was not included.

One teacher said it was "too abstract" for her students. Yet teachers of younger students have reported to colleagues their discussions about Peace - what it is, how we can create it.

The Testimony most cited by teachers (50%) was Community as evidenced during Community Meeting. Teachers focus a great deal of energy on creating inclusive and viable classroom communities. Stewardship can be interpreted to include service that was mentioned by 25% of the teachers. Equality was also mentioned by 25% of the teachers as being present in their classroom. Examples of Integrity - truth telling - being practiced in class were cited by 37% of the teachers interviewed.

The following are highlights from the teacher's responses.

"I think we do a good job this year with the Testimonies - remembering to talk about them and use them in conversation when it makes sense in context, as when we do veggie cutting. We also do a lot of stewardship. One child said "I can be stewardship." I said, well you can be a steward."

"Community meeting. We take care of each other, we care about others, and we help each other."

"Community Meeting. How we are treating each other, how we can show kindness, work through problems, be helpful to others."

"Integrity. My teaching partner and I modeled it when we lost some homework and confessed the truth to the class."

"Equality first and foremost. My teaching partner and I strike an equal balance of what it means to be a teacher in our classroom. Kids see that we are equal."

"We held in the Light a fragile newborn the baby panda in the fall. When the baby died, we held the mommy panda in the Light."

"Community. There's always a search for community, we are a family, we should be able to look around our circle and know we stand up for one another, we look out for one another."

#### Discussion of Question 6 Findings:

Teachers report to be comfortable with practicing the Testimony of community most often. Even if they don't name what they are doing as one of the SPICES (the Testimonies) teachers are creating, nourishing and enhancing their classroom community. One teacher mentioned that all good teachers work on community with their class. This point highlights the question of what is the difference between a regular good school with sound practices and a Quaker school built on the foundation of the tenets of the Religious Society of Friends. Teachers report that they focus on taking care of one another, helping others, taking care of the environment, doing service work, telling the truth, being responsible, treating each other equally, resolving disagreements with words and using a general tone that encompasses the Quaker Testimonies. The teachers are seasoned professionals and caring human beings. They are dedicated to living the Testimonies because they good for the children and the school. However, naming the Testimonies and linking them to the actions and behavior of everyone, teachers included, is not present yet.

(Please note that the questions are grouped by topic. Not numeric order).

**Question 15.** Teachers were asked to respond to the question, "How often do you and your grade level team talk about the Testimonies?"

Two-thirds of grade level teams (67%) rarely or never talk about the Testimonies. Twenty percent report they talk about them monthly while only 3% report weekly talk. No teachers report daily or bi-monthly discussions about the Testimonies with their grade level team.

See Table 15 for data below.

Table 15. How often do you and your grade level team talk about the Testimonies?						
	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Frequency	9	11	6	0	1	0
Percentage	30	37	20	0	3	0

Discussion of Question 15 Findings:

These figures reflect the absence of administrative support for Quaker practice with the teachers and their teams. It is also indicative of the absence of teachers who are Quaker on the faculty and the unfamiliarity that most teachers have with Quaker tenets and Testimonies. Although teachers may discuss items that affect the classroom community or issues of integrity, it is not common or 'normal' for teachers to bring up Quaker Testimonies in their team meetings.

**Question 16.** Teachers were asked to respond to the question, "How often do you notice school administrators mentioning the Quaker Testimonies?" A small percentage of teachers (14%) notice administrators mentioning the Testimonies weekly or bi-monthly. Thirty percent notice this monthly but the largest number 40% rarely notice administrators mentioning the Testimonies. Three percent report they never hear mention of the Testimonies by administrators and nobody or 0% notice this practice daily.

See Table 16 below for data.



Table 16. How often do you notice administrators mentioning the Testimonies?						
	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Frequency	1	12	9	2	2	0
Percentage	3	40	30	7	7	0

Discussion of Question 16 Findings:

Almost three- fourths of the teachers rarely, never or monthly hear administrators talking about the Testimonies. These figures reflect the reality of Quaker life is lived at the school. The principals are not Quaker, although they are lovely people who connect with Quaker values. Only the Head of School is a birthright Quaker. He will often share some Quaker history during his talks to the faculty, but mention of the Testimonies is sparse. With so much drama going on in the subtext of working relationships, it would be refreshing if the administrators would really address directly the issues that are weakening the school community. Talking about equality and practicing equality are two different things in the school.

### **Theme Two: Quaker Practice**

How does a Quaker school give birth to a vibrant practice of Quakerism? How are Quaker practices visible and woven into the daily life of the school? These queries led me to wonder about the relationship teachers have with Quaker practice.

### **Results**

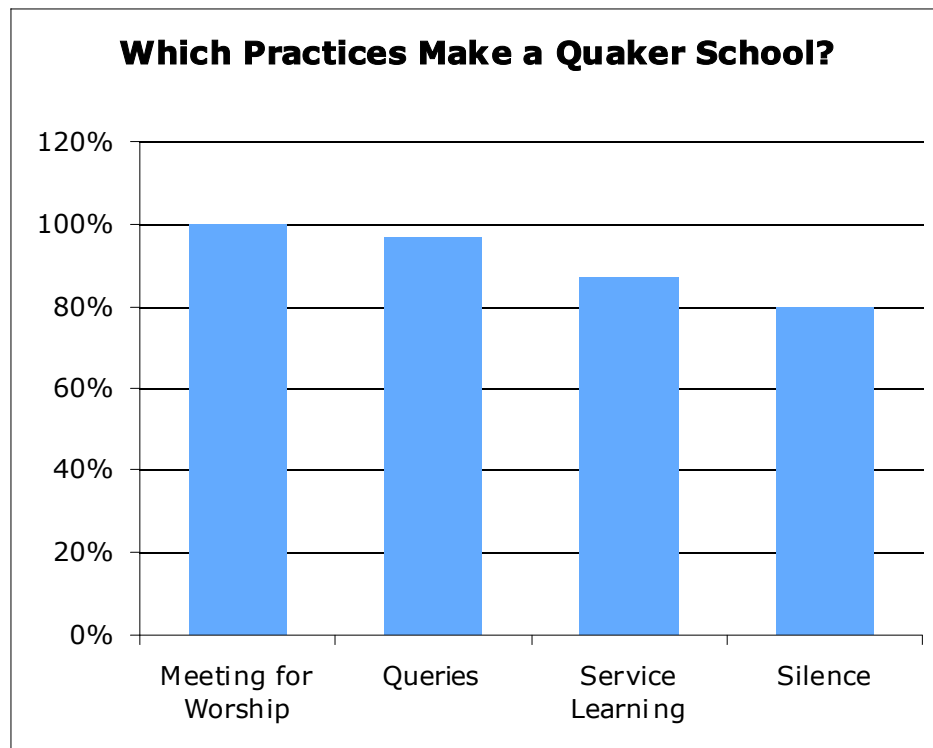
On the survey teachers were asked to respond to the question (#10), “Which of the following practices make this a Quaker School?” The choices were: Meeting for Worship, Queries, Silence before meals and classes, Living the Testimonies, The way teachers treat each other, The way children behave and treat each other, The way teachers

treat students who struggle and misbehave, The way conflicts are handled, The way faculty meetings are conducted, Service learning, and use of Consensus.

A resounding 100% of teachers responded that Meeting for Worship was the primary practice that makes the school a Quaker school. Ninety seven percent (97%) of teachers chose Queries as the secondary Quaker practice. Service learning was rated third by 88% of the teachers and Silence was rated fourth by 80% of the teachers. See table and chart below for data.

Table 10. Which practices make this a Quaker School?

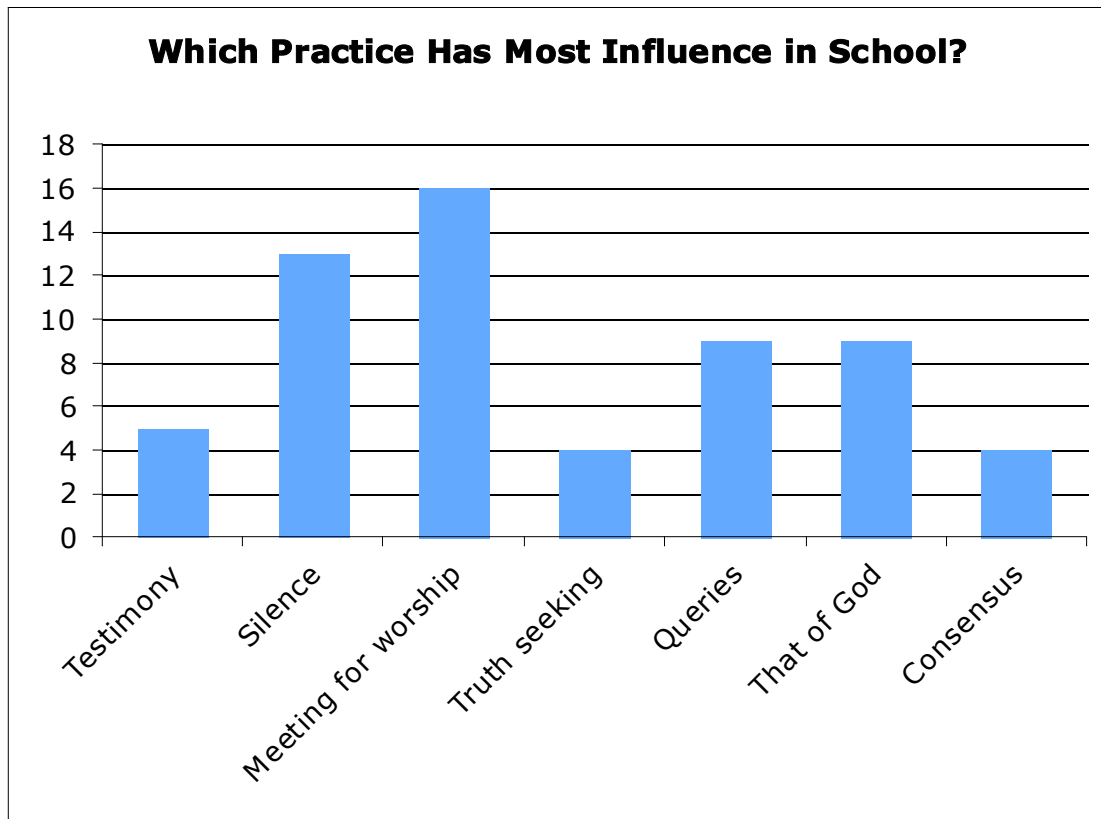
Meeting for Worship	100%
Queries	97%
Service Learning	87%
Silence	80%



**Question 9.** Teachers were asked to respond to the question, “Which of the following practices of Quakerism influence this school the most?” The choices were: Testimonies, Silence, Meeting for Worship, Truth Seeking, Queries, That of God in Everyone, and Consensus. Respondents selected Meeting for Worship (MfW) as the most influential Quaker practice in the school. Silence was selected as second, "That of God in Everyone" and Queries was selected as third. Testimonies was ranked fourth, while Truth Seeking and Consensus were both ranked fifth. Although question nine is similar to question ten, the emphasis in nine is placed on the *influence* that practices of Quakerism have in the school. See table and chart below for data.

	Rated first	Rated second	Rated third	Rated fourth	Rated fifth	Rated sixth	Rated seventh
Testimony	5	1	3	3	3	0	2
Silence	13	2	1	2	2	3	2
Meeting for Worship	16	3	5	0	5	1	0
Truth seek	4	4	3	4	1	2	3
Queries	9	2	1	5	5	1	1
That of God	9	2	0	1	1	4	2
Consensus	4	1	2	1	1	2	3

Table 9. Which practices of Quakerism influence the School the most?



Discussion of Question 9:

Teachers view meeting for Worship as the most prevalent Quaker practice that makes the school a Quaker school. This reflects the high comfort-level that teachers have with Meeting for Worship. Teachers attend Meeting for Worship every week with their students. Meeting for Worship is something teachers like and a Quaker practice they understand. When people practice something and make it their own, they feel connected.

The responses to certain options listed in question ten “Which practices make this a Quaker school?” are cause for concern. The way teachers treat each other, the way faculty meetings are conducted, the way children behave and treat each other, and the

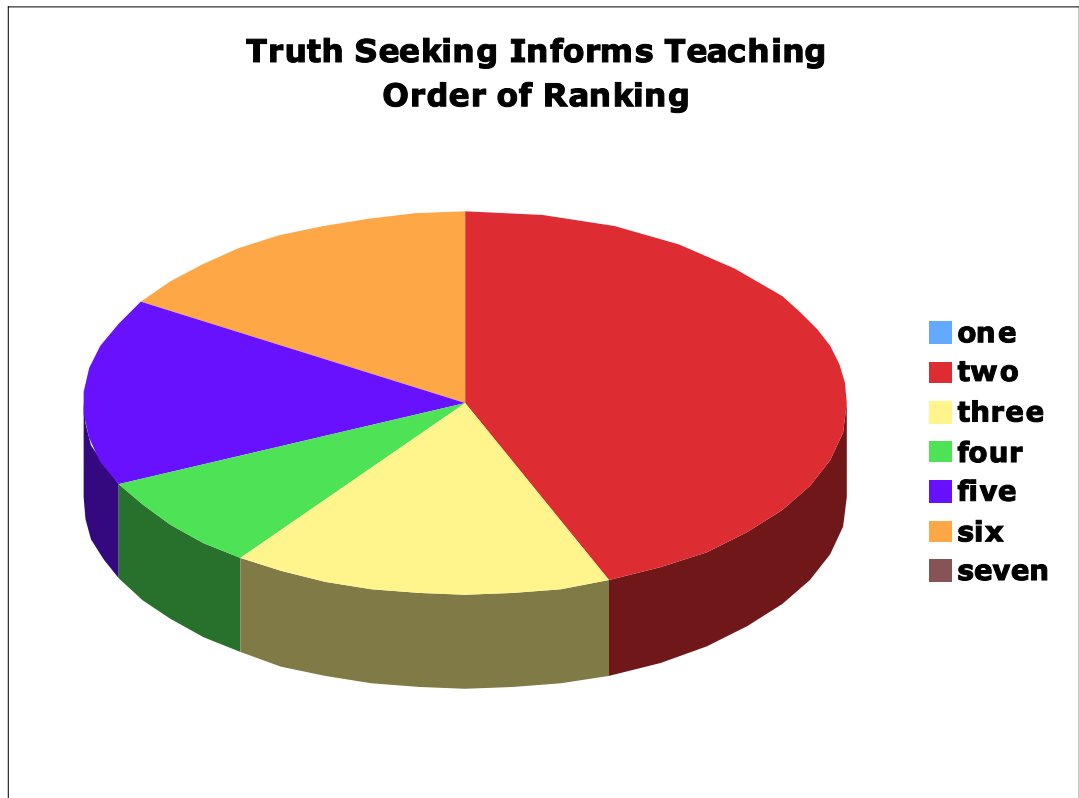
lack of consensus, were selected by a majority of teachers as evidence that Quaker practices are lacking in the school. This can be viewed as a reflection of the reality of life in the school. The faculty members are regular people, and human beings sometimes treat each other unkindly and act selfishly. Working in a Quaker school apparently does not have much impact on the way teachers treat one another, especially when only two faculty members are Quakers.

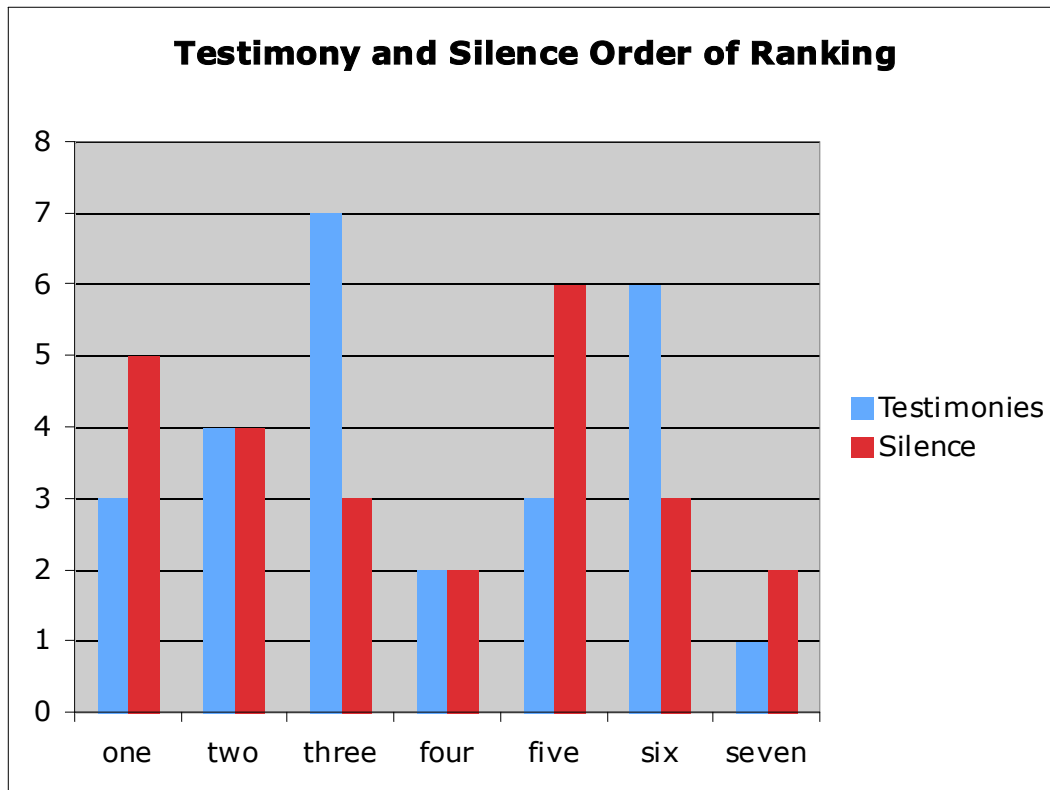
**Question 8.** Teachers were asked to respond to the following request on the survey. "Please rank the order in which each Quaker practice informs your teaching." The choices were Testimonies, Silence, Meeting for Worship, Truth Seeking, That of God in Everyone, Queries, and Consensus.

Teachers responded with a preference for "That of God in Everyone" as being the practice that primarily informs their teaching. Truth seeking was ranked second by teachers and Testimonies was ranked third. See table and charts below for data.

Table 8. Rank the order in which each Quaker practice informs your teaching

	Testimonies	Silence	Meeting for Worship	Truth seeking	That of God	Queries	Consensus
first	3	5	2	0	18	1	0
second	4	4	1	11	2	3	1
third	7	3	6	4	0	5	1
fourth	2	2	5	2	1	8	5
fifth	3	6	7	4	1	2	0
sixth	6	3	3	4	2	2	3
seventh	1	2	1	0	1	4	14





### Interviews with Teachers on Quaker Practice

Teachers were interviewed and asked the question "What do you regularly do in your classroom that you feel is Quaker practice?" The responses from the teachers interviewed included writing and discussing the queries, conversations they have with the children, morning silence, labeling behavior and connecting it to the Quaker Testimonies, creating space for Quaker ideas to live as they occur in the moment, using Quaker Testimony words, planning activities about Quaker life and practice, holding people and animals in the Light, being mindful about using the Quaker vocabulary, creating a classroom culture filled with respect and peaceful resolution of conflict. Highlights from the interviews include the following statements:

"We have conversations that don't have an answer, such as how can you be a good friend, why do we sit in silence, what do I mean by let your life speak?"

"We do a lot with the queries in our community meetings. We are labeling what a behavior is so kids will know the Quaker testimonies."

"Thinking of one conversation, we were talking about taking care of people and one child said "everyone but the bad guys." I said, "but if you don't take care of the bad guys how will they get better? If you don't love the bad guys how do they stop being bad?" That's where I find Quaker practice outside of Meeting for Worship and time for Silence. It's the opportunity to let those ideas live as they occur. Quaker testimonies can live in any moment in the classroom and it is being infused in the moments that we have."

"We use Quaker Testimony words quite a bit. We plan actual activities around Quaker life, Quaker living and practice. So you will hear somebody say, "someone is not being respectful of my artwork that I made and they are not making me feel like a part of the community." I feel like maybe that wouldn't have happened before we were really mindful about bringing the vocabulary and the practice more to light in the classroom."

"We respect the Light inside of each person. We create a culture where they value each other and respect each other. When we have disagreements it's figuring out how to stay calm and how we use words."

"We have community meeting and spontaneous discussions that are child-driven about values. The intentionality of having it every week is a good check-in point."



"We do the morning moment of silence and then we hang the poster up. We write the query once a year but haven't been having discussions about the query like we should."

"We have silence in the morning and a handshake in the afternoon. We are looking at each other and acknowledging each other. When we write the query, it is a big deal. We talk about it when it comes out. We do a lot of partnering work. Giving advice and help is very Quakerly."

**Question 21.** Teachers were asked to respond to the question, "How often do you explain to your students why we sit in silence?" One third of the teachers (33%) reported that they explain the reason for sitting in silence once or twice a month to their students. Twenty-three percent of teachers reported they explain it daily or weekly. As a bookend on this important topic for children in a Quaker school, the same percentages of teachers (23%) reported they rarely or never explain why we sit in silence to their students. See table below for data.

Table 21. How often do you explain to your students why we sit in silence?						
	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Frequency	1	6	7	3	6	1
Percentage	3	20	23	10	20	3

Discussion of Question 21 Findings:

Children are constantly learning and benefit from friendly reminders about expected behavior, especially before Meeting for Worship. In order to have meaningful silence and a gathered Meeting for Worship some teachers have found it beneficial to talk

to their students about how we sit in silence, what to think about, even where to set your eyes for these are things children do not know without being taught. I think it's no surprise that All-School Meetings for Worship are noisy and unsettled at times because teachers do not discuss the practice of sitting in silence enough. Teachers report that there are no guidelines issued on facilitating and teaching Quaker practice. New teachers just have to figure everything out for themselves based on what they see other teachers do and their best guess.

**Question 22.** Teachers were asked to respond to the question: “How often do you use silence or silent reflection in your teaching practice?”

The responses indicate that silence or silent reflection is used by more than half (54%) the teachers daily or weekly. Seven percent (7%) report bi-weekly use, 17% report monthly use, while another 17 % report rare use of silence of silent reflection. Three percent of teachers report they never use it. See table below for data.

	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Frequency	1	5	5	2	5	11
Percentage	3	17	17	7	17	37

#### Discussion of Question 22 Findings:

Silence is a powerful tool in any community. When the energy in a group gets too fragmented and negative, a request for silence can help everyone settle and return their focus to what matters. It is curious why more teachers don't use it frequently. If teachers had support on this and other Quaker practices they might be encouraged to embrace and

extend the use of silence in their class. If silence was a more ingrained part of teacher's daily practice, imagine what the effect would be on the children. Further studies on the use of silence in the classroom would be revealing.

### **Interviews with Teachers on Search for Truth**

One of the basic tenets of Quakerism is to seek the truth and be open to a continuing revelation of the truth. The teachers interviewed were asked, "How are the children encouraged to be in search of their own truth, to stand up for what they believe in?"

It is not often that teachers are asked a question like this one. Yet several teachers connected the search for a child's truth to the daily social relationships they have with peers and the emotional forces that can influence behavior. The following quotes are the core parts of the teacher's responses.

"By allowing kids to have their voice, we try to get the followers to ask themselves if this is what they really want to be doing. We protect their time and space, their right to make different choices and still feel okay and make the other person not feel rejected. We say, make sure you listen to your own thoughts and to your own heart."

"We encourage them to be who they are as an individual, in talks about bullying and other things; to not go along with the crowd; they are not allowed to say 'that's not cool'."

"Making sure they are true to themselves and don't follow what a friend does. We say you can do something different, you don't have to follow a friend or the crowd. We help kids to see you can respect each other; you don't have to be the same. You can have your unique ideas."

"We discuss the courage it takes to stand up to friend rather than a bully. We help them assert themselves and speak from their own truth. We say you have your own brain, you made your own choice. We are teaching a child they have agency. When we read books we talk about the connections between the story and real life."

"Children are empowered to seek ways to come up with their own solutions to problems; so we don't all find the same solutions and guess what's in teachers head. We are learning to think for ourselves, to our express ideas."

"By helping them to put their thoughts out for everyone in moments of play as well as in things they are trying to accomplish. It's letting their ideas be valued."

"It mostly comes out in writing or some kind of conflict within the group."

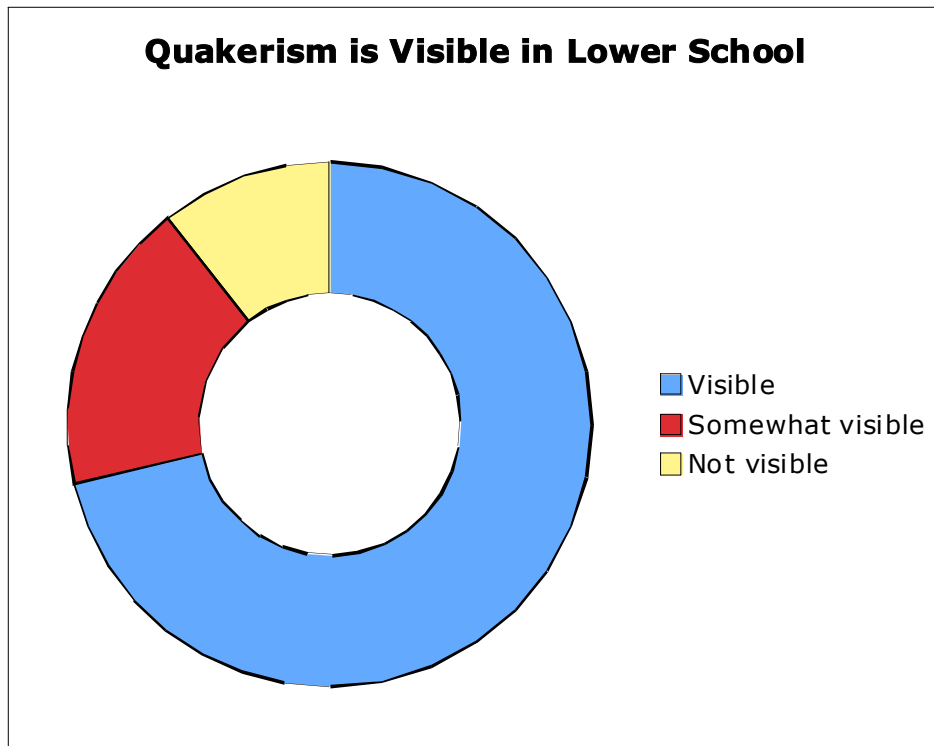
"It's part of our classroom culture. When kids express a passion for rocks, bugs or dirt we encourage them to investigate that. If their personal truth takes them somewhere, maybe we should do more."

### **Visibility of Quakerism**

**Question 23.** Quaker practice makes Quakerism visible. Teachers were asked to respond to the statement, "Quakerism is visible at our school." Seventeen percent of teachers reported they agree that Quakerism is visible at the school. Sixty- seven percent of teachers reported they somewhat agree with the statement, while ten percent of teachers report they disagree with the statement. See table and chart below for data.

Table 23. Is Quakerism Visible at school?

Visible	67%
Somewhat visible	17%
Not visible	10%



Discussion of Question 23 Findings:

The majority of teachers feel that Quakerism is visible at the School. Eighty-four percent either 'somewhat agree' or 'agree' that Quakerism is visible. Only 10% think it's not visible.

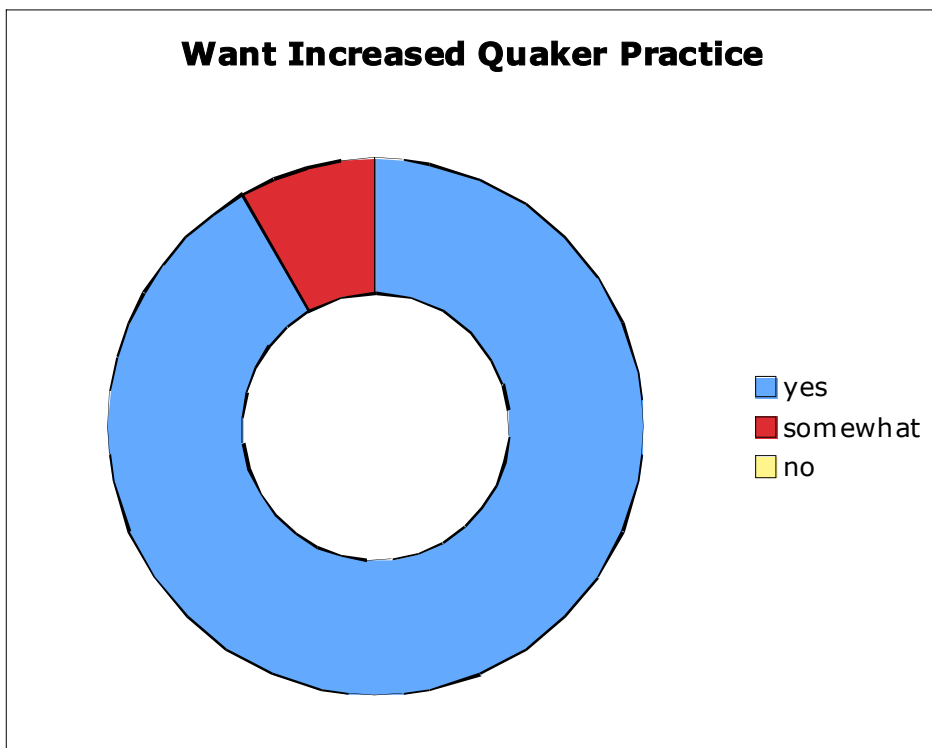
Given that most teachers don't talk about Quaker tenets or Testimonies or practice Quakerism in class, it is interesting that most teachers think the school is visibly Quaker. This can be viewed as a reflection of the misunderstandings among the general public and the faculty about Quakerism. The education new teachers receive about Quaker practice is paltry. It consists of required attendance at one workshop about Quakerism in addition to receiving the book, *A Quaker Book of Wisdom* by Robert Smith.

It would be enlightening to discover what makes Quakerism visible for each teacher. I approached that question when I interviewed teachers and asked, “What makes the school a Quaker school?” Meeting for Worship, Queries, and Silence were the primary answers from teachers.

**Question 24.** Teachers were asked to respond to the question “Would you like to see the school increase its visible Quaker practice?” The majority of teachers (77%) reported “yes” to the question. Seven percent of teachers reported 'somewhat' and zero percent reported “no”. See table and chart below for data.

Table 24. Increase Visible Quaker Practice?

Yes	77%
Somewhat	7%
No	0%

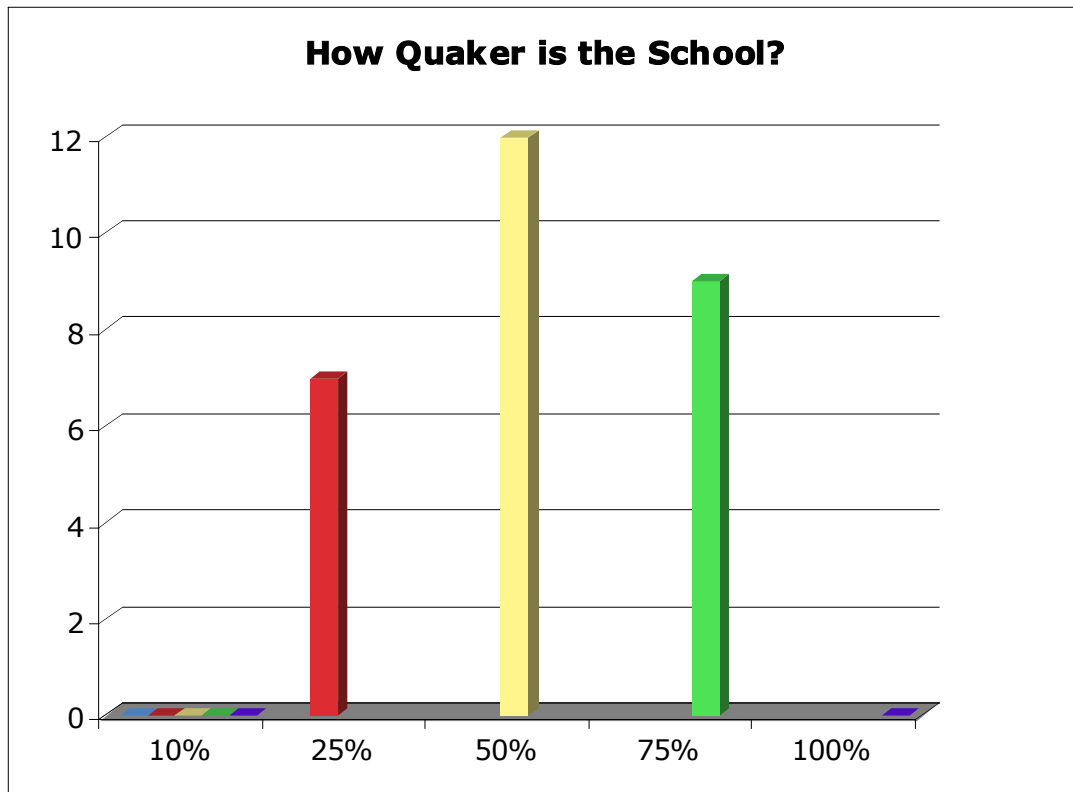


## Discussion of Question 24 Findings:

Most teachers would like to see the school be more visibly Quaker. This finding is encouraging and reflects the desire of most teachers to have the school be closer to its Quaker tenets and philosophy. What the faculty will do to make it more visibly Quaker remains a big question. What a 'more Quakerly school' looks like can depend on the teacher answering the question. Visions are diverse. Space and time needs to be created for teachers to explore their answers to this issue.

**Question 7.** Teachers were asked the question: “Based on what you have learned about Quaker history and Quaker practice, how would you classify your school?” The choices were 10% Quaker, 25% Quaker, 50% Quaker, 75% Quaker, 100% Quaker. The responses indicate that twenty-three percent of teachers see the school as 25% Quaker. Forty percent of teachers reported they see the school as 50% Quaker. Thirty percent of teachers reported they see the school as 75% Quaker.

See chart below for data.



Discussion of Question 7 Findings:

The good news is that most of the teachers (70%) see the school as having a core Quaker character. Half or three-quarters Quaker is a substantial measurement. However, nobody saw the school as completely Quaker (100%), which reflects acknowledgment of the holes in the fabric of this Quaker school. Opportunities abound for the school to improve its Quaker presence. It can increase the numbers of Quakers on the faculty and create learning circles for teachers to enhance their comfort with Quaker practices.



**Theme Three: “That of God” in Everyone**

The values of the Religious Society of Friends and the Quaker tenet of “That of God” in every person lead the educational community. The school declares that all of its actions are shaped by the principle of “That of God” in each person. However, the meaning of the phrase “That of God” for each teacher and the way teachers weave the thread of that basic Quaker tenet into the fabric of their classroom culture is a huge question. Clearly God is at the core of the school philosophy and value statements. Therefore, inquiries about God were included in the survey and the interviews.

**Results**

**Question 17.** On the survey teachers were asked to respond to the statement, I freely speak about your “Inner Light” and “That of God in Everyone” with my students. The responses indicate that half the teachers (50%) rarely or never freely talk about the Inner Light or “That of God in Everyone” with their students. Twenty percent (20%) of teachers report they talk about it monthly while fourteen percent (14%) report they mention it daily or weekly. See Table below for data.

Table 17. I freely speak about your Inner Light and “That of God” with my students						
	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Frequency	3	12	6	3	2	2
Percentage	10	40	20	10	7	7

**Question 18.** On the following question teachers were asked to respond to the statement, “I feel comfortable talking about “That of God in Everyone” with my

students.” The responses indicate that a good third of the teachers (36%) are rarely or never comfortable talking about “That of God in Everyone” with their students. Thirteen percent (13%) of teachers reported they feel comfortable talking about it monthly while seven percent (7%) reported they feel comfortable bi-weekly. The same percentage (7%) responded they feel comfortable talking about “That of God in Everyone” weekly but almost a quarter of the teachers (23%) responded they feel comfortable daily. See Table below for data.

Table 18. I feel comfortable talking about “That of God in Everyone” with my students.						
	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Frequency	1	10	4	2	2	7
Percentage	3	33	13	7	7	23

These two questions offer related insights and invite comparison. See Frequency Comparison and Percentage Comparison Tables below.

Frequency Comparisons for “freely speak” and “feel comfortable”						
	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Freely speak	3	12	6	3	2	2
Feel comfortable	1	10	4	2	2	7

Percentage Comparisons for “freely speak” and “feel comfortable”						
	Never	Rarely	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly	Daily
Freely speak	10	40	20	10	7	7
Feel comfortable	3	33	13	7	7	23

Teachers who reported feeling comfortable talking about “That of God” daily numbered 23% but only 7% of teachers reported they freely speak about your Inner Light or “That of God” daily. That difference suggests more questions and further research. The same percentage of teachers (7%) reported weekly to both questions.

The percentages for bi-weekly were numerically close. Seven percent (7%) of teachers reported they were comfortable while 10% of teachers reported they freely speak. Responses from 13% of the teachers indicated they were comfortable monthly while 20% of teachers reported they freely speak monthly.

The rarely and never categories hold big differences. Over a third (36%) of teachers reported they are rarely or never comfortable talking about “That of God” with their students. Half of the faculty (50%) reported they rarely or never freely speak about your Inner Light or “That of God” with their students.

Discussion of Question 17 and Question 18 Findings:

Although question 18 is worded differently than question 17, they ask essentially the same thing. It could be assumed that one has to feel comfortable with “That of God” in everyone in order to freely speak about “That of God” in everyone. However, the findings from asking basically the same information are distinctly different in some frequency categories.

The root of these findings can be found in the reasons why teachers do or do not feel comfortable talking about God, even though they teach in a Quaker school where the philosophy states that the school is founded on the core belief of “That of God in Everyone”.

Some teachers report bad experiences with religion when they were young and therefore do not want to relay those negative feelings to their students. Some report a public school teaching background that never included the mention of any God in it. In fact, most schools steer clear of mentioning God or any religion for fear of offending someone or stepping on the constitutional declaration that guarantees the separation of church and state.

It appears that most teachers have adopted the secular practice that predominates the public arena and do not feel comfortable when asked to talk about God. This is a conundrum for the school because the foundation of Quakerism, the very core belief of the Religious Society of Friends, is that there is "That of God" in everyone. It is a challenge to teach in a Quaker school and be true to the basic philosophy when teachers do not feel comfortable mentioning God. The communication of basic Quaker tenets to the students is hindered when teachers do not feel comfortable talking about "That of God" in everyone.

These findings reflect the absence of deep Quakerism and absence of Quaker practice in the school. This is a silent void in the community for it is never discussed or acknowledged. The school does not ask new teachers to be invested in Quaker practice. It is not part of the culture of the school or the conversation. How can Quaker tenets be taught and shared if teachers don't feel comfortable talking about them and God? These findings highlight an honest challenge for the school community.

**Interviews with Teachers about "That of God"**

Eight teachers on the faculty were interviewed regarding this topic. Teachers were asked the question: "Do you discuss with your children how there is "That of God" in everyone and encourage them to see it? If not, why not?"

The following comments are highlights from the interviews.

"I do mention that, but I am more likely to say there is something about you that's unlike anyone else."

"I have to confess, I hesitate about using the word God but I'm getting more comfortable. We talk about how special and unique you are. Do we use that terminology frequently, no.?"

"I don't use the word God because from my upbringing I had different experiences saying word God. It doesn't feel comfortable so I say the Light, it's more reachable for me."

"It feels a little uncomfortable saying God, it feels funny to say that in a school environment. I've got to be honest with you, so I don't know if I've said it every year. When we talk about Meeting for Worship, we talk about how there is the inner Light there is a little piece of God in each of us."

"I guess it's uncomfortable because I don't want to step on anybody's idea of God. In conversation, let your life speak is more of the kind of thing I would use."

"I do. I do use the word God and I do use "That of God in everyone". I try to not make it a definite when I'm talking with kids because I know they all come from different

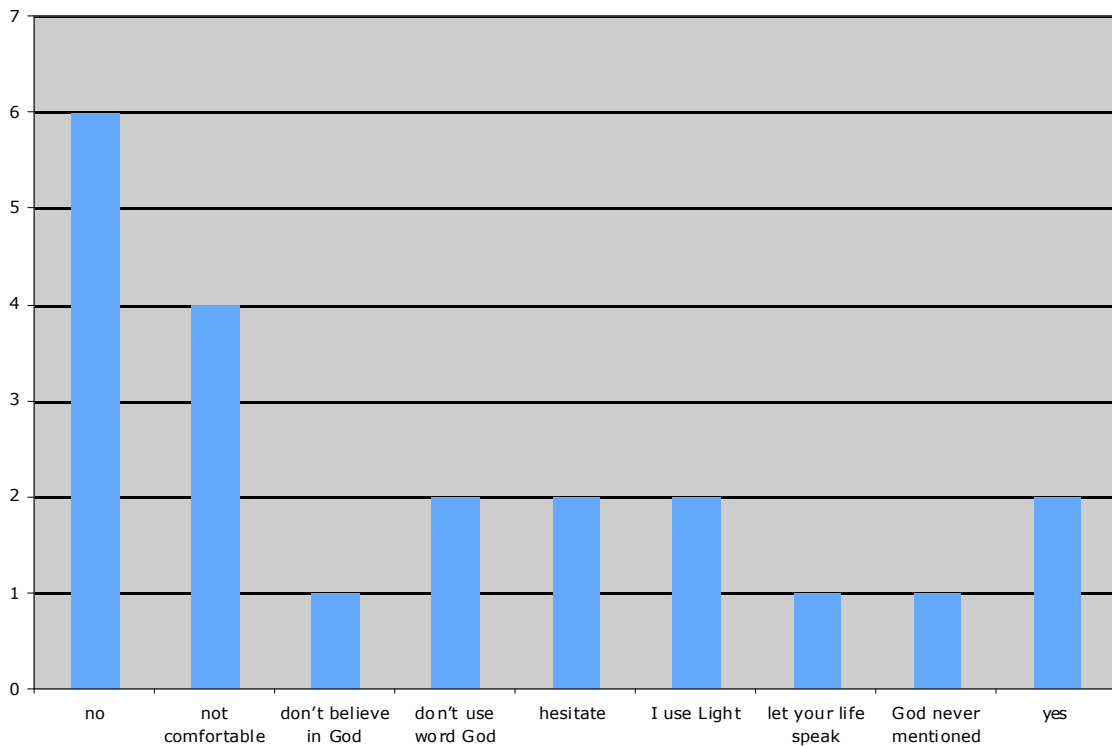
families and different belief systems, different ideas. We almost talk about God as a concept more than a personification or even a spirit."

"I don't use the word God. I don't use the religious term "That of God in everyone". I don't feel that there is a God like presence in the universe. I feel it's all within our hearts, that there is no separate entity."

"God is almost never mentioned because we are all at different places with God."

See chart below for data.

Do you discuss "That of God" with students?



### **Conclusion**

The Quaker curriculum in Quaker schools has been an understudied topic. The research literature is presently scant. The issues highlighted in this study may inspire future researchers to look critically at the actual curriculum in addition to conducting more surveys and interviews with teachers.

The academic experience of students in Quaker schools is consistently strong. However, the spiritual experience ranges from almost full to empty depending upon a teacher's personal connection to Quakerism and comfort level with discussing God. The school has no uniform Quaker curriculum or expectations that teachers add Quakerism into their lessons.

The school has adopted the easy parts of Quakerism to counter the widespread notion that the school is not a "real" Quaker school. Most visible are the Meetings for Worship, moments of silence; service projects and monthly Queries pinned on classroom walls. They are exalted as proof of being a Quaker school. The school appears cautious about advancing a true Quaker curriculum even though parents flock to the school for a Quaker experience with Quaker values.

Many teachers expressed serious interest in offering a curriculum that is in harmony with the Quaker Testimonies, but they want more experiential knowledge about Quakerism. I can see that teachers are seeking ways to create a classroom culture that is rich with Quaker practice.

Yearning to be closer to the true meaning of a Friends education, there has been a huge shift in the consciousness of the faculty around Quakerism and Quaker practice this past year. Faculty members have sought a deeper Quaker experience for themselves and

their students. New, original posters that illustrate the Quaker Testimonies have brought fresh energy, curiosity and purpose to the school community. Every classroom and hallway now hosts a big poster. The Testimony posters have not only increased the visibility of Quakerism, they have initiated an earnest dialogue about Quaker practice in the school.

Teachers and students now know what the Testimonies are and how they apply to their daily lives. When a child is “reporting” on the behavior of another child and about to exaggerate or omit the truth, a teacher can just say “integrity” and the light goes on in their head. They know to tell the truth and that truth telling has power and honor.

Teachers and children also created a huge Peace tree that welcomes visitors at the entrance to the School. The tree is adorned with green leaves that carry wishes for peace in the world. Later in the year orange leaves – with declarations of what each person will do to bring peace – were added to the tree. In the spring, bright flowers were added. On each flower the children wrote what actions they had done to help someone.

While the addition of the Testimony posters and the Peace tree have enhanced the visibility of Quakerism at the school, there is still more work to be done. Quakers ideally embrace the practice of consensus or sense of the Meeting. But the honest use of either method for decision-making in the school falls far behind the priority for operating the school as a moneymaking business with an elite status to uphold. School support for seeking a continuing revelation of the truth is nil. Dialogue about that Quaker practice is never heard around the campus. Quakerism also includes truth seeking, standing up for justice and equality, speaking to the condition of others, learning from those on the margin of society, letting your life speak every day and seeing “That of God” in everyone.



It is so interesting that God is not mentioned by most teachers at the school and that the administration does not know or care. Most teachers were trained in secular educational environments where the mention of God was verboten. Teachers report they “feel funny” if they talk about God with their students for some don’t believe in God and many have uncertainties about God. When teachers are uncomfortable discussing the core Quaker tenet of the school's mission statement: "There is That of God in everyone", I wonder how vibrant the practice of Quakerism can be in that community.

The school upholds the appearance of being a Quaker school well. Most non-Quaker teachers are comfortable with the manner in which Quakerism is practiced at the school. But without a cadre of Quaker teachers who are committed to extending Quaker practice in the school, this level of comfort with "Quaker-lite" will probably continue.

Quaker pedagogy offers many ways to deepen the experience of a Quaker education. Using the practice of personal reflection and seeking a continuing revelation of the truth are powerful tools for teachers anywhere, but they are particularly powerful for teachers in a Quaker school. When, and if, the school community desires to embrace all the practices and spirit that Quakerism has to offer, the school will be more Quaker.

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## Appendix

### FACULTY SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. How often do you discuss the Quaker Testimonies with your class?  
 Never  Rarely  Monthly  Bi-Weekly  Weekly  Daily
2. I refer to the Quaker Testimonies in classroom discussions  
 Never  Rarely  Monthly  Bi-Weekly  Weekly  Daily
3. I weave the Quaker Testimonies into my lessons  
 Never  Rarely  Monthly  Bi-Weekly  Weekly  Daily
4. I use the Quaker Testimonies for guidance in relating to students  
 Never  Rarely  Monthly  Bi-Weekly  Weekly  Daily
5. How often do you hear students talking about a Quaker Testimony?  
 Never  Rarely  Monthly  Bi-Weekly  Weekly  Daily
6. Please rank the order in which each Testimony is visible in your class  
 Harmony  Simplicity  Integrity  Justice  Community  Stewardship
7. Based on what you have learned about Quaker history and Quaker practice, how would you classify your school?  
 10% Quaker  25% Quaker  50% Quaker  75% Quaker  100% Quaker
8. Please rank the order in which each Quaker practice informs your teaching
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Testimonies	<input type="checkbox"/> Truth seeking
<input type="checkbox"/> Silence	<input type="checkbox"/> "That of God in everyone"
<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting for Worship	<input type="checkbox"/> Queries
<input type="checkbox"/> Consensus	
9. Which of the following practices of Quakerism influence this school the most?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Testimonies	<input type="checkbox"/> Queries
<input type="checkbox"/> Silence	<input type="checkbox"/> "That of God in everyone"
<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting for Worship	<input type="checkbox"/> Consensus
<input type="checkbox"/> Truth seeking	

10. Which of the following practices make this a Quaker School? (Check all that apply)

Meeting for Worship  Queries  Silence before meals and classes

Living the Testimonies  The way teachers treat each other

The way children behave and treat each other

The way teachers treat students who struggle or misbehave

The way conflicts are handled

The way faculty meetings are conducted

Service Learning  Use of consensus

11. How would you describe your understanding of Quaker Testimonies and Quaker practice?

No current knowledge  Limited  Good  Very good

12. How would you describe the understanding that the teachers on this faculty have of Quaker Testimonies and Quaker practice?

Not so good  Limited  Good  Very Good

13. How closely do you agree with the following statements?

*The SFS mission statement influences how I use the Quaker testimonies in my teaching.*

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

14. *I read the schools mission statement often and think about it.*

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

15. How often do you and your grade level team talk about the Testimonies?

Never  Rarely  Monthly  Bi-Weekly  Weekly  Daily

16. How often do you notice school administrators mentioning the Testimonies?

Never  Rarely  Monthly  Bi-Weekly  Weekly  Daily

17. I freely speak about “Your Inner Light” and “That of God in Everyone” with my students  
 Never  Rarely  Monthly  Bi-Weekly  Weekly  Daily
18. I feel comfortable talking about “That of God in Everyone” with my students  
 Never  Rarely  Monthly  Bi-Weekly  Weekly  Daily
19. Do you know enough about Quakerism in order to implement Quaker practice in your classroom and your teaching practice?  
 No  I need support  Somewhat  Yes
20. How well does the school prepare teachers to teach the Testimonies?  
 Poorly  Somewhat Poorly  Somewhat Well  Well  Very Well
21. How often do you explain to your students why we sit in silence?  
 Never  Rarely  Monthly  Bi-Weekly  Weekly  Daily
22. How often do you use silence or silent reflection in your teaching practice?  
 Never  Rarely  Monthly  Bi-Weekly  Weekly  Daily
23. Quakerism is visible at Lower School.  
 Disagree  Somewhat Disagree  Somewhat Agree  Agree
24. Would you like to see the school increase its visible Quaker practice?  
 No  Somewhat  Yes

Faculty Interview Questions

1. What do you love about teaching at this Friends school?
2. What do you do regularly in your classroom that you feel is Quaker practice?
3. Talk about how you weave the Quaker testimonies into your lessons?  
  
How do they appear in your daily interactions with the children and the classroom?  
  
If you currently don't do that, what holds you back from doing that?
4. How does the Quaker core tenet of "there is that of God in everyone" manifest in your teaching practice and in your interactions with each child you teach?
5. Do you discuss with your children how there is "that of God in everyone" and encourage them to see it? If not, why not?
6. How are the children encouraged to be in search of their own truth, to stand up for what they believe in?
7. Can you share an example of how Friends testimonies are expressed in you class?
8. What makes a school a Quaker School? What do you see, hear and feel?  
  
How is it different from just another good school?



## Original Posters Showing the Quaker Testimonies

Created by Denise Coffin (2012)





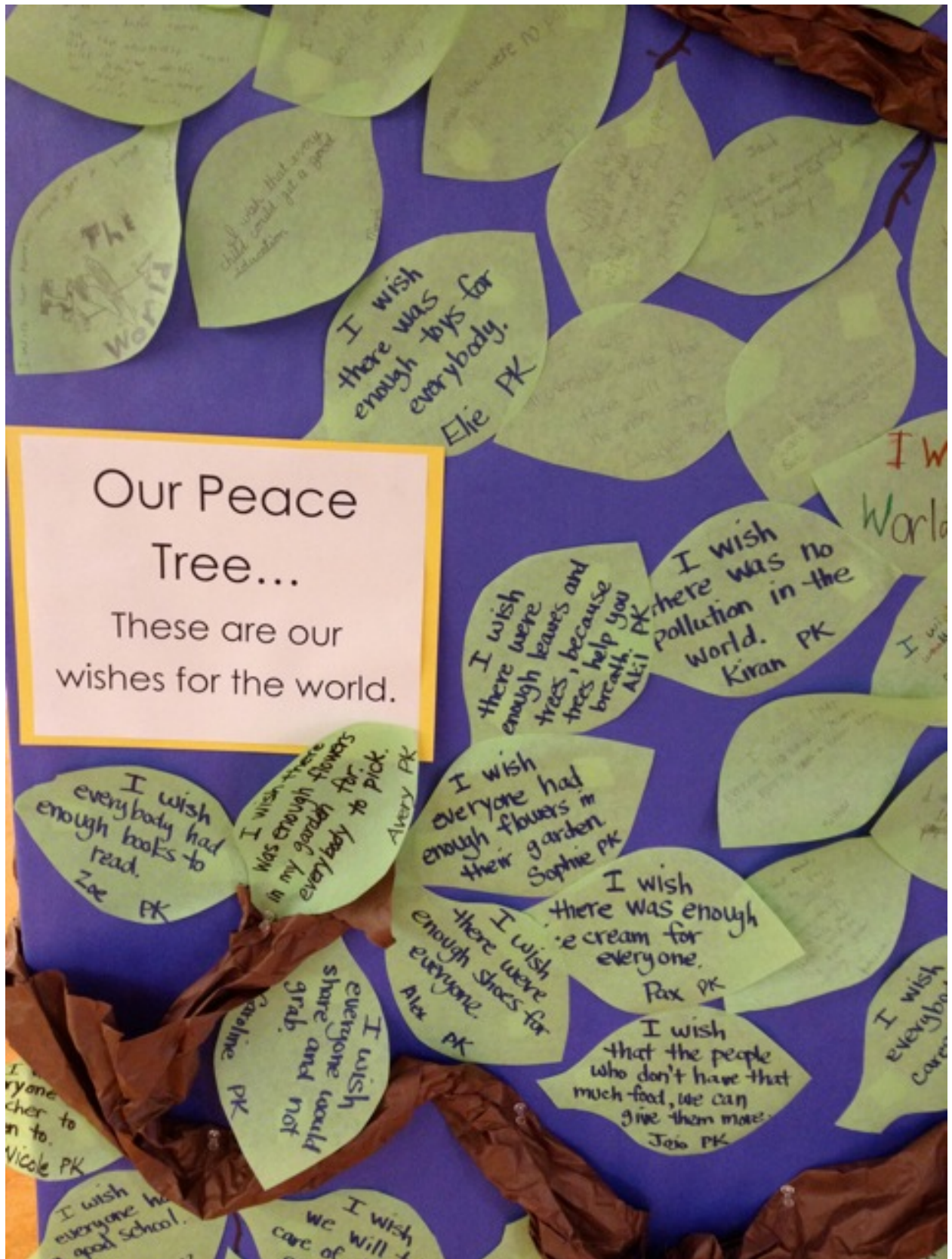
The Quaker Testimonies are easily remembered as SPICES.

## Peace Tree with Wishes for the World Created by Kathleen Geier (2012)



The Peace Tree in the fall







The Peace Tree in the spring







