

Friends School of Minnesota Overview

Friends School of Minnesota (FSM) is a thriving, independent, K-8, Quaker school in the heart of St. Paul's Midway neighborhood. In the tradition of more than 80 Friends Schools across the United States, FSM meets children's intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs in an environment that nurtures their social consciousness. Now in its 26th year, FSM is a healthy, vibrant, stable institution known for its rich, progressive curriculum; commitment to community; acclaimed conflict resolution program; and holistic, joyful approach to educating children.

FSM is dedicated to its mission: to prepare children to embrace life, learning, and community with hope, skill, understanding and creativity. We are committed to the Quaker values of peace, justice, simplicity and integrity.

FSM's 168 students enjoy a rich hands-on progressive education curriculum in small class sizes of 16 to 21 and multi-age classrooms. We believe that children learn best as active participants, collaborators, and problem-solvers within a community. Our in-depth, thematic, and inter-disciplinary approach and cooperative learning environment teach appreciation of multiple perspectives and foster social skills. Our focus on place-based education engages our students within the local community and prepares them to be compassionate global citizens. We emphasize environmental education and service learning starting in kindergarten. We have specialists in music, visual arts, physical education, and Spanish.

Our community actively works to increase diversity, remove barriers, and be welcoming and accessible. In our admissions process, we seek a range of academic abilities and diverse learning styles. We seek diversity, including racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, family structure, and belief system. FSM families have a range of religious and non-religious backgrounds, including 10% Quaker. Twelve percent of students come from LGBT families and 35% of students are children of color, mostly from multi-racial families. We consistently fund tuition aid at 20% of tuition revenue and provide need-based tuition aid for 37% of our students - up to 90% of tuition - to increase access to FSM and enhance its diversity. Our conflict resolution program is integrated into the daily culture of the school, actively teaching and modeling nonviolent, respectful techniques to solve the natural conflicts found in every diverse community.

Our great location across the street from a mini-arboretum city park, and our inviting indoor spaces serve our students well, but we continue to improve our facilities. In 2014 we will add a modern and fully-equipped art room, dedicated Spanish room, break out spaces and middle school student lounge to our existing facilities, which include nine classrooms, a full-size gymnasium, music room, library and multi-purpose room. Our school grounds incorporate outdoor classroom spaces and a natural play yard as well as a traditional playground and open field.

FSM is effectively governed by a strong, committed School Committee and standing committees that invest in developing their capacities and commitment to Quaker decision-making processes. We have enjoyed the excellent, stable leadership of only 3 heads of school over FSM's 26-year history. We invest in the professional development of our 29 talented, passionate faculty and staff and enjoy very low turnover and high job satisfaction. Our faculty and staff are active participants in professional development and networking opportunities with the Friends Council on Education and our local MAIS schools.

FSM is financially healthy. We have a sound operating budget of \$2.4 million, cash reserves, a growing endowment of over \$1,000,000 and enrollment that has steadily increased to near full capacity. A strong advancement team raises over \$235,000 annually through the famous Friends Plant Sale and \$164,000 through the annual fund. Exceptional loyalty to the school is demonstrated through 100% annual fund participation of the School Committee and faculty and staff, and 90% of the parents.