

Report to the New York Quarterly Meeting

January 16, 2022

This year marks the eighth year of the MMFS- BMM Care Relationship Committee. Last year during the 2020-2021 school year, all our meetings were virtual and like everyone, we navigated Google Meets to connect, collaborate and plan together. Through our virtual meetings, the committee continued to work deliberately to strengthen the ties between the Meeting and the School through the several ongoing and new programs.

Since our last report, the MMFS-BMM Care Relationship Committee membership has included: Jill Waldman, Heidi Wexler and Richard White representing Brooklyn Monthly Meeting and Kristin Siciliani, Mark Doty, Ted Erhardt, Becky Givan and Beth Schneider, representing Mary McDowell Friends School Board and Faculty. After stepping down from the MMFS Board, Sue Wolfe has chosen to stay on the QCC in an ex-officio manner. After eight years, first as a founding member and then an ex-officio member, Mary Doty has stepped down from our committee. At this time, we feel moved to recognize Mary Doty for her continuous support, and steadfast belief in both BMM and MMFS which served as the foundational model for our work together. We all benefited from her shared commitment, thoughtful comments and deep curiosity during our meetings.

Last year, the Committee met and shared the ways that each group navigated and managed during the pandemic. The committee considered how to maintain our previously built programs that fostered a relationship between the school and Meeting allowing for the deepening of MMFS' understanding of Quaker values and practices. We have also begun to discuss ways that MMFS might contribute their understanding and knowledge of working with young people with learning disabilities to the life of BMM Meeting. We are hoping to build reciprocal opportunities and understandings.

Report on Past Programming:

When the weather warmed up, the annual Family Cemetery Work Day took place. Following COVID protocols, we did not partner with BFS and did not offer snacks. Despite these changes, on a lovely Saturday in May, approximately 20+ families raked leaves and toured the cemetery with Bob Wilbur. Because of COVID-19, the traditional BMM, Brooklyn Friends and MMFS teacher appreciation silent meeting and dinner was canceled.

Last year, the committee spent time examining the racial justice work of both the school and BMM. In April, BMM was invited to participate in the MMFS Parents Association school speaker series with Dr. Bryant Marks who spoke on Implicit Bias and how to interrupt it.

The Quaker Care Committee also did some historical sleuthing as we looked for information/minutes for the Meetings announcements when Mary McDowell Center for Learning/Friends School was introduced to the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting.

2021-2022 Activities Thus Far:

When we returned in the fall 2021, we once again, reacquainted ourselves and updated one another on the current COVID-19 protocols at both organizations. Members from the QCC assisted with organizing the annual Middle School Cemetery Clean Up that took place on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Despite the cold weather, students and faculty raked leaves and then participated in an outdoor silent meeting together in the stillness of the cemetery. In addition, students in the 6th grade collected and organized packages containing food stuffs, toiletries, socks and underwear for distribution at the Community Dinner

Later this spring, if COVID protocols allow, we will plan a Brooklyn Monthly Meeting, Brooklyn Friends and Mary McDowell Friends School Silent Meeting and Teacher Appreciation. We have set a date for later in the year in hopes that we can gather together in shared silence. We will cancel the shared meal until the current health crisis subsides.

An area that we are developing this year focuses on how MMFS might share knowledge of learning disabilities with the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting. Members of the QCC are accessing the needs of the BMM community to determine areas of interest that members of the MMFS community might be able to address in workshops, speakers programs etc.

Our New Meeting House/Meeting Room

Mary McDowell Friends School has moved into all of the spaces in our new building addition at 20 Bergen Street. Previously, we have shared drawings of the new Meeting House/Meeting Room space. A few photographs are attached below. Currently, we do not have benches but we are using the space for Silent Meeting with students, staff and faculty seated on the floor. In the future, we look forward to inviting members of the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting to the space for a shared Silent Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
MMFS-BMM Care Relationship Committee
Mark Doty
Mary Doty
Ted Ehrhardt
Becky Givan
Beth Schneider
Kristin Siciliani
Jill Waldman
Heidi Wexler
Richard White
Sue Wolfe

Mary McDowell Friends School New Meeting House/Meeting Room
Ground Floor to Balcony Views





Balcony View in the New Meeting House during Silent Meeting







MARY McDOWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Revealing Brilliance

MISSION

Mary McDowell Friends School is a K–12 college preparatory program dedicated to the success of students with learning disabilities. Grounded in the Quaker values of equality, integrity, and social responsibility, we cultivate a diverse and anti-racist community in which all students can reach their full potential. Our specialized teaching methodologies and challenging curricula empower students to become academic achievers, creative thinkers, advocates for equity, and contributing members of a global society.

OUR COMMITMENT TO ANTI-RACISM AND EQUITY

The Mary McDowell Friends School community is committed to providing students, families, faculty, and staff with a learning and working environment that addresses racism and inequity with integrity and action. We welcome diversity in many ways, including race, color, culture, age, sex, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, family composition, ethnicity, nationality, religious expression, and disability. We commit to building an appreciation and understanding of each individual as well as of our community as a whole. We celebrate the strength of our diversity.

We commit to making anti-racism and equity central to our mission of cultivating “*a diverse and anti-racist community in which all students can reach their full potential.*” We believe that Black lives matter, and that we have a responsibility to challenge not only our national legacy of systemic racism but also the structural inequities within our own community. We will amplify our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) voices, and look to Quaker tradition to guide us in creating a safe, inclusive, and equitable school. It is essential that we embrace our [Quaker values and testimonies](#) as we work toward anti-racism and equity in our community and beyond.

ACTION PLAN ROADMAP

As we dedicate ourselves to achieving the goal of being an anti-racist school, we pledge to examine our own culture and history, and not let the past get in the way of the future. We will do the work of addressing racism and inequity with bravery and authenticity.

The recommendations that follow are the work of five committees: [Community](#), [Our Journey](#), [Advocacy](#), [Operations](#), and [Education](#). These proposals provide a roadmap for our work.

Community

- We will continue to provide all community stakeholders (i.e., families, students, faculty, staff, trustees) with differentiated and ongoing anti-racism and equity training and programming, starting with New Employee Orientation and continuing as part of professional development. (See also [Education Committee](#) recommendations)
- We will structure committees empowered to make decisions about MMFS policies and practices to include diverse representation and opportunities for leadership.
- We will develop mechanisms and channels for non-hierarchical feedback across and within stakeholder groups, including providing training on giving and receiving constructive feedback.
- Environmental justice is racial justice. We will reflect on how privilege affects our stewardship of resources, and we will take incremental action to become a carbon-neutral, environmentally sustainable institution.
- To provide visibility and celebration of shared social identities, our faculty mentorship program will now intentionally pair mentors and mentees who have expressed a desire to work with a colleague who shares one or more social identities. We will expand this program to create alumni mentors for students.

Our Journey

- We pledge to work with MMFS leadership and faculty to use our history of being a diverse and inclusive school to inform our future.
- We commit to furthering our goal of becoming an anti-racist institution.
- We are dedicated to the work that will foster the fruition of these ideals and guide our path going forward

Advocacy

- We will create the “Good Trouble” Committee (named in tribute to the late Rep. John Lewis) to create a practice of advocacy, activism, outreach, and education. The committee will be made up of students, staff and faculty, administration, families, alumni, and board members, and will seek out advocacy organizations with which to partner and create alliances in its work.

Operations

- We will create a rubric for admissions decisions and for determining Connors funding and financial aid, taking into account race, racism, and privilege.
- We will continue our policy of actively recruiting and retaining BIPOC faculty, staff, and administrators.
- We will widen the scope of our community outreach to ensure we are attracting and admitting more BIPOC students.
- To hold ourselves accountable, we will track and publish statistics about the diversity of the community.
- We will develop an internship program specifically designed to create a pipeline of teachers and staff members of color to join our staff. We will also encourage professional growth for internal advancement.

Education

Anti-Racist Supervision and Leadership: Admin and Board

- Attend annual or semi-annual anti-racism professional development
 - Equitable supervision training
 - Develop cultural competency and use of DEI terms and vocabulary
- Equitable Evaluations
 - Ensure that supervisors use identical criteria and language when evaluating faculty and staff.
- Curriculum Review
 - Admin will take part in active conversations on developing anti-racism education
- Leadership will work to create a space at the table for people of color and support positions of power/leadership to lead/facilitate a meeting

Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Curriculum: Faculty and Staff

- Attend annual or semi-annual anti-racism professional development with a commitment to implement new learnings
 - Develop cultural competency and use the DEI terms and vocabulary
- Develop/implement supervisor and/or colleague review/determination of equitable grading and assessment policies
- Commit to developing, implementing, and evaluating curriculum and assignments through an anti-racist lens in all subjects
- Teachers will work to create equitable space in the classroom that includes the voice and inclusion of students of color

Students

- Attend annual or semi-annual anti-racism workshops to develop an appreciation of diverse cultures and origins of knowledge
- Participate in workshops and community dialogue prior to field trips (in-person or virtual) related to race and identity.
- Increase community/student dialogue about anti-racism and anti-bias
 - US: Advisory, affinity groups, student leadership, and clubs
 - MS: Clubs and Affinity groups
 - LS: Affinity groups, student-led action initiatives (eg., Climate Kids Club)
- Commit to learn, participate, and demonstrate in classes, community workshops, events, and conversations with an anti-racism lens. Content should be shared in an accessible and age-appropriate multimedia format, such as a diagram, infographic, video, interactive activity or Kahoot/Jamboard
- Students should advocate for equitable space in the classroom, curriculum, and activities that include diverse cultures and perspectives

Families

- MMFS will provide families with access to anti-racism resources
 - Ask parents to become familiar with our Community Language Guide on DEI terms for conversations with students, teachers, and staff during meetings and community events