



CONNECTICUT  
FRIENDS  
SCHOOL

Preschool through Grade 8  
**Family Handbook**  
**2014 / 2015**

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## **Introduction**

The Connecticut Friends School Family Handbook provides an introduction to Connecticut Friends School's philosophy, academics, guidelines, and procedures. We encourage all parents, guardians, faculty members, and staff to refer to the Family Handbook whenever questions arise. Of course, you are also encouraged to contact the administrative office with questions regarding all school matters.

## **Mission Statement**

Connecticut Friends School seeks to create an environment that challenges and enables students and others in the community to realize their intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual potential. CFS works to prepare its students to live effective and fulfilling lives, guided by the Quaker principles of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship. In an ever-changing world, Connecticut Friends School teaches that true peace of mind springs from a sense of competence and confidence—and living in alignment with the soul's purpose.

### **More About Our Mission**

Connecticut Friends School's educational atmosphere is supportive and engaging; the small scale of the program assures everyone an environment where they are known. Students learn that the school community is a microcosm of the complex human family, and that the human family must live responsibly and harmoniously within the context of the natural world. The school works to make its community welcoming to all. Supported in a small school so oriented, students come to know themselves and their peers as valued members in the community, and this sense of value and respect for others is foundational to strength of character. Students develop a deep understanding of how to learn and how to find creative solutions. Connecticut Friends School's rigorous and cooperative learning environment nurtures independent thinking and joy in learning. At the same time, students develop the ability to live their lives with compassion, passion and mindfulness.

## **Friends Council on Education**

Connecticut Friends School is a member of Friends Council on Education (FCE), a Quaker organization designed to support all aspects of Friends schools. National conferences are held for school heads, development and admissions officers, trustees, and teachers of Friends schools. Additionally, FCE sponsors conferences on pertinent topics of interest to all Friends Schools and publishes a newsletter that shares best and successful practices among Friends Schools. The executive and assistant directors of FCE also act as consultants to all Friends schools. More information can be found at <http://www.friendscouncil.org/>.

## **Accreditation**

Connecticut Friends School is accredited by the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), an association of 97 non-profit independent schools serving 30,000 students from all Connecticut towns and many other states and countries. Both CAIS and the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) provide professional development support as well as guidance and oversight to CFS. More information can be found at <http://www.caist.org/>.

## **History of Connecticut Friends School**

The first Friends (Quaker) school in America opened in Philadelphia in 1689. Since that time, Friends education has steadfastly maintained that social, ethical, and spiritual development of students in education is just as important as

academic excellence. From the time Quakerism was founded in the early 1600's, Friends have been interested in education and in helping each individual develop his or her potential.

Friends Nursery School (FNS) was founded in 1957 by a visionary Quaker educator named Helen Gander and the school was known originally as Helen Gander Friends Nursery School. FNS is a preschool, serving children ages two through five.

Connecticut Friends School arose from a home schooling program that began in 1994 as a cooperative effort on the part of several Friends families. This program, known as Meeting For Learning, was taken under the care of Wilton Friends Meeting, which already had oversight responsibilities for Friends Nursery School. As the benefits of the home schooling effort became obvious, the Meeting requested that a more formal institutional structure be developed, and Connecticut Friends School, an elementary and middle school program for kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, was born. The school's philosophy evolved as an interweaving of the best of established Quaker education and the best of home schooling. The founders purposefully put aside assumptions about the benefits of generally accepted practices found in traditional American schools, choosing instead to mindfully re-examine each practice in hopes of adopting only those that had authentic value.

Officially opened in the fall of 1998, Connecticut Friends School had one classroom teacher, five enrolled students, and the class met in the vestibule of the Meeting House. In 1999 Hastings Hall opened its doors on the 5-acre grounds of Wilton Friends Meeting and in 2002 a second classroom building – the Annex – was added next to Hastings Hall. In July of 2012, Friends Nursery School merged with Connecticut Friends School. The school now serves approximately 70 students in preschool – grade 8 and has a growing community of graduate alumni.

## *The Quaker SPICES*

While Connecticut Friends School actively seeks a diverse community and never attempts to convert students to Quakerism, we do hope that all families are aware of, understand and support the Friends values. We hope this Family Handbook will help families achieve this harmony. The six principles by which Quakers strive to live are Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Simplicity (or SPICES.) Here are a few specific examples from CFS of how each "SPICE" comes to life in our school:

**Simplicity:** School days for our younger students have large, unhurried blocks of time for children to explore, discover, and follow their own interests. At all levels, we make use of natural materials in our classroom environments and keep the hubbub of holidays to a minimum. Our aim is to be a haven from the commercialism and technology of the modern world. Technology is viewed as useful but we try to be mindful about how and when to introduce high tech tools, preferring that our youngest students fully explore the world of books, blocks and handwriting before they jump into relationships with machines, gadgets and electronic equipment.

**Peace:** Quakers are widely known for their efforts toward peace. We aim to establish a safe, warm, understanding atmosphere in our school where children can feel comfortable and where they can learn ways of handling conflict and working out problems in positive ways.

**Integrity:** We speak and listen carefully to each child and help them to express their feelings lovingly and cordially to both adults and peers. Friends are encouraged to express, listen to and welcome disagreement as part of understanding truth.

**Community:** Helping children learn to relate to others in a positive way is an important aspect of our program. CFS strives to have children feel a part of a group, to learn the joy of helping others, and to cooperate instead of compete. In this regard, cooperative games are an integral part of the program. The school also aims to help parents and families connect to each other and, as such, hosts several social events throughout the year. At its best Connecticut Friends School fosters a "fellowship of parenting", helping families by reinforcing the values they hope to prioritize in their homes and offering a healthy format for lively dialog about the challenges and opportunities of parenting in the modern age.

**Equality:** Friends believe that every person has something sacred within, that each human is unique. Our school is child-centered, meaning that the teachers take their cue in developing curriculum from the children's interests. We wish to help

each child develop confidence and a feeling of security in their community and themselves. Teachers help children discover and value their own abilities and appreciate the abilities of their peers.

## ***Philosophy of Connecticut Friends School***

### **Overview**

Connecticut Friends School teaches children academic and life skills while simultaneously encouraging a permanent and joyful love of learning. While we hold students to high standards of scholarship and classical skill building (spelling, math, grammar), we perceive learning not as a set of principles to be memorized but as a continual process of inquiry. By fostering cooperation rather than competition among students, CFS creates an atmosphere that celebrates individual differences. Working together, the children learn the joys and challenges of building a community while, at the same time, gaining a sense of their individual uniqueness.

Current research in brain-based learning supports our conviction that such an environment is optimal for learning. When social and emotional functioning is under stress, cognitive learning is blocked. In a school culture that prioritizes social and emotional security, students are able to build a sense of trust that it is safe to be their authentic selves. Then they can engage in learning to their full potential.

We have chosen our particular academic model not because we feel it is most fun for kids, but because we believe it is a powerful pedagogy, capable of affecting children in a profoundly positive way as they navigate their way through life.

At Connecticut Friends School, we create an effective learning environment by making the following transitions:

- From classroom-based instruction, where the classroom is the primary source of information, to world-based instruction where students gather knowledge from the world and are involved in the world as a whole
- From investigations with known outcomes, to open-ended problem solving
- From memorization where a student reads, memorizes, and gives back information, to critical thinking, where an idea is introduced and the student discovers the question and the answer
- From having students grouped into exclusive age levels, to an inclusive model, which also incorporates individualized instruction
- From large groups and teacher-centered instruction, to a combination of teacher-centered instruction and individualized, student-centered instruction
- From a curriculum providing an overview of a broad range of concepts and general topics, to a curriculum providing an in-depth exploration of fewer concepts that are developed in connection with real-world inquiry
- From linear, sequential instruction, to an integrated curriculum, with a topic-centered or thematic approach to learning.

### **The Un-Graded, Continuous Progress, Multi-age Classroom**

Connecticut Friends School classrooms are organized with two or three age groups together in one classroom. Currently there are five multi-age classes: Preschool (comprised of 2, 3, 4 and 5 year olds,) Maples (5, 6 and 7 year olds), Pines (7, 8, 9 and 10 year olds), Oaks 1 (10, 11 and 12 year olds), Oaks 2 (12, 13 and 14 year olds). In the multi-age classroom, students have the opportunity to learn from interactions with students of a wider age range and therefore broader experiences and perspectives. CFS staff with the families of the students determine classroom placement for each student based on his or her overall development. Social, emotional, and academic strengths and challenges are considered during the placement of students.

We consider students to be on a continuum in every area of development. For example, even those who are beginning to learn how to write or draw are considered writers and artists. Our aim, then, is to help each student to progress along these continua at a pace that meets the student at their “edge” in every content and skill area. It is helpful, then, not to be in the habit of referring to our students as 3<sup>rd</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> graders but to more carefully recognize, track, and support their achievement.

The multi-age classroom has many benefits. The setting provides students with the opportunity to remain in the same classroom, often with the same teacher, for two or more years. Returning students help younger classmates (and the teacher) with the routines and culture of the classroom, exercising leadership skills. Parents, as well as students, benefit from spending more than a single year with a teacher who is familiar with each student’s strengths and areas for growth.

Multi-age classrooms diminish the competition and performance anxiety that traditional single grade level classrooms may promote. Students expect their peers to bring a wide range of academic and social skills to the classroom environment. Older and younger students work together on classroom activities based on needs and interests, supporting each other's success with a reduced sense of tracking and competition. At CFS, cooperation over competition is further promoted by daily and formal assessments that do not use letter grades but instead offer more authentic feedback to the individual students.

### **The Self-contained Classroom**

In the self-contained classroom, teachers remain with their students and are in charge of their curriculum throughout the day. By observing the student in a variety of situations, both academic and social, teachers have the opportunity to develop a deep understanding of each student's strengths, challenges, and special interests. Students are more likely to become engaged and to take personal responsibility for the learning activities in their classroom, working with classmates to create for themselves a more secure and exciting environment.

Communication with parents is improved when the teacher or team of teachers can develop an overview of the student's school life. Parent/Teacher Conferences or Family Conferences (which include the student) are held both during scheduled times of the year and on an as-requested basis to provide opportunities for detailed discussions of student's progress. In addition, written narrative assessments for K-8 students are posted each trimester (in December, March, and June) to ThinkWave, a website that parents log into via a secure account. Throughout the year, parents are encouraged to keep in touch with the classroom teacher and share any concerns or feedback they might have for the teacher regarding their child's experience.

### **The Physical Classrooms**

Each teacher organizes their classroom to support the subjects being studied, the age of the students, and the pattern of daily activities, but all classrooms are designed to accommodate the natural energy and activity of students. Every classroom has a work area or areas with tables and chairs arranged around the room, a library area, comfortable places for reading, and a large open area for class meetings and group activities. Individual desks are not generally seen in our classrooms as we find that larger shared tables better serve our goals of cooperative learning, student independence, and individualized instruction. Teachers often use the tables to set up learning centers around the room. As described by educators and authors Harvey Daniels and Marilyn Bizar in the book *Methods That Matter: Six Structures for Best Practice Classrooms*:  
*"Centers or learning stations are special spots in the classroom where the teacher has set up curriculum-related activities that students can pursue autonomously."*

Likewise, in the book *Multiage Q and A*, published by Staff Development for Educators, the authors state:  
*"Learning centers allow teachers an opportunity to observe students engaged in their work and to arrange for small-group and individual conferences. Learning centers also facilitate ongoing assessment that allows for immediate re-teaching as necessary...Student ownership in the learning process is an important benefit of learning centers. Students in such settings are first taught how to learn, rather than what to learn. The classroom that effectively uses learning stations will be filled with choices that allow students to take responsibility for their learning. The teacher is involved with the planning and completion of each student's activities, yet the student is allowed to take as much ownership in the process as she is capable of managing...Providing a range of developmentally appropriate activities that meets the need of students of various ages can be done very effectively in a center-oriented situation. Materials and tasks can be available at a variety of levels."*

Teaching at CFS benefits from spatial flexibility and decentralization. The classroom becomes a workshop for research, investigation, and inquiry. Daniels and Bizar of National-Louis University in Chicago equate workshop model classrooms with working laboratories or studios "where genuine knowledge is created, real products are made, and authentic inquiry is pursued." As a center for all types of learning experiences, the Connecticut Friends School classroom is a lively place.

### Thematic Study

Thematic studies teach students the interrelatedness of all things. Students see not only the relationships between and among various facets of life, but they come to understand the truth of the concept that physicists now see: that all things have an effect upon each other. Within each classroom, thematic study units can organize interdisciplinary investigations over the course of a week to two or three months. Again, students with their teacher's guidance identify central questions to investigate and design projects that will reflect their deeper understanding of the topics studied and practiced.

On a school-wide level, it is our practice to meet as a staff at year's end to choose a central theme for the coming school year. Each classroom teacher, with their students, will work in curricular strands to reflect this school-wide theme at a developmentally appropriate level. In addition, individual classes choose topics for thematic studies throughout the school year.

### Teaching From The Microcosm

Teachers at Connecticut Friends School give their students the opportunity to explore a particular topic thoroughly and intensely, expecting that the students will then be able to repeat the process and apply the same model of critical thinking to a different topic.

Dr. Parker Palmer, senior associate of the American Association for Higher Education, who has taught at Pendle Hill, the Quaker living-learning community, has written brilliantly on education. In his recent book, *The Courage to Teach*, Dr. Palmer describes teaching from the microcosm:

*"Rather than ... tell my students everything practitioners know about the subject, information they will neither retain nor know how to use, I need to bring them into the circle of practice in that field, into its version of the community of truth. To do so, I can present small but critical samples of the data of the field to help students understand how a practitioner in this field generates data, checks and corrects data, thinks about data, uses and applies data, and shares data with others. ... Every discipline has a gestalt, an internal logic, a patterned way of relating to the great things at its core. ... Each discipline has an inner logic so profound that every critical piece of it contains the information necessary to reconstruct the whole, if it is illuminated by a laser, a highly organized beam of light. That laser is the act of teaching."*

As with all decisions at Connecticut Friends School, these decisions are made in the context of developmental appropriateness, from preschool to Grade 8.

### Learning By Experience

Students learn best when they are able to interact with what they are learning. At CFS, we not only take students on field trips, we use the classroom to make the learning experience interactive and three-dimensional. When a class studies water cycles, they create a closed terrarium in order to observe first-hand the cycle of evaporation and precipitation. When studying Van Gogh, CFS students create their own paintings in the style of the Impressionists.

Students are taught across the learning styles—visual, kinesthetic, and auditory learners are given an equal chance at understanding and assimilating knowledge. As noted by Daniels and Bizar in *Methods that Matter*:

*"Recently we have begun to see that putting down words is not the only way for students to engage, construct, probe, and store knowledge. Many other representational strategies that are commonly classified as art—drawing, sketching, mapping, drama, movement, song—turn out to be equally powerful cognitive levers, used either alone or in combination with words."*

Because we want CFS students to grow into adults who are powerful thinkers and problem solvers, we structure our curriculum in a way that develops all of their resources. Students who have learned to think three dimensionally, for example, can apply that skill when attempting to solve complex mathematical equations. Daniels and Bizar elaborate:

*"In recent years, practically everyone working in education has enthusiastically genuflected to Howard Gardner's (1983) concept that human beings don't have just a single type of intelligence, but rather a combination of eight different kinds of "smarts"—linguistic, mathematical, musical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and environmental. The key implication of this reasonable and well-supported theory is that schools must extend kids' existing areas of intelligence while helping them develop their weaker ones. Pedagogically, this means students should be encountering, processing, and representing ideas through a dramatically widened range of instructional activities."*

**Service Learning and the Practical Curriculum**

It is the aim of Connecticut Friends School to excite students to the possibility of improving our world through organized action or service work. Students learn about the difficulties that our modern world faces, brainstorm possible solutions, and then act. No students are too young as we witnessed recently with the sustained efforts and successful fund raising of our Maples students (grades K-1) in support of The Obey Foundation's school in Ghana, West Africa. Whether writing a letter, visiting a person in need, volunteering to paint a room, creating an informative website, or initiating a fundraising effort, the students learn that we are not helpless when it comes to problems and that they indeed can make a difference. Being able to contribute through positive action is self-affirming.

Service projects have been described by Quaker educators as controlled experiments in cooperative activity. Service work activities can become an important agent in character development. Students from diverse backgrounds who come together on a project find their understanding of one another increasing as they focus on the work to be done. Such work is also a great equalizer. Leadership is shared differently and more widely. Members of the group trade teaching and learning roles. Even teachers and students find themselves trading roles at times, to mutual benefit. Thus, by crossing age and cultural boundaries, service projects have the stunning ability to aid in the building of community among participants. (Note: parents who commit to helping at school-sponsored work days and who serve on school committees also experience an accelerated sense of community!)

Another positive result of participation in service work is the practical knowledge students gain. In the historic tradition of Friends schools, Connecticut Friends School considers the acquisition of practical skills to be very important. A student's sense of confidence and competence increases as s/he learns how to build, fix, or prepare, using the appropriate tools. Whether cooking, doing carpentry, or learning how to change a tire, a student who is heading toward independent living learns that he or she can negotiate the day-to-day ins and outs of the adult world. Friends schools also hope to convey the value of honest labor and the self-discipline that is required to complete a job.

Quaker educator Paul Lacey states the powerful contributions of life in a caring community in the development of the child in the following quotation from his book, *Growing Into Goodness*:

*"Community is the matrix in which young people can develop the trust and self-confidence essential for the risk-taking required in experimental education. In community, everyone can learn to take responsibility, to follow or take the lead. In community, we can learn to give and receive love. Simplicity gets the most out of scarce resources. It stresses acquiring practical and, therefore, empowering skills. It teaches us how to make do. The student who learns how to garden and to cook learns how to feed himself; the student who learns how to put up a building or fix plumbing learns how to care for her own shelter."*

**Building Community**

Community building is one of the essential aspects of life at Connecticut Friends School. Daily morning greeting by school administrators sets the tone for an ethos of respect and inclusiveness. Every child who arrives on campus is welcomed by a friendly adult who shakes the student's hand and exchanges "good morning" greetings. The message to the student is clear and consistent: "You are seen; you matter; we welcome you. We expect you, likewise, to recognize us with courtesy and friendly acknowledgment." Some children struggle more than others with finding the courage or good energy to be able to engage comfortably in this important but simple ritual, but we work on gently bringing everyone along to the point where a polite handshake with eye contact feels like a natural, joyful way to start the day.

Teachers at Connecticut Friends School plan activities that enable students to bridge differences and to create a close, working group. Whether the students are participating in cooperative games, practicing a play, or collaborating on a science experiment, an underlying goal is to build community. To this end, students are asked to practice the skills of being good listeners in many different venues.

Connecticut Friends School events such as the all-school potlucks and Square Dance, among others, are powerful and delightful means for families to make connections with each other and the CFS staff beyond the regular routine and roles of the school week.



All members of the Connecticut Friends School community are held to high standards of courtesy and respect and are expected to refrain from divisive behavior. When inevitable conflicts arise, students, and indeed all members of the CFS community, are expected to work through the conflict using the proper avenues and tools. Members of the school community must make a commitment to this process, though it may feel uncomfortable at times. Only in this way can we all learn from the conflict that, ironically, offers us an opportunity for growth.

In a true Quaker community, a creative tension exists between the needs of the individual and the needs of the group. Whenever and wherever possible in its curriculum, Connecticut Friends School addresses this seeming paradox.

The Quaker conviction that there is “that of God in every one” naturally translates into respecting every student, teacher, and community member and to honoring the distinct gifts that each individual brings.

### **Conflict Resolution**

Like students anywhere, students at Connecticut Friends School run into conflict with one another. At a Friends school, the conflict is used as a springboard for moral growth.

The education students receive in handling interpersonal relationships is of vital importance at a Friends school. Because we are committed to the Quaker peace testimony, one of our significant goals is for students to learn skills that promote healthy, evolving relationships. Teachers at Connecticut Friends School are trained in methods of conflict resolution and effective classroom management, drawing on the techniques of a number of programs, including Students’ Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC), American Friends Service Committee’s Help Increase the Peace Program (HIPP), Northeast Foundation’s Responsive Classroom, and the I-to-I conferencing method developed by Friends School of Minnesota.

In general, we want to provide our students with various forums for working through conflict, be it group discussions or individual conferences. At CFS, we encourage a dialogue process, asking people to bring forth concerns in a way that encourages further dialogue rather than shutting communication down.

We ask all CFS community members to be committed to positive interaction with one other. We approach students, and all community members, with a general expectation that we can trust them and that they are deserving of respect and a certain amount of freedom. Students learn that with freedom comes responsibility-- which includes clear consequences for breaches of trust. We teach students to consider whether their behavior is helpful in building community or is breaking it down.

In addition teachers and administrators at CFS look for opportunities for students to foster leadership skills, conscious that our students benefit from a regular practice at being problem-solvers, collaborators and facilitators.

### **Nurture of the Spirit**

Meeting for Worship, a time of silent meditation, is central to all that happens at Connecticut Friends School. Meeting time gives students the chance to turn inward, to check in with themselves, and to acknowledge an interior life. Students come to welcome this “settling in” time and benefit from the stress-reducing effects that meditation offers. Once the silence is ended, participants are welcome to share “after thoughts,” However, sitting quietly and listening with hearts and minds is as important as speaking “Afterthoughts”.

Each day, the students gather for a short period of quiet time. Teachers use centering devices such as guided imagery, poems, pictures, songs, music, stories, or queries to help the students grow in their ability to be reflective. A student is selected to end the silent, contemplative period by greeting his or her neighbor with the traditional Quaker phrase, “Peace be with thee,” to which the neighbor replies, “and also with thee.” The greeting is then passed around the circle.

Quakers speak of the Inner Light and of the need for each person to seek the Spirit within. The Spirit of the Meeting is taken into the everyday life of the school and students are encouraged to live the Quaker testimonies of integrity, equality, peace, community, simplicity, and stewardship.

At a Friends School, it is acknowledged that there are invisible aspects of life beyond the touchable, seeable reality. Students are encouraged to consider ethical questions and to develop a vocabulary that enables moral searching.

## **Academic Curriculum: Kindergarten through Grade 8**

(\*See “Academic Curriculum: Preschool” on page 16 for preschool curriculum information, but many of the same principles apply at every age level so we encourage parents of nursery age children to read the section below. We believe the underlying values run across the age groups.)

### **Daily Classroom Schedule**

Students begin their day by organizing themselves and their belongings and by greeting their teachers and peers. Classrooms begin with a morning meeting, a type of settling-in time. Each class has some silence during their day that mirrors the Quaker Meeting for Worship.

The daily schedule varies from classroom to classroom but always includes time for academics, discussion, review, meetings, outdoor or indoor play, and planning activities. Many classes hold daily organizational meetings. Because students are more productive in their schoolwork if they engage in outdoor play during the day, each class takes time out for a snack and a morning break. Students also have a 30 to 40-minute recess after lunch, outdoors in the supervised play areas. Students should always come prepared to go outside regardless of the weather. Communication, community, conflict resolution, and physical activity are all integrated into this important part of the day, as the entire school has recess at the same time. Energetic and industrious students of all ages find playground equipment, building tools, and natural objects to match their interests.

Each day, classes gather for meetings, projects, or presentations. Teachers use the gatherings to describe the work that will be expected for the week, teach a lesson, discuss a social problem, or read aloud. The younger students often have meetings to discuss events that are happening in the classroom, listen to instructions for a project, tell stories, or listen to the teacher read a story or book chapter. Throughout the elementary school, students are encouraged to share ideas and thoughts with classmates, and such stimulating discussion is at the core of the CFS curriculum.

Students also work in small groups, where they might discuss a book they have been reading, perform a science experiment, work at a computer, conduct a survey that combines math and social skills, or write a report for a social studies assignment. Teachers organize the small groups so there is a balance of abilities in each. The groups change membership over time, giving the students a chance to work with a variety of classmates.

At times, students work independently on the same assignment. Students may be reading to themselves, writing, working on their own projects, or doing math problems independently. In the younger classes, reading is taught every day, with students reading to themselves and to each other. Teachers work one-on-one with each student several times during the week and also read with students in small groups. Creative writing is taught in the same way: students write in their journals, or writing notebooks, while teachers move from student to student, making suggestions, helping with revisions, and editing. In the upper elementary classes, reading and writing are also taught in groups, where discussion of reading or student compositions helps students develop their analytical and writing skills.

The younger classes have a designated free time, often called “choice,” when they work by themselves or in small groups on projects or activities they have chosen or devised. Thus the students take an active role in their own learning. During “Choice Time” a student might elect to work on an art project, read, write a story, or build something in the block area. With other classmates, s/he might produce a skit, play games, or initiate a project.

As the students grow older and their schedules grow more complex, free time becomes work time known as “Academic Choice,” when students may select what they want to complete from the daily or weekly assignments. Students gradually learn to budget their free time both in and out of the classroom so that they can finish all of the work assigned for the week. Some teachers use a “work for the week” and “work check” system to accomplish this goal. Under this system, assignments are announced at the beginning of the week, posted to the ThinkWave website, and each student checks over the work for the week with the teacher on a designated day. Some of the work for the week can be completed in the classroom and some of it is done as homework. Whatever system a particular teacher uses for assigning, collecting, and checking work, it is designed to help students develop a sense of responsibility for their schoolwork and establish an appropriate pace in every area of study. Parents as well as students can track assignments and progress on ThinkWave, in the GradeBook section.

**Weekly Schedule**

During the course of each week, teachers weave the year's central theme throughout the academic subjects, which include reading, writing, social studies, science, and the arts. A separate time is set aside for the traditional study of mathematics and, for our middle schoolers, foreign language. Time each week is set aside for field trips as well as service learning and special projects.

**English Language Arts Overview**

At Connecticut Friends School, students are encouraged to develop a lasting appreciation and enjoyment of reading for information and for pleasure. Students are also encouraged to write in order to develop and refine their thoughts and to communicate with others. Language-based activities support students in their use of all aspects of language, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. All students are treated as readers and writers.

Language development is encouraged across all curriculum areas. Reading starts with whole texts; skills are developed within the context of the stories. Authentic writing activities that ask the students to develop their own voice and to consider their audience is valued over writing that merely practices isolated skills. Students are asked to share their ideas through class discussion, reading books, sharing their writing, and presenting what they have learned. These activities are designed to help students develop their ability to speak clearly and confidently in front of others.

Developmentally appropriate learning tasks (such as reading strategies, phonics, punctuation, handwriting, vocabulary, and spelling) are provided as needed, with weekly assignments to establish a pattern for study and mastery. The emphasis, however, remains on how students use these tools, in their response to literature and in their own writing, and how authors use these tools in the books that the students are reading. Students are encouraged to take risks in their learning. Their approximations, not just accuracy, are recognized and appreciated.

**English Language Arts in the Lower Grades**

At Connecticut Friends School, we use a balanced, integrated approach to language arts. For students in the early years, instruction in reading and writing employs principles similar to the way in which spoken language is acquired and developed. Students learn about books through being read to and through shared reading. They are encouraged to write their own books, modeled upon those they have read. When these books are "published," they are in turn read by others. Students further develop their skills as readers and writers through more formal instruction. Shared reading is used along with guided reading in small groups and individual instruction. The main purpose of this instruction is to help students integrate all three cueing systems – meaning, language structure, and visual – while they gather information and enjoy the story. Writing becomes a tool to communicate thoughts. Through editing and publishing their own writing, students learn skills that aid them in their reading.

Teachers monitor progress by regularly listening to each student read. Teachers keep a record of each student's growth in both reading and writing and use these records to inform their instruction. Along with a whole language approach, students receive direct instruction in the building blocks of reading and penmanship. Teachers assign activities designed to foster sound-letter recognition, familiarity with phonics patterns, understanding of prefixes, suffixes, contractions, and spelling patterns. They also give students opportunities to develop their grapho-motor skills.

**English Language Arts in the Upper Grades**

Students progress from learning to read to reading to learn. After this transition has been made, they are ready to engage with the ideas presented in books. Students are encouraged to relate these ideas to past experiences, to gain new meaning through their reading, and to reflect on their reading as they interact with their community and the world at large. Students participate in "Literature Circles," in which each student takes on a role that contributes to the overall student-led discussion. This format is designed to foster cooperation and independence among young readers

Reading is also used as a tool to gather information. Students learn to pose a problem, gather data, evaluate the data, and create something (a play, a picture, a chart, a report) that shows what they have learned.

Once again, writing is integrated with reading. Students write in different formats for a variety of purposes throughout the content areas. The process of writing helps students develop and refine their thoughts and write with an audience in mind. Within the context of each writing assignment, a broad range of skills and strategies can be taught. Writing workshops give

students the opportunity to reflect on writing methods used by authors, to work on their own, to collaborate with others on written pieces, and to share their writings with the class.

Teachers check on progress by discussing literature with students, by having them do “retells” and responding to what is read, and, occasionally, by having the students read aloud to them. Records are kept of each student’s reading and writing progress. As well, students take an active role in evaluating their progress. Teachers, students, and their parents set goals together.

### **Visual and Performing Arts**

At Connecticut Friends School, the arts are an integral part of our core curriculum. We believe that students should be literate in the languages of music, dance, the visual arts, and dramatic theater, as well as knowledgeable about the rich human history of arts and crafts. Working with their teachers, students are given the chance to express themselves in these areas. During our frequent field trips, students often attend performances; visit museums, or tour studios of working artists. Teachers also bring books on art, relevant videos, and music into the classroom.

In our studio art classes all students (K-8) explore all the basic elements of art: line, shape, pattern, color, and composition. They use a variety of materials—pencil, crayon, water-color, oil pastel, and ceramic—to study still life, abstraction, and impressionism. Throughout the year students are given opportunities to experiment with clay, wire, wood, fabric and other materials as they learn about sculpture and ceramics. On a given year students may try silk screening, papermaking, printmaking, bookmaking or metalworking.

During music classes, students work in a music lab environment. At various points in the year students explore African drumming, recorders, and singing. With access at the middle school level to professional grade keyboards, ukuleles, MacBook Air, iMac computers and iPad tablets, composition is a central component of the music program. Students also learn basic music history and survey the roots of music. Our aim is music literacy for all students based on exposure and exploration. We expect in-depth study of a particular instrument to occur outside of school hours in private lessons, although students will find a variety of forums in which to perform their particular instruments at CFS.

During movement classes, students are exposed further to a wide variety of music. In this way, students experience firsthand the rhythms and music of cultures all over the world. Our artist-in-residence instructors have included professional dancers and choreographers. Teaching traditional rhythms and movement, African drummer Kojo Bey works with the students for 10 weeks each year. With Kojo, students learn firsthand about the richness of African history, culture, and musical traditions.

Formal storytelling and class plays help students take the stage with poise and purpose.

### **Mathematics**

At Connecticut Friends School, math is taught as a distinct discipline, but whenever possible it is integrated into the ongoing theme and linked to everyday life. In this way, the students realize that math is a language to help them describe and think about their world and to help them express themselves.

From the time students are young and are playing with blocks, puzzles, and construction materials, they are on the road to becoming mathematically literate human beings. In using such materials, students are learning about spatial relationships and patterns. Concepts such as up/down, in/out, left/right, near/far, or high/low reveal a student’s sense of space, which is also an indicator of their mathematical understanding. For this reason, at CFS play and exploration are valued. We also acknowledge the overlap between science, art, and math and look for opportunities to explore the relationships among these subjects.

At CFS, students engage in a rigorous mathematics curriculum. Teachers of all age groups employ math manipulatives to help students better understand math concepts. Our program uses a model in which students revisit concepts at deeper and deeper levels. With repeated exposure, each concept is more fully understood. We balance the classic basics (such as fact memory and efficiency with computation) with the development of conceptual understanding, problem solving, and critical thinking. Teachers check on progress by discussing problems and problem solving methods with the students. Students are assessed on the basis of their problem-solving abilities, projects, class participation and on their portfolio of work. Teachers keep records of growth in the many mathematical strands.

The math program at CFS is designed to meet the goals stated by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics\*. Students who progress through the entire elementary and middle school math program at Connecticut Friends School are expected to have the following:

- The ability to set up problems with the appropriate operations
- Knowledge of a variety of techniques to approach and work on problems
- Understanding of the underlying mathematical features of a problem
- The ability to work with others on a problem
- The ability to see the applicability of mathematical ideas to common and complex problems
- Preparation for open-problem situations, since most real problems are not well formulated
- Belief in the utility and value of mathematics

\*National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics, 1989, 2004.

### **Science**

It is by learning and practicing the methods of science that we employ one of our most powerful means to understand the world in which we live. From kindergarten through 8th grade students pursue thematic investigations in the physical, life and earth sciences. “Science as Inquiry” is put into practice at the earliest levels. For instance, in our Maples classroom students awed by the sudden appearance of large icicles off the roof of the building harvest, with the help of their teachers, lengthy specimens. The questions are endless and lead to a number of investigations: What are icicles? Where do they come from? How do they form? How much does this icicle weigh? How much water will there be when it melts? How long will it take to melt back in the classroom?

Observation and measurement are two tools of the scientists practiced in this classroom and all CFS classrooms. Reporting the results of investigations calls students to bring their skills as writers, artists and mathematicians to bear upon their final reports and displays. Public presentation and public speaking are culminating skills developed in all classrooms as young scientists reveal their findings, sharing research, demonstrating models, and giving “formal lectures” to other members of the CFS community.

The students become increasingly competent in their ability to develop criteria to classify things and order events while recording their findings. They learn to discern and make scientific statements (“falsifiable” statements) versus non-scientific statements (those, that even if they were false, were not demonstrably so). More rigorously applied critical thinking skills, along with increasingly sophisticated technology, mark the scientific investigations of the later grades.

Science investigations inform the core framework of the Oaks classes’ six-week interdisciplinary investigations. Readers’ Workshop titles often amplify the theme unit’s scientific investigation: the Oaks 1 students reading a novel about life in the wild during a life science unit; the Oaks 2 students reading a futuristic novel about cloning while studying genetics in life science. Always, the Oaks students are writing about, charting and modeling their scientific investigations and discoveries.

Of particular importance at Connecticut Friends School is helping students better fulfill their responsibilities to the planet (the Quaker testimony of Stewardship). One of our goals is to encourage students to “walk lightly on the earth”. We especially seek to excite students to the wonders of the natural world. Students spend a lot of time investigating out-of-doors and set up models of natural systems in the classrooms for closer observation. In learning about systems, (matter, energy, or information that moves through defined pathways) students are taught that the human species has a singular and crucial role within a universally interconnected ecological system.

### **Social Studies**

The social studies curriculum at Connecticut Friends School orients students to other people in the world and to physical boundaries. As the educator Irene Neurath has written, “social studies promotes a scrutiny of connections—man to man, past and present—which may yield important material for a perspective on the future.” In learning about the past, students discover where we come from and how we got here. Neurath continues in her discussion of social studies:

*“Building a sense of rootedness prepares and generates a feeling of belonging, first to one’s immediate surroundings and finally to the whole world. Increasingly a sense of belonging, of caring for the “family of [humans],” of stretching oneself to encompass at least some of the problems which permeate a world population, not just that of a city or state, becomes necessary for the survival of life as we know it.”*

The social studies curriculum at a Friends School challenges the traditional outlines and definitions of what is worth studying. It dares to use voices that are traditionally neglected or marginalized, such as those of women and minorities, as focal points of discussion. Whether one is studying the changing face of agriculture in the middle ages or the contemporary United States, it is worth our while to consider a variety of points of view.

At CFS we put human dignity and integrity at the center of our studies. We support the students in learning to think beyond national boundaries, to recognize people everywhere as human beings, and to discern nature's imperative to create order.

We would like Connecticut Friends School students to develop cross-cultural curiosity and commitment, trusting their daily experiences to lead them to question current patterns of belief and action in the wider world. We expect our students to learn to think of people in other countries as having complex cultures deserving of respect, as having personal integrity and, although perhaps unknown to them, as being potentially in conversation with them.

We hope to nurture in these students a desire to find common bonds amidst the many diversities of life, and we hope that differences in governing bodies and strategies are not an indicator of final separateness. Students should come to feel that they belong in contingent affiliation with life everywhere. "To citizens such as these, we could entrust policy-making." (Peggy MacIntosh, Ph.D. of Wellesley Center for Research on Women.)

### **Outdoor Education and Leadership**

A signature program at CFS, Outdoor Education and Leadership for the Oaks gets our 5th through 8th graders out of doors, practicing an array of skills, including: orienteering, technical climbing, paddling, and caving. The program uses a "challenge by choice" approach in which students push to the edge of their comfort and experience to learn more about their ability to overcome real obstacles. While the outdoor program can be intense and intensely personal, students almost always share with and are supported by peers. The program brings young adolescents together with knowledgeable and safety conscious adults in a group to practice interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

Furthermore, the natural world waits for us with all its beauty, wonder, and potential lessons. Its value to us becomes evident as we act more closely in nature, as we hike in the rain, as we scratch our way through an overgrown path, as we scramble over unyielding rocks, and as we take in an unexpected vista. We are compelled then to incorporate stewardship as part of our Outdoor Education and Leadership Program, which is why students participate in projects such as river clean-ups and habitat restoration for indigenous wildlife.

### **Foreign Language – Spanish**

At Connecticut Friends School, 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students develop oral and listening skills in Spanish. These skills are acquired through active interaction among students and between students and teacher, using multiple media and combining different approaches to learning. The most common techniques used in the classroom are oral presentations, skits, dialogues and more directive exercises like "fill in the blank." Although writing proficiency represents an important component in language studies, it is not the main objective at this level.

The curriculum covers the five C's of Spanish study: communication, cultures, connections, comparison, and communities. Communication means using Spanish as a means of conversation, building skits, and discussing stories and dialogue. Cultures aims at gaining knowledge and understanding of the Spanish culture through discussion of skits, stories, and dialogues. Connections represents the interdisciplinary nature of Spanish. Comparisons point at developing insight into the nature of the Spanish language and the many Spanish cultures. Lastly, communities encourage student participation with multilingual communities at home and in Spanish-speaking countries.

The languages spoken in the classroom are a combination of Spanish and native English. To help students practice Spanish, the use of Spanish as the primary language in class becomes more dominant as the academic year progresses. The overall goal for the whole program is that students, according to their own developmental level, are able to speak, listen and write short paragraphs about common everyday situations.

**World Culture Program**

Throughout the year students in kindergarten through 4th grade are introduced to different nations, traditions, religions, and languages via “world culture” units, which are taught by Connecticut Friends School classroom teachers, graduates, parents, and friends. Students sing songs, play games, and find out about the cultures of peoples they most likely have never met but with whom they share a common humanity if not a common lineage. Children are exposed to different writing systems, folktales, cuisines, crafts, and celebrations. They are introduced to world geography as visitors share about a land and people near and dear to their hearts.

**Technology**

The computer is a near ubiquitous and still evolving tool in our modern lives. We are keenly aware that our time together each day is short and packed with a wide range of goals and that while the youngest of children now happily acclimate themselves to a range of electronic tools, at Connecticut Friends School we use computers judiciously. Computers are rich, fascinating tools, but we believe that they can be over-glorified at the expense of some work of childhood.

We prioritize work for our younger students that is more concrete and more directly social. At this level we emphasize traditional handwriting skills and use of books, magazines, and public libraries for learning how to explore subjects. The Oaks (10-14 years old) students have access to a bank of computers with Internet access as well as a raft of iPads. Pines students have iPads in their classrooms which, again, are used judiciously. We do not formally teach keyboarding skills and expect parents to support their children in learning how to type at home.

Although, strictly speaking, students are texting, posting to Facebook (and any other social networking sites,) playing electronic games and emailing during non-school hours, Connecticut Friends School staff reserve the right to get involved if issues of cyber-bullying enacted during after-school or weekend hours disrupt the harmony of the CFS community and such issues begin to effect the school day. Unkind gestures of any sort are not in keeping with the priority CFS, as a Quaker school, places on community. We expect CFS students, parents, staff and trustees to practice best manners at all times, during school hours and at all other times. We expect all members of the school community to work out conflicts via methods that creatively and non-violently resolve the conflict, not escalate it.

Younger K-8 students may occasionally be assigned electronic tablet devices to use educational APPS, to listen to an audio book or to view a useful video. Middle schoolers regularly use tablet devices and computers to create animation videos, complete robotics assignments, use word processing software and research the Internet.

**Day and Overnight Field Trips**

Every semester, CFS classes participate in day and overnight field trips, both of which are essential to the curriculum and ethos of the school. Such trips provide hands-on experience in the community and allow students to apply what they have learned, gaining first-hand knowledge of principles and theories discussed in class. The variety in learning environments that field trips provide caters to all styles of learners – visual, tactile, and auditory – as well as exposing students to landscapes and people from outside their own small corner of the world. All of this helps to expand thinking, stimulate community exchange, and foster understanding of the complexity of the world in which we all live, supplementing classroom learning. Field trips also give students an opportunity to learn about personal responsibility and appropriate public behavior, as well as planning, cooperation, thoughtfulness, and willingness to participate.

Field trips have proven to be natural opportunities to practice mental-processing skills and to recognize the relationships between often-compartmentalized segments of daily life, allowing holistic learning. Students can use their math skills to determine mileage, arrival time, or total expenses for the trip. An excursion to a factory gives students the opportunity to see the relationship between raw materials and finished products sold in stores. A field trip to a living history museum such as Plymouth Plantation gives students the chance to connect classroom lessons with historical events and places. All of these instances provide students with connections that give depth, meaning, and proportion to daily life.

Field trips also foster in students the desire to expand their knowledge about the world and the other people in it. Particularly at this time in history when so much is changing, the school feels it is appropriate for students to be comfortable with and enjoy that which is new and unusual. Whether it is food, speech mannerisms, concepts, or physical environments, it is important that students meet “newness” with the spirit of opportunity, curiosity, and joy about the diversity of our planet.

The school teaches students that true security and safety comes from competence, knowledge, preparation, mental agility, self-discipline, and confidence in oneself. Field trips allow these to develop in a safe, guided environment. Given the importance of field trips to Friends philosophy and curriculum, we expect full participation from students. We treat these field trips as integral components to learning, not as optional extra-curricular activities.

**Safety Measures:** Prior to the start of the school year, parents sign a general Field Trip Permission Slip. On field trips, your child will be riding or carpooling with other parents, teachers, or administrators in private cars, with insurance on file or riding in a bus with a driver who carries a current Commercial Driver's License (CDL).

Connecticut Friends School will make every effort to let parents know well in advance if a planned trip is expected to extend past normal dismissal time. When signing a child up for afternoon classes and activities, parents should bear in mind that there will be times when the length of a given school field trip would prevent a child from getting to an after-school activity on time.

### **Physical Education**

At Connecticut Friends School, we value the health of the total body. At the K-8 level Physical Education classes are held twice per week. Students participate in a variety of fitness activities including stretching, aerobics, strength training, yoga, dance, and soccer. Our organized activities are designed to promote community building and emphasize cooperation among students. We applaud each student's efforts and minimize competition. Our physical education classes develop in students self-discipline, agility, strength, flexibility, cooperation, and even compassion as we take the time to discuss standards of manners including why we refrain from judgment or teasing when a fellow student struggles with athleticism. Students also have generous amounts of unstructured outdoor recess each day—30 minutes at lunch and an additional break in the morning. We refer parents to our homework policy as relevant in that we do not believe in long hours of busy work after school and encourage students to follow their interests in sports through after school events provided in their hometowns.



## Academic Curriculum: Preschool

In addition to the Quaker testimonies, The Connecticut Framework: Preschool Curriculum Framework, established by the Connecticut State Department of Education, also serves as a guide for the Friends Nursery School program. The unique combination of the Quaker guiding principles (SPICES) coupled with the professional direction of the Preschool Curriculum Framework ensures that each child in his or her own way will be ready for the next step in their education.

The curricular goals at Friends Nursery School for older students incorporate and build upon goals for and accomplishments of younger children as well.

### Two Year Olds:

- To provide a positive first school experience in an organized, nurturing environment while offering an engaging curriculum that focuses on classic learning materials such as blocks, sand, crayons, paint, clay, musical instruments and water.
- To help the child develop harmoniously (physically, emotionally, cognitively, creatively and socially) through activities that allow for: body coordination, creative expression, peer and adult interaction, speech and language experiences, visual and auditory stimulation, concept development (e.g.: up, down, in, out, sit, stand, etc) and independent self-help skills.

### Three, Four and Five Year Olds:

- To foster the harmonious development of each child; physically, emotionally, cognitively, creatively and socially.
- To assist the child in building self-esteem by offering age-appropriate challenges that allow for success and a sense of accomplishment.
- To help establish positive patterns of interactions with others.
- To encourage independence and competence in the area of self-care (e.g., the ability to put on and take off one's own jacket, pour one's own drink, help with clean up, etc.)
- To foster compassion and empathy for others.
- To nurture friendships and a sense of community.
- To aid in the development of self-control in each child.
- To create a stimulating environment that will motivate children to try new experiences and solve problems in a creative way.
- To encourage in the child aesthetic sensitivities and artistic expression.
- To promote a sense of harmony and peace within each child.
- To enrich language skills, including both expressive and receptive verbal skills via early exposure to and practice of word patterning, rhyming, sound letter recognition and grapho-motor skills.
- To expose and develop pre-reading, pre-writing and pre-math skills through intentional play and inquiry based learning opportunities.
- To foster the harmonious development of each child; physically, emotionally, cognitively, creatively and socially.
- To provide hands-on, age-appropriate, interdisciplinary project based activities.
- To allow children to mature and develop their skills and abilities in an atmosphere that allows them to thrive.
- To engage children in experiential explorations of age appropriate language and number concepts via hands-on activities that support the development of critical thinking skills. Art, music, movement, dramatic play and a wealth of books enhance the nursery school day.
- To immerse students in rich language, numeration and symbol experiences and thoughtful discussions that foster pre-reading, pre-writing and pre-math skills, as well as expressive communication.
- To foster a sense of camaraderie in this dynamic learning community and to promote a sense of appreciation for the concepts of interdependence, cooperation and collaboration.

## **Structure of Connecticut Friends School**

### **Governance**

In Quaker tradition, Connecticut Friends School is under the care of a Meeting (Wilton Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, or WMM). The CFS Board of Trustees, is entrusted with the school's ongoing mission and its financial viability. Connecticut Friends School Inc., is a 501(c) (3) [tax-exempt, non-profit] Connecticut corporation, operating under a set of by-laws. According to the by-laws, the majority of the School's trustees must be members of a Friends Meeting. The CFS Board meets regularly during each calendar year. The Co-Heads of School are ex-officio members of the School's Board of Trustees and are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school.

### **Staff**

The teaching, administrative, and support staff of Connecticut Friends School form a community of caring adults...caring for the students, caring for CFS families, and caring for each other. All CFS employees prioritize a heart-led fulfillment of their responsibilities, making time for connection with students, the students' families, and each other. CFS employees practice a "do what it takes" approach to problems as involved as coordinating the development of curricular strands across the K-8 program or mapping out a marketing strategy and as simple (and time-consuming) as collecting materials for a classroom lesson or managing a bulk mailing. Dedicated to helping the school thrive, it is not unusual for teachers to find inspiration for their classroom while on a trip they take with their family or for administrators to problem-solve on evenings and weekends in meetings with members of Wilton Monthly Meeting and the School Board. Virtually all employees participate in social events such as Winter Celebration, and Earth Day.

In a small school such as CFS, the staff expects to take on many roles, such as recess duty swing pusher, CFS parent coach, field trip driver, etc. These dedicated staff members rarely watch the clock as they fulfill their responsibilities. The culture of the school is one of support, mutual respect, and a deep commitment to serving the students as they grow and learn; there is deep satisfaction for all staff who are aligned with the school's mission and feel their work contributes to the success of this maturing and unfolding model of a small school. At the same time, CFS cannot guarantee specific teachers from year to year as the vagaries of life circumstances may affect staffing.

## **Communication Between Parents and School**

### **Orientation Evening, Preschool**

In late August, before school starts, Friends Nursery School holds a Parent Orientation Evening. During this event, teachers speak about the fundamentals of the school's pedagogy in an overview presentation to all parents. In addition, details about how to handle various situations that may arise during school will be discussed, as well as a great deal of logistical information. Finally, this is good opportunity to meet and speak with Connecticut Friends School parents, teachers and staff.

### **Curriculum Nights**

Curriculum Nights for each classroom are held in September. During the evening, the Co-heads speak about the fundamentals of the school's pedagogy in an overview presentation to all parents. Then parents hear about specific classroom curriculum from the students' teachers, as well as plans for day and overnight field trips and other exciting events for the year.

### **Conferences, Preschool**

Before classes for the new school year begin, parents may call the school to set up a meeting with their child's classroom teacher(s) to discuss the child's interests, abilities, and challenges. Conferences for Willows and Spruces will be scheduled twice during the school year. The conferences are approximately 15-20 minutes in duration and will provide an opportunity to discuss your child's strengths and weaknesses with his/her teacher. A teacher or parent may request an extra conference on an as-needed basis; these check-ins are scheduled in a customized way, at mutually agreeable times. All parents are encouraged to communicate often with their child's teacher(s), in a way as casual as a quick hello during pick-up or a brief email to confirm a plan, or as formal as a conference that includes a Co-Head, Nursery School Administrator, teachers and parents.

**Assessments and Conferences, K - 8**

Before classes for the new school year begin, parents may call the school to set up a meeting with their child's classroom teacher(s) to discuss the child's interests, abilities, and challenges. These "Optional Conferences" may be for parents and teachers only, but as the student matures it is common practice at CFS to have the student not only present at most family conferences but to facilitate the meetings. Family Conferences are held both in November and March/April, with another Optional Conference in late January. Parents and teachers (and students beyond Maples level) reflect on progress, accomplishments, and challenges and work together to set goals for the next trimester.

In December, March, and June, K-8 teachers write an assessment in the form of a narrative report on every student. The evaluation reports are posted to a secure website, ThinkWave and parents log in to their account to view what teachers have written. Letter grades are not used at Connecticut Friends School, although for subjects such as math, geography, and spelling, students receive number "grades" on their quizzes as an indicator of how well they have mastered a unit of study. Instead of grades, teachers use a combination of observation, portfolio assessment, and formal assessment tools to evaluate each student's progress. Because teachers at Connecticut Friends School have the luxury of close observation and a variety of assessment tools at their disposal, we do not administer standardized tests.

As previously stated, traditional Friends schools nurture the teacher/seeker-of-knowledge within each student and have high expectations of each student. Students at Connecticut Friends School are encouraged to become proficient at self-assessment and at setting personal goals. They meet regularly with their teachers in order to learn these important life skills.

**School News and Communications**

There is a weekly school snapshot email that goes out to all parents. In addition, teachers send emails regarding specific events and news related to your child's class.

The administration also regularly emails calendar updates with reminders about upcoming field trips, schedule variations, announcements, and so forth. Therefore, it is imperative that you keep the school informed of your current email address.

To schedule a conversation with a teacher, please call (203 762 9860) or email the school office ([office@CTFriendsSchool.org](mailto:office@CTFriendsSchool.org)), or speak with the teacher directly (there is a staff directory on the back cover of this handbook.) When appropriate, teachers will share your concerns with other faculty at our weekly staff coordinating meetings, allowing general input, brainstorming, and discussion to take place, in order to address your child's needs.

**Expressing Your Concerns**

Parents are encouraged to take concerns about their child directly to his or her classroom teacher. Teachers are available for short conversations both before and after school and teachers will schedule longer conferences at mutually agreeable times.

The Co-Heads of school are resources for parents, students, and teachers. They keep abreast of any ongoing concerns in the classroom, consult with all members of the community and, at their discretion and/or invitation from any of the invested parties, attend family conferences.

## Parent Involvement

Connecticut Friends School can only function with the generous and remarkable investment of time and energy on the part of the parent body. CFS encourages parent involvement in regular and special classroom activities. Throughout the year, teachers will communicate ways that parents can get involved and contribute to the year's activities, helping with classroom projects, field trips, etc. In addition, parents provide essential program support through All Parent Meeting fundraising activities.

### All Parent Meeting

The purpose of the Connecticut Friends School All Parent Meeting (APM) is to support the school, the parent body, and relationships within the school community. It operates largely by custom and without formal by-laws. While it is the responsibility of the school's trustees to set school policy and develop a strategic agenda, and of the professional staff of teachers and administrators to shape program and curriculum and manage administrative operations, the All Parent Meeting fills an important role in supporting these stewards of the school's mission and vision. The primary aims of the All Parent Meeting are to:

- involve parents in the life of the school;
- provide a way to inform parents about the school's curriculum, culture, and policies;
- provide regular opportunities for parents to learn about the ongoing work of the faculty, administration, and board of trustees;
- provide a channel through which teachers, administrators, and trustees can solicit or receive feedback on school policies and practices;
- work in partnership with teachers, administrators, and trustees on issues of community-wide concern;
- facilitate communication between the school and families, and among families themselves, through designated class representatives;
- plan opportunities for parent education through lectures, workshops, and discussion groups;
- raise funds for the school and its programs.

The All Parent Meeting (APM) is held periodically throughout the school year, generally once per month. The All Parent Meeting Steering Committee, in consultation with the Co-Heads of School, develops the agenda for the APM meetings. Meetings provide a valuable arena for ongoing communication between the school and the parent body, allowing the trustees, administration, and faculty to communicate to parents the rationale for decisions relating to the school's finances, capital improvement projects, or aspects of the school's program and curriculum, and for parents to communicate to the school specific questions, ideas, praise, and concerns. Gatherings convened by the All Parent Meeting are aimed at enhancing understanding among the school's constituencies and considering broad issues with an eye toward mutual problem solving.

In addition, the All Parent Meeting supports the faculty and administration of the school through organized fundraising activities. Funds raised through these efforts support faculty professional development, special programs for students, field trips, and the purchase of equipment and instructional materials.

All meetings of the CFS All Parent Meeting and associated committees are conducted "in the manner of Friends." Decisions are reached through a process known as "sense of the meeting." This is achieved when those involved in a decision, in a spirit of respect and appreciation for one another as volunteers and members of the school community, reach an understanding of what best represents the collective will of the group. Please see your class representative to suggest ideas for All Parent Meetings and the APM Steering Committee will discuss your suggestion.

### Membership and Participation

All Connecticut Friends School parents (FNS and K-8) are automatically members of the All Parent Meeting. It has been found, however, that those parents who become actively involved in the work of the APM tend to feel more deeply connected with others in the school community. All parents are therefore urged to volunteer in one way or another, not only for the valuable assistance they can provide, but also for their own satisfaction as members of the extended CFS community.

Opportunities for service within the All Parent Meeting are many and varied. In order to carry out all of the work that needs to be done, each parent is encouraged to serve the school in at least one major role or in several less time-consuming ones each year. The Parent Volunteer Signup Form which is distributed at the initial All Parent Meetings (and by email) asks individual parents to communicate their interests for the coming year, and roles are assigned by mid-September.

Opportunities for parent involvement in the life of the school include the following:

- become involved with the CFS All Parent Meeting; serve as a representative to the APM;
- serve on a committee of the Board of Trustees;
- offer a special curriculum-related workshop or presentation for students in an area of expertise;
- pitch in with all-school celebrations and events, including, Storytelling Night, Winter Celebration, etc.;
- help out with school admissions events, representing the parent perspective at the school's Admissions Open Houses;
- serve on the Annual All Parent Meeting Fundraising Event Committee, the subcommittee of the All Parent Meeting that coordinates the All Parent Meeting's major fundraising effort;
- donate an event, vacation home, service, or item to the Annual Fundraising Gala, or solicit donations from others;
- serve as a buddy family to a family new to the school.
- In addition to these volunteer opportunities that come around every year, each school year offers particular events in which to become involved.

### **Structure of the All Parent Meeting**

The All Parent Meeting Steering Committee leads the CFS All Parent Meeting. The members of this committee include the following:

- Co-head of School
- Preschool and K-8 classroom representatives (one each from FNS, Maples, Pines, Oaks 1 and Oaks 2)

The All Parent Meeting Steering Committee meets monthly, at a time and day determined by that year's Committee. Specific responsibilities of the All Parent Meeting Steering Committee include the following:

- plan the agenda for meetings of the full All Parent Meeting;
- plan special programs of general interest to parents;
- oversee the progress of major All Parent Meeting fundraising efforts.

In addition, the Annual All Parent Meeting Fundraiser Committee, (or Gala Committee,) a subcommittee of the All Parent Meeting including the class representatives, and other parents who have volunteered for specific event responsibilities, meets as needed to plan and carry out the myriad tasks relating to the event effort. Members of the school's administration, including a Co-Head of School, the Business Manager, and the Communications staff, will attend these meetings as needed. Through shared work that contributes so significantly to the life of the school, the Connecticut Friends School parent body has developed a strong spirit and identity, and individuals who so choose have discovered deep and enduring friendships within the community.

## Philanthropy at CFS

Voluntary giving is integral to the financial health of Connecticut Friends School and is a testimony to a strong community of families and friends that care about CFS. Connecticut Friends School is committed to a reasonable tuition structure that allows children from a wide variety of backgrounds to attend the school.

Connecticut Friends School has a strong “culture of philanthropy” and this has a direct impact on the school’s ability to deliver a superior program to its students and helps CFS attract and retain superior faculty.

Throughout the year, families have different opportunities to get involved in the philanthropic life of the school: Operating Budget Philanthropy and Capital/Expansion Campaign Philanthropy.

### Operating Budget Philanthropy

There are two main fundraising events that support the operating budget: the first is the Annual Fund and the second is the Spring Fundraiser/Gala. Parent participation in both of these fundraisers is critical to the health of the school’s finances and, as such, we ask for 100% participation.

- Annual Fund: Each year, CFS relies on gifts to the Annual Fund to help bridge the gap between tuition and the actual cost of educating each child, bolster the school’s operating budget and provide the best teachers, programs and resources for its students. Each year CFS strives for 100% participation from the parent community. Donations to Annual Fund are put to work immediately in the classrooms and support all aspects of the operating budget including: teacher’s salaries, classroom supplies/materials, field trips, art, music, outdoor education program, guest instructors/visitors and professional development.
- Spring Fundraiser/Gala: Organized by the All Parent Meeting, the Spring Fundraiser is a celebratory way to gather as a school community, throw a party and raise additional funds to support the school’s operating budget. All parents are expected to attend – there is role for everyone. Parents can choose to participate by soliciting donations from area businesses, organizing the Gala, donating a vacation home/service/item to be auctioned at the Gala and/or simply attending the Gala. Volunteers to help with set-up or break-down, or to perform a job during the evening help to make the evening a success.

In addition:

- A voluntary contribution of any amount to the CFS Professional Development Fund is always appreciated. Donations from preschool families to this fund will benefit FNS directly. We use these funds for staff training and education. This contribution is tax-deductible. Your contribution will be acknowledged upon receipt.
- Overnight field trips: Parents or guardians who wish to are encouraged to make donations earmarked support students from their child’s class who may not be in a position to pay the full amount. Fees for overnight field trips vary and all contributions are greatly appreciated.
- Donors may wish to earmark their gifts for academic scholarships; these funds will be dedicated to supporting our Financial Assistance program. CFS awards grants to students who would otherwise be unable to afford a Friends education.
- Parents and members of the community who make on-line purchases via Amazon.com may wish to register with Amazon Smile as a way to support Connecticut Friends School. This is a simple process and if you enter the Amazon site via the Amazon Smile portal each time you shop, the school will accrue donations (once you choose Connecticut Friends School as your favorite charitable institution).

### Capital/Expansion Budget Philanthropy

- From time to time the Board of Trustees of Connecticut Friends School initiates a capital campaign. Such a development project may fund capital improvements to the school’s facilities, help the school acquire additional land, support the school’s endowment or provide funds to support teacher salaries.

## Health and Safety

### Medical Emergencies

It is critical that the school be able to notify parents in case of emergencies. If you change your address, phone number, or emergency contact information, it is imperative that you notify the school immediately, via the TADS website. In the event of a medical emergency, we will make every effort to reach parents or guardians. If it is not possible to do so, we may call the child's pediatrician, and, if necessary, take the child to an appropriate facility. Our teaching and administrative staff are trained in basic First Aid and CPR, but we have no registered nurse on staff.

### Illness

Students must stay home from school if they:

- Have a fever of 100° or more in the past 24 hours
- Have vomited in the past 24 hours
- Have diarrhea more than once in the past 24 hours
- Have copious yellow/green mucus discharge from nose
- Complain of severe earache, with or without fever
- Have a severe sore throat with symptoms indicating possible strep throat
- Have conjunctivitis (pink eye) with discharge
- Have a skin wound, sore or lesion that appears infected, e.g., is red, swollen or draining fluid
- Have an undiagnosed or communicable rash

### **PLEASE NOTE: IT IS AT THE SCHOOL'S DISCRETION TO SEND A CHILD HOME FOR MEDICAL OR BEHAVIORAL CAUSES.**

Students must remain home:

- For 24 hours after an elevated temperature returns to normal without the use of anti-inflammatory medication
- For 24 hours after vomiting has ended
- After a throat culture--until the results are available (regardless of physician advice)
- For 24 hours after their first dose of medication with a diagnosis of strep throat to prevent the spread to other students
- For 24 hours following treatment for bacterial conjunctivitis or conjunctivitis with discharge
- Until they are adequately treated for head lice, scabies or other infestation, communicable illness or skin infection, or have been assessed by a physician and determined to be non-communicable. A physician's note may be required to return to school.

### Allergies

By the nature of our program – field trips, classroom cooking projects and shared hospitality, community potlucks and family-style eating – it is not possible for us to designate any classroom as “peanut-free”. While we will make every effort to be “peanut-aware” and take all reasonable precautions – for peanut allergies or any other allergic conditions – parents will acknowledge by their enrollment at Connecticut Friends School, including Friends Nursery School, that the school cannot guarantee that their child will not be exposed to conditions that cause their child to have an allergic reaction. Also, it is the parents' responsibility to bring to the schools' attention, prior to enrollment, their child's sensitivity to such conditions so that Connecticut Friends School can ascertain whether it can reasonably accommodate the allergy.

### Head Lice

Head lice can be a problem in any school. Please recognize the signs – itching, small bite marks, and nits – and check your child for these regularly. Please notify teachers or the office immediately if your child has head lice or nits, so that other families in class can be notified to check their children. If a child at school is discovered to have head lice, parents will be called and asked to come pick her/him up. Please do not send a child to school until they are completely free of lice and nits, which will minimize the risk of spreading the infestation to other students. CFS contracts with a registered nurse to check children for head lice, typically at least 3 times in the early fall.

### Deer Ticks

Deer ticks are prevalent in this part of the country. Although we invest in deer tick protection for the campus, we urge parents to check their children daily for ticks and look for symptoms of Lyme Disease.

### Prescription Medications

If a child needs to take any form of prescription or over the counter medication(s) during the school day, the school must be so informed in writing using our “Permission to Administer Medication” form sent to families with our August “mailing” (this is one of the TADS on-line forms). Both the child’s physician and the child’s parent/guardian must complete this form. We cannot administer any medication at any time throughout the school year without this form on file.

## Application, Enrollment and Financial Responsibilities

Enrollment shall be open to any child, provided the school can meet the needs of that child, and there is space. Enrollment shall be granted without regard to gender, race, family structure, color, or creed.

**Families returning to CFS** must return the Re-Enrollment Survey by January 15, 2014, indicating their intentions for the following school year. Signed Enrollment Agreements and non-refundable deposits (\$500 for FNS and \$2000 for K-8) are due on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015. See information below for details regarding the schedule for families applying for Financial Aid.

**Families new to CFS** must submit an Application, accompanied by the \$75 application fee which you will submit via the TADS site after creating an account for your family. Friends Nursery applicants will return their Class Selection form and the Parent Questionnaire, to the Director of Admissions. In the case of those applying on-line, the \$75 fee is split between TADS (\$17) and CFS (\$58). See information below for details regarding the schedule for families applying for Financial Aid.

The non-refundable deposit is due with the return of the Enrollment Agreement. The deposit is applied toward the balance of fees due. The school reserves the right to terminate enrollment of a child, for reasons of non-cooperation, delinquency in payment of fees, or inability of child and/or parent to adjust to the school program. A Connecticut Friends School Co-Head of School will determine termination.

**Parents agree to pay the full year's tuition regardless of the child's absence, withdrawal or dismissal, whether voluntary or at the School's discretion. Please refer to your child's Enrollment Agreement.**

### Non-Discrimination Policy and Financial Aid

Connecticut Friends School welcomes all applicants. The school is committed to serving a diverse student body and to support that commitment the school commits a large percentage of each year’s operating budget to financial assistance. As a Quaker community, CFS believes that Divine Light dwells within all people and that nurturing this Light enables us to grow spiritually, academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. As part of our commitment to social justice, we actively seek students from a wide range of family structures and racial, cultural, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds. Though a number of CFS students are part of a Quaker Meeting, Connecticut Friends School is open to anyone who is of “like leading” with the Friends’ educational vision. The goal of a Quaker school is not to convert students to Quakerism but rather to help all students appreciate the richness of their own cultural heritage.

### Enrollment dates for 2015

- Jan 15 All Returning Families – Re-Enrollment Survey due
- Feb 13 Returning Families (not requesting Financial Aid) – Enrollment Agreements and deposits due
- Feb 16 New & Returning Families (K-8 only) requesting Financial Aid– Financial Aid applications due to SSS
- Feb 16 New & Returning Families requesting Financial Aid – 2013 taxes due to SSS
- Mar 6 New & Returning Families requesting Financial Aid – Financial Aid decisions conveyed
- Mar 27 New & Returning Families requesting Financial Aid – Enrollment Agreements and deposits due

The first wave of Financial Aid applications are processed in March of each year. After March we accept applications on a rolling basis.



## **Admissions Policies and Guidelines**

Connecticut Friends School seeks students who can contribute to a community that values intellectual curiosity, mutual respect, and cooperation. We offer a collaborative learning environment for students with the necessary academic and personal standards to contribute to the vitality of the school. We believe that it enriches everyone's experience to have a student body of diverse races, family structures, nationalities, ethnic origins, and religions. New students are admitted on the basis of previous academic records, observations made by teachers and administrators during a full day, partial day, or shorter visit to the school, and recommendations.

References/recommendations provided as part of the admissions process are for the sole purpose of assisting in the admissions process and are considered confidential and therefore are not accessible to the applicant or his/her parents.

Our admissions process does not include formal testing, although if recent psychological testing is available, copies are required. Information provided by the parents verbally and on the application form is also taken into consideration. In all cases, the school retains the right to determine, in its sole discretion, whether or not to select a student for admission or to re-enroll a student.

Preschool: We suggest that children be two years of age by September 1<sup>st</sup> to enter the 2's program, and 3 or 4 years old by December 31<sup>st</sup> to enter the Three's or Four's program. Every child is considered individually and on a case-by-case basis. Considerations during this discernment include the child's own strengths and challenges as they relate to the composition of the class the child would join. A school tour, including a classroom visit by the parent(s) is required to decide if Friends Nursery School can meet the needs of both the child and parents.

## **Student Records**

Student files and records (academic and medical) are confidential. However, the school will share information, as needed, with staff members who have a legitimate need for student information in order to provide appropriate services.

Narrative reports for K-8 students are written in December, March, and June (see Assessments /Conferences on page 18). Such reports can be withheld if fees have not been paid in full. As stated in the student enrollment contract, failure to pay fees will also result in the following: the student shall not be allowed to attend classes, participate in year-end graduation celebrations nor receive a diploma or other evidence of honorable dismissal. Enrollment in any other member school of the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools may also be forfeited.

Our staff will write letters of recommendation for Connecticut Friends School students applying out to other schools only upon receipt of a Release of Records Waiver Form. This acknowledges that the letters of recommendation are confidential communications between CFS and the recipient schools and that the parents and students waive any right to receive, review, inspect or have access to the letters of recommendation.

## **High School and College Admissions and Enrollment**

Our graduates have gone to local public high schools in Darien, New Canaan, Norwalk, Weston and Westport as well as magnet schools such as Academy of Information Technology & Engineering (AITE), Academy for the Performing Arts, Center for Global Studies and Nutmeg Ballet School. Other students have been admitted to Fairfield College Preparatory School, International School (Rome, Italy), George (Friends) School (PA), Hopkins School, King School, Marvelwood, The Masters School, Miss Porter's School, The Sound School, Soundview Prep, St. Joseph High School, St. Luke's School, Solebury School (PA), Stanwich School, Suffield Academy, Trinity Catholic, Trinity-Pawling, la Unidad Educativa Americalatina (Quito, Ecuador), Waldorf School (Oberberg, Germany), Westtown (Friends) School (PA), and Wooster School.

CFS alumni have been accepted at the following colleges and universities: American University, Bennington College, Bowling Green, Brandeis, Bryn Mawr, Bucknell, Champlain College, College of the Redwoods, Clark, Clarkson, Colorado College, Columbia, Cornell, Culinary Institute of America, Earlham, University of Edinburgh, Eugene Lang School for the Performing Arts at the New School, George Mason U., George Washington, Gettysburg, Goucher, Green Mountain, Guilford, Hampshire, Hartwick, Harvey Mudd, Haverford, Hobart, Lafayette, Lewis & Clark, Middlebury, MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Mount Holyoke, New York University, Northeastern, Princeton, Rochester Institute of Technology, Sarah Lawrence College, Swarthmore, University of Connecticut, University of Dayton, University of Massachusetts/Amherst, University of London (School of Oriental and African Studies—SOAS), University of Rhode Island, University of Rochester, University of Vermont, Wellesley, Wentworth Institute of Technology and Wheaton, among others.

## School Procedures and Policies

### Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures

**K-8 Students:** Teachers arrive at school by 8:00 am. Students should be dropped off between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m. Classes start at 8:30. Students should be picked up from school promptly at 3:00 pm Mondays through Thursday. Friday is a half day for the Maples and Pines, and pick up is at 12:30 pm. The Oaks have a full day on Fridays to accommodate their music and Outdoor Education and Leadership programs and so pick-up for our middle school students is 3:00 pm on Friday.

In the event that your child has not been picked up from school by 3:10 pm Monday - Thursday, he/she will go to the After School Care Program (see below), and you will be responsible for paying a \$10 drop-in fee upon arrival. This drop-in fee will increase to the full \$27 drop-in fee if a child is not collected by 3:25 pm. All fees will be billed to your account. At times when there is no ASCP (Fridays after 3 pm), children who are not picked up on time will be supervised in the office. Children will not be released to any adult suspected of being "Under the Influence." In addition, if the child is involved in any custody issues, please inform Connecticut Friends School to whom the child may be released; legal documents may be requested.

**Preschool Students:** Teachers arrive at school by 8:30 am. The core preschool program runs from 9:00 – 12:00, Monday through Friday. The parent/driver must accompany the child(ren) s/he is responsible for, into school. It is helpful if parents/guardians allow the children to begin their school day as soon as the appropriate transition steps have been accomplished: the child should hang up her/his jacket and school bag and wash hands thoroughly before entering the classroom. A quick goodbye helps the whole class begin their day smoothly. While we believe that it is important for the children to arrive on time, please do not come earlier than 9:00 am unless your child is enrolled in the Early Drop Off program. You are always welcome to use our playground until school begins.

The morning program ends at 12:00pm, and Lunch Bunch ends at 1:00pm, except Fridays when it ends at 12:45. We ask that you or those responsible for picking up your child **come five minutes earlier** to participate in our closing circle. By the end of the day's session, young children are tired and looking forward to seeing their mom, dad, or caregiver. Please pick up your child promptly. If possible, please call if you are going to be delayed (203 762 9860.) A \$10.00 late fee will be charged for each fifteen minutes (or portion thereof) that you are late. If there is to be a change in departure routine, the child and staff must be told with whom the child will be leaving, and at what time. In addition, the parent/guardian must sign the permission log indicating the date, with whom the child may leave, and the time of pick up. This log is located on the shelf by the loft stairs in the classroom. Children will not be released to any adult suspected of being "Under the Influence." In addition, if the child is involved in any custody issues, please inform Connecticut Friends School to whom the child may be released; legal documents may be requested.

For additional fees, preschool students can be enrolled in these additional child care options:

Early Drop Off: 8:30 – 9:00 am, M – F

Lunch Bunch: 12:00 – 1:00 pm, M – F

Extended Day: 1:00 – 3:00 pm, M – Th

Please refer to your registration materials, or inquire at the school, for pricing details. Preschool students can be enrolled in these options for every day of the week, one day of the week, or as a drop-in, as long as space is available. Please call (203 762 9860) or email ([office@CTFriendsSchool.org](mailto:office@CTFriendsSchool.org)) the office at least one day in advance to confirm space is available to enroll your child on a drop in basis, before confirming your plans that require child care.

**Changes to Pick-up Routine**

Written notes are required for any change from the usual pick up arrangements (for example, going to another child's house for a play date or staying for After School Care Program.) Email [office@CTFriendsSchool.org](mailto:office@CTFriendsSchool.org) with any changes as early in the day as possible if a note was not sent in the morning.

**Late Arrival/Early Pick-up/Middle of the Day Appointments**

When a student arrives late at school, the parent/caregiver should accompany the child to the office. An administrator will deliver younger students to their classroom. If for any reason a parent needs to pick up a child early, please inform the classroom teacher that morning in writing or email [office@CTFriendsSchool.org](mailto:office@CTFriendsSchool.org).

**Absence Policy**

Connecticut Friends School requires preschool and K-8 parents to email [office@CTFriendsSchool.org](mailto:office@CTFriendsSchool.org) or call 203 762 9860 as soon as possible when students will be late, stay home for the day, or leave early. If a child's absence will be prolonged or will interfere with schoolwork, parents should communicate with the classroom teachers directly to address these issues.

**Lunch**

Preschool students staying for Lunch Bunch, as well as all K-8 students, bring their lunches to Connecticut Friends School. K-8 students usually eat together in their classroom. Parents are encouraged to pack lunches tailored to their child's eating habits and dietary needs. We request that every K-8 student keep a water bottle or mug at school; the school has several Crystal Rock water coolers on campus to encourage children to stay hydrated.

For every student to maintain his/her energy and mental focus, as well as physical well being, parents are asked to pack healthy lunches with, for example, a good protein source, along with several pieces of fruit or vegetables. K-8 students will also eat some of this food during snack time. Parents are asked to avoid foods that tend to be full of sugar and/or empty calories. Candy, soda, and coffee are not permitted on school premises. We request re-usable containers rather than disposable individual containers. Oaks classrooms (Grades 5 – 8) have small refrigerators and microwaves available for student use, but we discourage lunches that require elaborate preparation. Lunches for Preschool, Maples and Pines students should allow children maximum independence; these students do not have access to a microwave or refrigerator.

**Dress Code**

For all students, Preschool and K-8: The general atmosphere at Connecticut Friends School is designed to reflect the school's core belief of respect for the worth of each individual as well as respect for the community as a whole. We appreciate it if parents and students bear in mind that while we seek to promote a comfortable, casual learning atmosphere at CFS, school is not a place for "hang around the house-wear" such as pajama bottoms. Dress should be appropriate for the occasion and not distract from learning

Specific garments deemed not appropriate for wear at Connecticut Friends School include the following:

- Camouflage or camouflage-like clothing
- Clothing that displays images or text promoting violence or weapons use, even by cartoon characters
- Clothing that displays images or text promoting the use of alcohol, tobacco, or controlled substances
- Clothing that displays offensive or violent language
- Clothing that reveals bra straps, bare midriffs, or underwear
- Ripped clothing.

It is our aim to be outside as often as possible, even in inclement weather. It is best to expect that students will be outside every day, and to send the appropriate clothing to school given the conditions. Please ensure that your child has appropriate layers, a warm jacket, boots, hat and mittens and other necessary outerwear.

A note on footwear: CFS is definitely a place for sturdy footwear! Each and every day, the students participate in hikes around the property and outdoor games involving running. They climb (or run) over rocks, roots, sand, and hills. Rubber soled shoes and sneakers will provide both safety and confidence for running, climbing and exploring. Delicate and/or slip-on shoes are not safe for these outdoor activities. If a student insists on wearing less sturdy shoes to school, please make sure that s/he has appropriate footwear to put on when going outside. Ideally, each student should have an extra pair of sneakers and an extra pair of waterproof boots to leave at school.

Preschool Students: Please dress preschool children for comfortable indoor and outdoor play, as FNS students frequently work and play with messy materials. Special clothes, party dresses, dressy shoes or any items your child may have an emotional attachment to should be saved for other occasions. Dress your child for active and messy play. Your child will participate confidently if s/he does not have to worry about cleanliness. Paint, sand, paste, glue, wet grass and mud are all part of the every day experience at FNS! Also, dress your child in clothing s/he can manage her/himself. For 2's and 3's this means no belts, buttons or snaps; pants with elastic waists are best for everyone. The more your child can do "all by myself," the happier s/he will be and the closer s/he will be to independence. Open-toed sandals are not permitted for safety reasons. Please have an extra set of clothing, including socks and underwear, at school or in the child's school bag/backpack. Any items left at school should be clearly labeled with your child's last name.

#### **After School Care Program, for K-8 Students**

Our After School Care Program operates on Mondays through Thursdays from 3:00 – 5:30 pm and Fridays from 12:30 to 3:00 pm. Please read more detailed information about ASCP and fees on our website or inquire about the program at the CFS office.

#### **CFS Students and Publicity**

Connecticut Friends School may occasionally use photographs, voice recordings, videos, and written extractions, in whole or in part, for the purpose of illustrations, advertising, or publications. A student will not be identified by full name on public spaces (social networking sites) or our website. Traditional hardcopy newspapers tend to run the first and last names of people who are featured in photographs so we follow that pattern. We ask parents to authorize such use each year.

#### **What NOT to Bring on Campus**

Preschool students: Except for special items that may be needed in the opening days to help ease your child's transition from home to school, we ask that you leave your child's toys at home or in your car.

It is our strong preference that students leave personal electronic equipment (including, but not limited to, cell phones, tablets, media players, electronic game devices, web enabled devices, e-readers and the like) at home. If a student brings such items to school, the device must remain unused and out of sight at all times (stored in a backpack or other school bag) while the child is on campus, including before school, during recess and in the After School Care Program. Oaks Students should they desire or need to carry a phone to school are required to deposit their cell phone each morning into a drawer or container designated by their homeroom/classroom teacher. This is meant to help students resist the temptation to text or post or use their phones in any way mid-day. Phones that have been surrendered will be returned at the end of each day. Students who fail to follow the cell phone policy will forfeit their right to have a cell phone on campus. Classroom teachers may, at their discretion, approve the use of a particular electronic device (for school work).

If a student needs to make a phone call, s/he can request use of the office phone. Classroom use only of personal laptop computers and e-readers is permitted only at the classroom teacher's discretion, and students must always follow the school's Acceptable Use of Technology Policy. Approved lap top computers or e-reader devices must be registered with our Technology Coordinator for access to the Connecticut Friends School wireless network.

Weapons such as guns or knives of any nature are absolutely forbidden on campus. This includes Airsoft and paintball guns. Bringing them on campus is a very serious breach of trust and a potentially expellable offense.

#### **Class Assignments**

At Connecticut Friends School, we expect our students to work diligently while school is in session. We also believe in the promotion of close family life and to that end we encourage families to spend time together each evening. All students should have time to play and relax, participate in family chores, and engage in extra-curricular activities. Our teachers do give assignments that must be completed outside of school, but we do not equate long hours of busy work with a rigorous academic program. Time spent on class assignments and projects should be time well spent. Parents and students are encouraged to communicate openly with teachers with regard to extenuating circumstances that might affect a student's ability to complete an assignment in a timely fashion.

**Reading/Special Education Services**

Connecticut Friends School is not a special education school. While we seek academic diversity in our student body and celebrate that our approach embraces students with a variety of learning styles, as a small school we are not equipped to serve students requiring significant special educational support.

However, for students requiring some additional support with reading or math, or those with language processing difficulties, our program has been successful when supplemented with private tutoring.

Our own staff includes a Reading/Special Educational Consultant and a Speech & Language Specialist who can make classroom observations, conduct one-on-one diagnostic meetings with students, and make follow-up recommendations. These consultants are also available for private tutoring during school hours; if a family elects to contract with our reading/language/speech specialist, the family pays for that service directly. Families may prefer to hire their own tutors either during school hours or after school. Connecticut Friends School cooperates with tutors and therapists (a CFS teacher may confer with a tutor about assignments and about next steps/educational goals for a student, and the school offers physical space for students to meet with their tutors) but the school does not recommend any one professional over another; it is the parents or guardians who decide if the fit is a good one, according to the child and family's needs.

**Vacation Travel Planning**

Families are requested to schedule vacations and other trips during the 16 weeks a year that Connecticut Friends School is not in session.

**Field Trips - Preschool**

Field trips are a source of wonder and enrichment for the children. The teachers will assess each group to determine whether and when to schedule appropriate field trips. Parents are asked to provide transportation on our preschool trips. Here are CFS preschool field trip guidelines:

- No child will be permitted to participate without a signed permission form.
- All children must have an appropriate car seat. Children must not sit in front seat.
- All passengers must wear seat belts.
- Children will be assigned an adult "leader" before departure time. Each parent will be given a list of the children in their charge and will remain responsible for these children throughout the trip.
- Written directions will be given to each driver.
- Emergency Medical Forms and First Aid Kit will be taken on every trip.

**Holiday and Birthday Guidelines**

We invite CFS families to share their family's holiday celebrations and traditions with the class throughout the school year. Please feel free to coordinate these activities with your child's teachers.

A time-honored CFS birthday tradition that is optional, but certainly appreciated by everyone at the school, is to have the birthday child present a book to the school as a "reverse" birthday gift. The book can be presented to the teacher and classmates for the classroom library. We ask families to be considerate of all CFS students when planning off campus celebrations. For example, an after school party that does not include all classroom peers, but begins on the front porch for carpooling, is a recipe for hurt feelings.

K-8 students: Birthdays are celebrated during our weekly All School Meeting for Worship. Students who have had birthdays during the week each receive a big candle as the whole group sings a Tom Chapin version of the Happy Birthday song. The birthday students then blow out their candles, and we move into Silent Meeting while a special birthday candle remains glowing in the center of the circle.

Preschool students: At Friends Nursery School, children who have had birthdays during the week each receive a big candle as their friends and teachers sing a Tom Chapin version of the Happy Birthday song. The birthday students then blow out their candles, and we share a bit of silence prior to snack.

**Teacher Gifts**

In place of individual gifts, it has become something of a tradition for parents to organize a handmade group gift for classroom teachers. This avoids the stress of individual gift giving. However, if your child would like to make something special for his or her teacher, a handmade card is greatly appreciated.

***School Closings, Delays and Early Dismissals***

Connecticut Friends School will post delays and closings on the following media platforms:

**Websites**

News12.com

NBC30.com

ctweather.com (IAN cancellations: schools)

**Television**

Cablevision News Channel 12

Cable Channel 30 (NBC)

Parents/guardians can sign up to have information on school closings and delays sent via email and/or text:

- Go to [www.CTWeather.com](http://www.CTWeather.com)
- Click on e-notifications
- Create an account
- Log into your account
- Select the box for Connecticut Friends School
- Press “submit.”

**Early Dismissal Due to Weather:** Parents will be called if CFS has an unscheduled early dismissal. **Please give us *all* of your telephone numbers!** No child is ever abandoned. If a parent cannot be reached, some provision will be made to safely take care of your child; a staff member may elect to do this. We will make every effort to communicate our evolving plan as we respond to the particular circumstances. Please make sure the CFS has every telephone number necessary to reach you and your emergency contacts.

**Make-up Days:** It is the policy of Connecticut Friends School that we do *not* make up days cancelled due to inclement weather or other emergencies.

***For More Information***

For more information on Connecticut Friends School, please visit our website [www.CTFriendsSchool.org](http://www.CTFriendsSchool.org) or contact:

Oriana Laflamme, Director of Admissions

Connecticut Friends School

317 New Canaan Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897

203-762-9860

[info@CTFriendsSchool.org](mailto:info@CTFriendsSchool.org)

*See back cover for school and staff directory.*

**Facilities Management/Notice regarding Asbestos:**

The linoleum tile floor of the front foyer of the Meeting House covers some asbestos. Our management plan is to regularly monitor the tiles to be certain no section of the floor is cracking or flaking off. In addition to our staff's regular inspections of the tiles, we contract for official inspections every 3 years and a copy of those reports are kept on file in the school's business office. Anyone wishing to see a copy of our official Asbestos Management Plan may access it on our website ([www.ctfriendsschool.org](http://www.ctfriendsschool.org)) or may ask our business manager to see a hard copy.





## **Connecticut Friends School and Staff Directory, 2014 - 2015**

**Telephone** 203 762 9860 (Office Hours: 8:30 – 5:00 Monday – Thursday, and 8:30 – 3:00 on Fridays)

**Email** office@CTFriendsSchool.org  
 \* Please **use this email address to report absences**, request information, etc, as all administrators will receive your message, ensuring a prompt response. Please allow enough time to receive a response from one of the administrators.

**Website** www.CTFriendsSchool.org

**Calendar** <http://ctfriendsschool.org/calendar>

**Mailing Address** 317 New Canaan Road, Wilton, CT 06897

**FAX** 203 834 9640

### **Emergency Contacts**

Kim Tsocanos, Co-Head of School, <a href="#">cell phone</a>	203 219 5270
Mark Dansereau, Co-Head of School, <a href="#">cell phone</a>	203 895 0222

**Staff Emails** [firstname@CTFriendsSchool.org](mailto:firstname@CTFriendsSchool.org)

### **Adminstrators**

<i>Kim Tsocanos</i>	Co-Head of School
<i>Mark Dansereau</i>	Co-Head of School
<i>Beth D'Erario</i>	Business Manager
<i>Sean Higgins</i>	Technology Coordinator, Communications, Health Services
<i>Stacey Mink</i>	Nursery School Administrator, Spruces Teacher
<i>Oriana Laflamme</i>	Admissions, Communications

### **Classes**

<i>FNS</i>	Friends Nursery School
<i>Willows</i>	2 year olds
<i>Spruces</i>	Ages 3 & 4
<i>Maples</i>	Kindergarten and Grade 1
<i>Pines</i>	Grades 2, 3 and 4
<i>Oaks 1</i>	Grades 5 and 6
<i>Oaks 2</i>	Grades 7 and 8
<i>ASCP</i>	After School Care Program (K-8)

### **Teachers & Staff**

<i>Hans Bulteryst</i>	Maples Teacher, Development Administrator
<i>Kimberly Jackson</i>	Oaks 1 Teacher, Service Work Coordinator
<i>Ceil Bush</i>	Maples Teacher
<i>Megan Collins</i>	Art Teacher
<i>Jen DaSilva</i>	FNS Teacher (Spruces)
<i>Jessica Lopa</i>	Music Teacher
<i>Lynn Marrison</i>	Pines Teacher
Liza Nikitin	FNS Assistant Teacher (Willows), ASCP Director
<i>Sachi Porizkova</i>	Willows Teacher, Pines Assistant Teacher
Gregory Sawyer	Oaks 2 Teacher, Outdoor Ed Instructor
<i>Adam Taraska</i>	Physical Education Instructor, Outdoor Education & Leadership Program Director
<i>Carlos Velasquez</i>	Spanish Teacher

### **Music Workshop Instructors:**

<i>Kojo Bey</i>	Drumming Teacher
Pete Zaccagnino	Ukulele Teacher