

Telling the Friends School story

a Tool Kit and
User's Guide

The “Voicing” Process

Imagine two pianos of identical manufacture, which have both been brought into perfect tune. They do not sound exactly the same. The piano that is in better voice is going to produce the richer, more resonant sound. While tuning involves bringing the strings into perfect harmonic relationship, *voicing* involves the precise regulation of the piano’s action, including the delicate task of plucking the hammers’ felt to render them with just the right firmness; this assures that each key on the keyboard will strike the strings in precisely the same way, producing the same rich tone up and down the keyboard.

Our commitment to Voicing our School involves more than developing a new and better-tuned marketing message: it asks all of us who are part of the School community to contribute to the richness and depth of Friends’ voice.

First, a little context: For the families who have chosen it, Friends School of Baltimore is well understood, highly valued, even beloved. Each one of us—parents, students, faculty, staff, alumni and trustees—has been on our own “journey of discovery” about Friends School. Our journeys have been informed by our own experiences with the curriculum and the culture; our own relationships with our children’s teachers, and our conversations with one another. We each have accumulated our own “proof” of the value of Friends School from our children’s first day forward. In effect, each of us has become, or is fast becoming, an “expert witness” to the distinctive and compelling qualities of a Friends School education.

What if a family is new to Baltimore, or not familiar with the region’s independent schools? How can we motivate that family to learn more about all that Friends School has to offer? The all-important first step is to make a positive initial impression—and all of us can help with that. It would be unfortunate indeed if a family were to learn of the benefits of Friends too late, after choosing another independent school.

This guide is focused on how we, as an educational community, can help interest others in Friends. Perhaps one day those now unaware of this School’s exceptional qualities will find themselves here, and they too may be inclined to agree with what one of our recent graduates said to her mother about her School experience: “Friends is the best education the world has to offer.”

Why is our image so important?

The preface to the School's new Strategic Plan, approved in May 2007, reads as follows:

Our vision for the School's future is to achieve a new level of transformative impact in the lives of our students, their families, our employees, and the larger community in which we live.

The plan identified issues the School needs to address in the years ahead in order to achieve this vision, and it established goals to meet those needs. The trustees recognized that, in order for the School to be able to move forward with confidence, three general conditions must be achieved:

- **Friends School must become more widely known.**
- **The School's identity must be more effectively managed.**
- **The School's commitment to the future of Baltimore must be better actualized in the wider community.**

Each of these conditions can be advanced by a stronger, clearer, and more consistent School voice in the community.

To design and execute a comprehensive communication campaign that will measurably improve understanding of Friends School not only in the greater Baltimore area, but among those who comprise the community of the School: the faculty and staff who deliver the Friends School promise every day; the students who attend that School; and their parents, guardians and extended family. A successful, comprehensive and long-term communications campaign, designed to firmly and correctly position the institution, will provide a strong foundation upon which to build the future of the institution.

—Friends School Strategic Plan, 2007



Flannery McArdle, Emily Orrson, Kyla Minton, Kerry Townsend and Libby Nichols—all Class of 2009—have planned a three-week trip to Peru this summer. Their itinerary includes a four-day hike on the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu. They'll also spend several days on the Uros Islands, where they'll live with local families and volunteer at a day care center. "We didn't want to simply take a vacation," explains Townsend. "We wanted to do more."

"I can't imagine a better way to experience a culture and get in touch with its people," adds Orrson.

All agree that Friends' culture of engaging students in many different pursuits, and the mutual respect that exists among the students and faculty, have profoundly shaped their School experiences. ►

“There’s no pressure to find a set niche,” says Minton. “The teachers encourage you to branch out.”

All five have co-headed service clubs to address a wide range of social concerns, from feeding Baltimore’s hungry to funding a cure for cancer.

“Friends is a diverse place,” says Minton. “Being in this community has helped me learn to respect opinions that are different than my own, and to be more accepting in general.”

Coeducation, a fundamental aspect of a Friends education, enhances the School’s diversity and promotes more natural relationships between peers, according to McArdle. “I’ve thought about this issue a lot because we are surrounded by single-sex schools,” she says. “Coeducation prepares you for the real world.”

Nichols concurs. “We’re not timid to speak in class because we all treat each other with the same respect. I have just as many close guy friends as I do girl friends.” ■

Finding Our Voice

In late 2007, Friends established a Marketing Task Force which engaged outside counsel, Cognitive Marketing Inc., a firm that advises colleges, universities and independent schools on marketing and communications issues. We asked Cognitive to undertake a thorough study of our School’s identity and position in the context of the Baltimore independent school community, and then to develop a set of communications tools Friends School constituents can use to expand awareness and deepen appreciation for the School throughout the metropolitan Baltimore area.

Cognitive Marketing applied their “Voicing” process in close collaboration with the School’s Marketing Task Force. The work involved in-depth personal and group interviews with over 125 members of the School community, including students, staff, faculty, trustees, parents, prospective and former parents, and alumni. The firm also conducted a thorough communications audit to evaluate how the School conveys its information, as well as a comparison of Friends’ marketing materials and website with those of other area independent schools, and of Quaker schools in other markets.

This process has yielded five new communication tools for the School, which have been approved by the Marketing Task Force and the School’s Board of Trustees:

- 1. Our Identity Statement**
- 2. Our Promise**
- 3. Our Key Messages**
- 4. Our School Signature**
- 5. A new graphic identity system that includes a new School Seal and a new School Wordmark.**

An examination of these communications tools follows.

1. Identity Statement

The **Identity Statement** is meant to distill the answer to three essential questions:

- **What does Friends School do best?** (Especially in comparison to other local schools, all of whom arguably provide fine educational alternatives.)
- **For whom?** (How do we describe the people that Friends will appeal to the most?)
- **Why?** (What are the essential reasons Friends is the best choice for these people?)

Our Identity Statement reads as follows:

“Friends School is the best choice for families of Baltimore who want for their children an education that will ready them to lead their lives with *wisdom and confidence*. The Friends School experience stimulates imaginations, engages intellects, strengthens bodies, and protects spirit. It is a school that gives its students the time and the place in which to build the foundation of a happy, prosperous and contributive life. Friends is an independent school in which *girls and boys*, women and men share in silence and noise, reflection and debate, with a self-respect and *mutual regard* that allows all to grow ever stronger and truer to themselves. The oldest school in one of America’s foundational cities, Friends School of Baltimore is a progressive community of learning; its *commitment to balance* in education the product of centuries of work teaching children to find and keep their own balance in a world that is forever changing. Firmly rooted in the enduring values of the Quakers, today’s School is a vibrant, 21st Century learning community that chooses *simplicity* over material possession; peaceful resolution of conflict over aggression; integrity over expedience; equality over elitism; and stewardship of the earth as a collective and personal responsibility. Friends students are lovingly educated; they go many places and do many things, each propelled by possibility, motivated by optimism, unrestricted by convention, reinforced by achievement, and guided by principle.”

These words, the ideas they introduce, and the emotions they evoke, are intended to capture the essential attributes of Friends School. Think of this statement as the fertile soil in which we all can help grow our institutional identity and reputation. Its ideas and themes are departure points from which to tell the many stories of Friends School, and weave them into a coherent narrative. ►



Last spring, **Michael Mandelkorn '09** traveled to Russia with 13 Upper

School Russian students. “I stayed with an elderly couple who remembered clearly the ‘better’ Soviet times,” he recalls. “My host father worked on the space program, his wife was a history teacher.”

Soviet medals and certificates bearing Lenin’s face filled Mandelkorn’s room. “I imagined how the couple had once lived compared to how they lived now—in a drab apartment building with graffiti and barbed wire atop the walls—‘*What had history done to these people?*,’ I wondered. History hadn’t done it, I realized; politics had.” He returned to the U.S. with a new appreciation for its form of government and a desire to participate. He began volunteering for the Obama campaign, supervising phone banks, organizing canvassing trips and registering scores of voters.

His study of the Russian language, combined with his love of history and exploring new places and cultures, had merged into a new passion: politics. He’s grateful to Friends School for providing the spark.

This fall Mandelkorn will attend Carleton College, which offers strong Russian language and history programs. “I don’t know exactly what I want to do,” he says, “except that I hope to use Russian in whatever profession I choose. Maybe a job in the State Department...who knows?” ■



Generations of Friends students have engaged in the quiet, shared contemplation of weekly Meeting. Two years ago, the School introduced an elective curriculum to further broaden students' minds, deepen their spirits, and connect them with global cultures and issues.

One of the courses—Peace, Non-violence and Social Justice—explores key thinkers and nonviolent activists, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Thich Nhat Hanh, who have shaped the public's understanding of what it means to work for peace and social justice.

"Initially, the students see these iconic heroes and think, 'They've done things far beyond what I can do,'" says Upper School religious studies teacher **Amy Schmaljohn**. "What they take away from these readings is that there's nothing magical about this work. It's something human beings can do with the right capacity for listening, with the right opening of heart to develop compassion, and with the right fortitude.

"We spend so much of our time as educators nurturing children's intellect and supporting their physical development," says Schmaljohn. "There has to be an equal emphasis on the evolution of their spiritual lives." ■

The Identity Statement is not intended to be recited, but rather internalized—not to be hung on the wall, but to be used. While it is essentially a marketing tool, it establishes a compelling set of reasons to choose Friends. Most importantly, it is *ours*: a statement that in its entirety could only have been written for Friends School of Baltimore.

2. Promise

*Friends School will develop in your child
a vigorous intellect and the habits of a peaceful heart.*

Our **Promise**—a central element of our shared voice—is the “bottom line” reason to choose Friends School; it is the unique gift this School offers to its students, and, through them, to the world. The combination of a “vigorous intellect” and the “habits of a peaceful heart” is one that Friends School is uniquely able to develop in its students—and is clearly needed in our time as much as ever in history.

We hope this Promise finds its way into your heart, and also onto the tip of your tongue. It captures the essence of what we do at Friends School—the promise we make to every family that entrusts a child to us. And it is a promise that we are uniquely qualified to make.

There are many fine independent schools to choose from in our region, but for those who have reflected upon the world in which their children will live, many will recognize in the Promise of Friends an extremely important additional value beyond what any good education would be expected to provide.

As with all good tools of identity and communication, the Promise is meant to stimulate the imagination and start a conversation (“*That’s interesting—tell me more!*”).

3. Our Key Messages

If you have only 15 seconds to explain to someone how Friends School keeps its Promise, and how it really stands apart from its peers, these Key Messages will help you make your point:

Friends School of Baltimore is:

Balanced • Morally-centered • Responsive • Coeducational

While each of us knows from our individual perspectives why Friends School is so special, these four messages percolated to the surface during the Voicing process. These are the critically important reasons Friends must convey to those considering the School in a context of other educational options. These messages are meant to work together to complete a whole picture.

Friends School Education is Balanced

Friends provides a balanced educational experience, not only in the co-curricular integration of academics, athletics and the arts, but in the attention it gives to developing the character as well as the intellect.

Friends School is Morally-centered

Friends surrounds its students with a caring community organized around the essential human values of the Quakers, and rooted in the belief that there is ‘that of God’ in every person.

Friends School is Responsive

Friends is at once Baltimore’s oldest and most forward-looking school; a School with a long and dynamic history of thoughtful and relevant responses that can provide the perspectives and tools students need to meet the great challenges the contemporary world presents.

Friends School is Coeducational

Friends is a community of girls and boys, women and men, of many perspectives and backgrounds, who work and learn together in an atmosphere of mutual respect, understanding, and trust. Friends creates the conditions in which the many benefits of coeducation are amplified.



Early in high school, **Nick Rodricks** ‘08 bonded with Friends’ Choral Director Michael McVey.

“It’s easy to explain why we got along so well,” he says. “We were both athletes pursuing aspirations not typical of our teammates.”

McVey, who played high school football, is a longtime assistant Varsity coach and sings with Concert Artists of Baltimore. Rodricks played club ice hockey and Varsity lacrosse while at Friends; he also sang in the chamber choir and performed in the School’s plays and musicals.

“Mr. McVey encouraged me to pursue the things I really wanted most,” he says. “I never needed to ‘just’ be a jock or ‘just’ any one thing.”

At Connecticut College, Rodricks is continuing to follow McVey’s example. A defender for the varsity lacrosse team, he plays ice hockey, sings with the college’s co-ed a *cappella* group, studies theater, and volunteers with a rape prevention and counseling organization—all while working toward a degree, possibly in environmental studies.

He’s grateful for his Friends experience. “Friends provided an environment where I could explore and discover my true passions without social pressures,” says Rodricks. ■



Camille Powe '02 is a third-year medical student at Harvard. Next

year she'll take time off from her clinical rotations at Massachusetts General Hospital to do research on gestational diabetes.

"This condition may occur in any woman regardless of socioeconomic status and access to prenatal care, but occurs disproportionately in minority women," she says. "It may be that those without prenatal care are more likely to be affected by complications associated with the disease."

As a physician, she plans to contact legislators and policy makers about the need to provide high-quality health care to all people, regardless of socioeconomic status.

Powe believes her Friends education influenced her decision to become a doctor. "I couldn't imagine a career in which I would not be serving others, especially those who are most in need of help."

She still reflects on the Quaker values she learned at Friends when interacting with her patients.

"I attempt to find the good in each person I encounter, and that enables me to connect with all types of patients," she says, "including those who want nothing to do with doctors." ■

4. Our Signature

The world needs what our children can do.

Our **Signature** is not a tagline, nor is it a self-promotional boast. It is, instead, an idea—one that reminds us all of the higher purpose of education, and of the great hope every generation places in the next.

This Signature's expression of our School's identity is intended to be associated directly with the School's graphic identity (the "Wordmark," or logo). People who may not yet be "in the market" for a Friends School education can still come to recognize and appreciate our *Signature*—and eventually associate Friends School with the perspective this statement implies.

This Signature for Friends School is intended to capture the *emotional heart of the argument*. We did not want a self-aggrandizing tagline, but rather something that would function like a personal signature: as an imprimatur, a mark, an indication of who we are and what we represent.

Note that this signature is expressed in the present tense: the world needs what our children can do *right now*, whether as kindergartners, sixth graders, or seniors. This respect for all children as beings able to make their own immediate contribution is fundamental to the Friends School culture.

In the years ahead, this Signature will be associated with the name of our School wherever and whenever it is appropriate. We hope you will be proud to share in the conviction it expresses, and that it will remind all of us of the importance of our shared endeavor. We are certain it will be compelling to future Friends families; but we also hope it will inspire all who are part of Friends School right now.

5. A New Graphic Identity for Baltimore's Oldest School



The School Seal

This new **School Seal** was developed to symbolize Friends School. The Cognitive Marketing design team, in concert with the Marketing Task Force, explored over two dozen initial design ideas for the Seal before selecting this image as the foundation for the School's visual identity system. The design is inspired by a singular architectural detail of Friends School's unique and beautiful campus—one of our numerous Oriel windows. This window icon symbolizes well both Friends School and its Quaker traditions, for it is comprised of many panes, each of which provides protection from the elements, and each of which transmits light both into, and out from, the gathering space within.

The Seal design includes the place and date of the School's founding, reminding us that Friends School is, as the Identity Statement says, "...the oldest school in one of America's foundational cities."



Friends School
OF BALTIMORE

The world needs what our children can do.



Every day is commencement.



Friends School
OF BALTIMORE

The world needs what our children can do.

The New School Wordmark

Friends School

OF BALTIMORE

The Voicing study made clear two things about our identity. First, our institution is known to most people in the Baltimore community as Friends School, and the word “School” is especially important because it avoids confusion with the Religious Society of Friends. Second, we learned that the words “of Baltimore,” while in the School’s formal corporate name, add little clarification or value to the School’s identity, particularly in the local community.

The new **School Wordmark** thus gives equal weight and prominence to the words “Friends” and “School,” with the balance of the School’s official name serving in a supporting role.

Sharing Our Stories

Were all of us to take a blank sheet of paper and draft our own Identity Statement, Promise, or set of Key Messages for Friends, we would, no doubt, produce as many alternatives as we had authors. We hope, though, that in reflecting on the results of this collective and disciplined two-year effort to **distill the essence of Friends**, you will conclude that these communication tools capture the essence of how you feel about the School, and that this work gives you new ideas about how to frame your own advocacy of the School.

As we move forward in this next year, Friends School will begin generating communication materials and programs that utilize these new identity tools. Updating our materials and our website, however, will be only one part of our marketing effort. In order to vouchsafe our School's future, we must each be willing to share the Friends School story with enthusiasm—and even passion.

By sharing our stories, we can help ensure that those for whom Friends School might be the ideal choice will find their way to 5114 North Charles Street and begin their own journey of discovery.



Friends School
OF BALTIMORE

The world needs what our children can do.

How can we distill
the essence of
Friends School and
communicate it
to others?

Friends School of Baltimore
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