

Dear families,

I am excited to share news regarding important and impactful changes to programming in both the Preschool and Lower School at Goshen Friends.

Beginning in the fall of 2017, **Full-day Kindergarten and first grade, second and third grades and fourth and fifth grades will be vertically grouped.** Historically many classes have been vertically grouped at Goshen Friends, including Physical Education, Art History, Sing!, Outdoor Education, Spanish, and Quakerism. During the 2015-16 school year, the fourth and fifth grades were combined to form a multi-age learning experience and this year first and second graders are combining for science and social studies.

There are many tangible benefits to vertical grouping. Research indicates that children in a multi-age classroom are more social, more likely to practice leadership skills, better known by their teachers, and more likely to resolve their conflicts peacefully. The academic experience is highly differentiated, cooperative, and filled with innovation. Goshen Friends will implement vertical grouping in its Lower School classrooms next year.

Goshen Friends School will offer **both half and full day options for kindergarten students.** By giving families options for their children, Goshen Friends recognizes that every learner is an individual. Especially at this pivotal year between preschool and elementary school, a family should have the opportunity to determine what works best for their child. This is a form of differentiation that can have meaningful impact on a child's first foray into elementary education.

For the 2017-18 school year, in addition to the Room C and G options for prekindergarten students, **a multi-age class of PreK and half-day Kindergarten students will be offered.** Vertical grouping has been recognized and endorsed nationally and locally by both public and independent schools. Classes for these students will begin at 8:00AM, providing a slightly longer day than the typical preschool schedule.

For several years, the administrative team has been closely following how preschool families would like their Goshen experience to look and feel. One consistent trend is that **families would like to have expanded options for their preschool aged children.** Often we heard that a full day program would be of interest. With additional constructive input from prospective, current and past preschool parents we will be increasing and changing the offerings for all preschool learners.

Morning Preschool classes will still be offered next year, however, there will be additional full-day options. Students enrolled in any of next year's Pre-K classes (rooms C, G and in the combination Pre-K/K class) can choose to extend their day to 3 p.m., three or five days a week. This full-day pre-K option will be held in a lower school classroom and will be modeled after our current Enrichment program.

In addition, **children enrolled in the 3-year-old programs will have full-day options through an enhanced program in Extended Care.** Children will enjoy a structured curriculum based on a thematic approach to learning, with lessons in cooking, science, art

and outdoor education. Families can choose as few as one and as many as five full days in the afternoon program.

While next year's vertical grouping will create a different look in the Lower School, children will still experience the same academic excellence, differentiated instruction, specialized classes and commitment to Quaker values that Goshen Friends School has always offered. To that end, we invite all Goshen families to experience these traditions during Lower School Visiting Days on **Wednesday, January 25 and Wednesday, February 8**, beginning at 9 a.m. both days. Families are welcome to wander in and out of classrooms (Kindergarten through Grade 5), observe lessons and ask questions of faculty and staff. We'll end the day with Meeting for Worship at 10 a.m. No need to RSVP. Just join us if you can! And if you cannot, please contact Mimi Ackers, director of Admissions, to schedule a private tour.

This letter contains much information and hopefully will spark interest and discussion around the innovative programs described. I will be holding open office hours on January 25th, 8:15-9:45AM and 10:45AM-4:00PM, please stop by for further conversation. I am also happy to schedule an individual time that is convenient for your family.

In friendship,
Mimi Blackwell
Head of School