

STRIDE Annual Report 2023

Presented to Interim Meeting - Saturday November 11th, 2023 Rachael Carter, STRIDE Coordinator

Mission

STRIDE (Strengthening Transformative Relationships in Diverse Environments) is a program within BYM that works to break down barriers to access that youth of color experience in attending BYM Quaker camps and build communities of genuine diversity.

Philosophy

To foster camper's ownership and leadership of the camp, we address these five roadblocks: trust, access, money, gear and culture/procedures. STRIDE is more complex than a program that "sends kids to camp," though it is one of our primary goals. STRIDE's vision is to create the environments where more children access BYM quaker camps and more young adults connect with Quakerism.

Goals

1. *Create access for youth in each of these cities to attend Baltimore Yearly Meeting summer camps,*
2. *Create communities of genuine diversity, equity, and inclusion in these youth serving programs and,*
3. *Support campers and their families to be invested in the life of camp, now and through their life of being involved in camp*

Beliefs

Access

More equitable distribution of resources (we have influence over how the money, space, labor, and time of BYM camping programs are allocated and feel we have a moral/spiritual responsibility to expand the pool of people these things are allocated to.

Camper and Family Contributions/Strengths

We believe in an assets-based model. That is to say we believe that families and campers who participate in STRIDE not only receive benefits from being part of camp but that (like all community members) their unique perspectives, personalities, strengths and spiritual leadings contribute much to the camp community

Improving the Environment for BIPOC and Families Experiencing Low Income in Our Communities

Though largely made up of white people, our camp community already includes people of color. We aim to support and acknowledge them, recognizing that not all people of color in our program are "new" and that efforts that make the program work better for people of color are integral to our pre-existing community as well as the one we hope to create.

Radical Inclusion

The "radical" means that we expect the community to be changed and shaped by the inclusion we are seeking rather than simply asking people to join and conform to what already exists.

Benefits for Camper

We believe that participating in camp is great for young people. It builds friendships, new skills, self-confidence, and leadership. We will ground our advocacy in this belief, making every attempt to make our work "person-centric", that is based on what is best for individual young people and families in our program.



Summary of Accomplishments and Program Impact and Implementation

STRIDE has hired a new STRIDE Coordinator Rachael Carter, and transitioned that position to full time. Rachael is deeply honored to have the opportunity to serve in the position of the STRIDE Coordinator since May of this year and it has been a wonderful experience for them so far. STRIDE was able to send 16 campers to camp this summer. This is down from last year's attendance of 30 campers. STRIDE had five new campers who are excited to continue in the program moving forward. Most of our campers were from Philadelphia and went to Opequon in 2023 with one camper returning to Shilo. This previous season on the whole went well with high camper and family satisfaction.

STRIDE did a new pre and post camp survey to better understand the hopes and expectations and the final experiences of our campers and families. STRIDE hopes to continue this practice in addition to follow up one on one calls with families after. After a review of the program, it is clear that STRIDE has done really well over the past several years including making many transitions during the pandemic that allowed STRIDE campers and families to feel more connected.

Future Outlook and Long Term Goals

There are a few changes that STRIDE is hoping to make in the next two years to stabilize and grow the program. The hope is that in the next two years STRIDE can become a program that lives more connected with our larger camp community and also better strengthen the needs of all families while still specifically supporting our STRIDE families in the ways that are most important to them.

STRIDE hopes to have 24 campers go to camp in summer 2024 with campers going to all three camps in summer 2024. The program hopes to have more opportunities for campers and families to connect with each other and also connect with the larger camp community.

Young adults are looking for ways to meaningfully work and find leadership within Quakerism and BYM. STRIDE has deeply scaled back volunteer responsibilities to support volunteer capacity. There will be three camper orientations that will happen in April and May. There will be 2-3 meetings between April and August focusing on drivers and gear support. STRIDE hopes to engage young adults both virtually and in person to find out what they need or are hoping for to be a part of the program for this upcoming season and future engagement. Individual capacity has drastically changed since the pandemic and taking a more clear look at the roles and responsibilities of volunteering with STRIDE will help create more sustainable engagement in the future.

STRIDE is also working on two website refreshes for the BYM website and the Camp Website to help direct partners, campers, families and volunteers to understand more about the program and how they will be supported in their participation. There will be a CRM to help keep track of communications with campers and families as well. STRIDE is reaching out to



our three camper partners to reestablish relationships with them in which there will be virtual and in person conversations. The STRIDE Coordinator would like to connect with meetings during the winter season to help support rebuilding a relationship and community around STRIDE.

The program has previously considered a STRIDE Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) which is an incredible idea to forward. At this time this has moved into a second year initiative, hoping to first improve camper experience and stabilize the volunteer program. The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) functions similarly to a board of directors. It is a governing body that provides guidance and vision like a board. It also can influence decision-making as a board does. STRIDE's YAC will be youth-led which means that youth members are involved in all aspects of planning and implementation of the program, such as setting agendas and running meetings. However, YACs do require adult support, structure, and resources.

Justice, Equity, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (JEDI) does not happen in a bubble. It is not something that can continue to be separated just in the program of STRIDE. While it is an idea that is valiant, it is also flawed. After many conversations with camp staff and families the challenges around Communication, Transportation and Gear. What would it be like to better connect with the rest of camp to work on these things together? This is something that the STRIDE Coordinator hopes to explore in the future of this role. The Coordinator will work closely with Camp Directors to think about what are the ways that STRIDE can be more integrated into the larger camping program. There are plans to have a BIPOC staff gathering before and during the season and also think about programming for Pre-Camp.

Closing Reflection

While there are many changes that are happening within the program, it is clear that STRIDE has had a strong foundation and has the ability to continue in its current work. There is a lot of work to do with volunteers and thinking about how the program is supported by the rest of the Yearly Meeting.

This program works really well with the participation of the Quaker Community. Whether it be Young Adults or seasoned Quakers, camper and family interactions and support from you is essential to the success of the program. STRIDE Orientation Hikes and activities are more helpful to STRIDE families when they are able to connect with people who know about the wonder of being at camp, and the challenges of it. The quality of our gear storage and the ability to meet families where they are by supporting them with transportation is the way that we show commitment.

STRIDE is not just a program, it is a community building activity. STRIDE looks forward to seeing you out on the trails.

