



March 8, 2006

Dear Administrator,

Where does one begin when talking about Maryann Thompson and the wonderful team of professionals in her firm? A few of the superlatives that come to mind include visionary, bold, meticulous, completely hands on, positive, unflappable, ingenious problem-solver, utterly devoted to her clients.

Never once has The Children's School looked back and regretted selecting Maryann Thompson to design its new school and campus renovation. It is worth mentioning that she was the only one of 12 highly accomplished architects who pulled out tracing paper and began drawing during the meeting and interview process. That gesture spoke volumes and demonstrated that Maryann could deliver what we were aspiring to in the project.

Now, some three years later, we have a design for a 13,000 square-foot school and renovated campus (including extensive landscaping and a refurbished antique barn) that will speak to children and families for generations to come. The open, light-filled building, and its careful nestling on the site, is nothing short of inspired. The school is integrated with the landscape, a result of the days and days that Maryann spent walking the grounds, understanding, among other things, the flora and fauna as well as the sun's arc across the property. Always, she conceived of the design from the point of view of children: in particular, the response that it would evoke in them as they moved through the building as well as the learning groves outside.

The outcome is a school and campus that honors each child's intellectual potential, emotional life and developmental stage. Here the natural world almost spills into the classrooms through the generous use of windows and skylights, enabling students to experience epiphanies of surprise and delight. How is this possible? Not only does the building serve as a pedagogical tool, it also purposefully incorporates mystery and discovery in the way that the interior classroom space unfolds—thus giving the child plenty of “A-ha!” moments. Moreover, in its eco-friendly use of sustainable materials and natural resources, the building embodies enduring values that we believe are essential to communicate to future generations: the importance of conserving and sharing as well as of protecting the world's scarce, precious resources. If the design sounds complex, even overwrought, let me assure you that it is not. For it is Maryann Thompson's genius to create designs of absolute simplicity and purity.

Architecture, as we all know, is not just about aesthetics. Making a drawing come to life is often a matter of politics and practicality, budgets and building codes. In these areas, too, The Children's School has found Maryann Thompson to be a consummate professional. Neighborhood worries were overcome, in no small part due to her ability to work with various viewpoints and address them effectively. Maryann also proved extraordinarily adept in helping us win over our local Zoning and Planning Board, which had had turned us down



in earlier attempts. Just recently, the design came in on budget when it went through the bidding process with several builders.

Finally, Maryann has stood with us every step of the way in terms of marketing this project to parents and alumni families for fundraising. She has worked tirelessly (and within her fee structure) to present the plans to potential donors in a series of gatherings. Maryann has done so because I believe that she loves this project and the School almost as much as the people who have worked here for many, many years. That measure of dedication and commitment is priceless. It is of incalculable benefit to any organization about to embark on a major building and capital campaign.

As important as the architect's technical and aesthetic talents are to a project, even more important is the relationship between architect and client. Is the architect someone whom you not only respect and admire, but who will be with you, the client, through every phase of the project? In other words, is this an individual with whom you can develop a good, solid relationship, one that can stand the test of time as well as the inevitable challenges that are part of any building project? On all of these questions, the answer is a resounding yes when it comes to Maryann Thompson. Approachable and humble, brilliant and willing to give it her all, Maryann (and her entire team) are all about the client and the collaborative vision that they forge together.

In closing, The Children's School highly recommends Maryann Thompson Architects. We are confident that you will find the experience of working with her not only pleasurable and gratifying but also inspiring. She is changing the architectural vernacular in America for the better. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Maureen Murphy  
Head of School