



# GARDEN SCHOOL

Jackson Heights, New York

Richard Marotta, *Ph. D., Headmaster*

August 2017

Dear Garden Families:

I am thrilled to be writing to you during the middle of the summer in preparation of the opening of the school year 2017-18, our 95<sup>th</sup> year! We have been very active this summer, working on the opening of school in September. Our Summer Camp is going strong, with activities and lots of pool time.

In the Spring of last school year, the Board increased its membership by adding two new Trustees: Domingo Hasbrun and Dianne Sarro. Domingo comes to us from the community and from the world of business. Diane Sarro, as you know, served as PTA President for several years and now joins us as a trustee. Both of these Trustees have already begun to share their expertise on various Board committees and the Board is made stronger by their presence.

Last summer, we were in the preparation stage for our NYSAIS accreditation visit. After a rigorous self-study by the school and a four day on-site visit by the Accreditation Committee examining all aspects of school life, from finance to curriculum, I am happy to report that we have received accreditation from NYSAIS. One of the benefits of every NYSAIS accreditation is that it is accompanied by both commendations and recommendations. We have spent the summer addressing these recommendations and plan to submit them to NYSAIS for review one year earlier than requested. The process and goal of becoming a NYSAIS accredited school is productive, worthwhile, and something of which we can all be proud. We use this review process and ongoing membership to improve institutional functioning, tighten administrative operations, and so enhance the mission of the school and our ability to serve our students and families. I must express a heartfelt thank you to all members of Garden School community who made this a successful accreditation process and result.

We have been busy with staffing for next year and, as of this writing, have made three appointments: Tyler Rivenbark in the English Department, Lauren Little in Math and Chris Zelles in Art. Tyler Rivenbark comes to us with a B.A. in English and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing, and eight years of experience teaching in the English Department at Queens College. Tyler is a published playwright and has had several of his plays produced. Lauren Little holds a B.A. in Math from Columbia University and an M.A. in Math from Hunter College. Lauren has several years experience working with students at all middle and high school levels, including in preparing students for the AP Calculus Exam. Chris Zelles joined Garden as a long-term substitute teacher for the last quarter of school year 2017-2018 and now joins us as a full-time teacher in the Fine Art Department. Chris Zelles holds a B.F.A. and a M.A. in Teaching with a double major in History and Art from Manhattanville College. We are in the process of interviewing some outstanding candidates for our remaining two positions.

As promised, Brad Battaglia has joined Garden School as Upper Division Head and Director of College Counseling. Brad Battaglia began working at Garden this July and has already proven himself to be an outstanding member of the administration. He comes to us with experience working in college admissions at Beloit College and as Director of College Guidance at Birch Wathen Lenox for eleven years. He holds a B.A. in Sociology from Boston College and an M.A. in Education from Columbia Teachers College. Brad has already held several college meetings with members of Garden's senior class and their families.

Each year we have our annual Gala to support the mission of Garden School. **This year's Gala will be held on April 13<sup>th</sup>.** Please put this date on your calendar. The Annual Fund, the Gala and the Walkathon are our three major school fundraisers for the year and are an important component of independent school life. As you know, like most independent schools, Garden's tuition does not cover the cost of educating your child; and it is fundraising that supports our mission and allows us to offer the finest education in Queens at the lowest tuition of any NYSAIS accredited, Queens independent school. We all strive to reach a goal of 100% participation in giving from trustees, faculty, alumni, past families and current families. Thank you in advance for your support.



We have planned and will complete some upgrades to the physical plant for the opening of school. Among the projects for the summer are replacing the doors in the main hallway and upgrading the windows in the first, second, third grades and lower division science classrooms. In addition, we continue to upgrade the Upper Division facilities with a plan to completely renovate at least one Upper Division classroom per summer. This summer, Room 23 is receiving a new floor, new ceiling, new paint and a furniture upgrade as well. And, working with the student leadership and fundraising help of the Garden Key Club, we are following through on their vision of installing two new hydration stations in order to decrease the use of disposable plastic water bottles in school. Parents and students can support these efforts by bringing well-marked, reusable water bottles to school or by purchasing an aluminum Garden water bottle from the Key Club.

As we did last year, we have posted back to school information and forms on our website under “Parents>Forms.” There is also a “[Back to School](#)” link on the right of our homepage. It is very important for you to advise us of any changes in contact information, including e-mail addresses or telephone numbers, and any pertinent medical and allergy information ASAP.

Thank you for all of your support, confidence and trust in Garden School and for joining with us to ensure your child’s experience at Garden School is of the highest quality. Garden’s future is secure and vibrant because of the support provided by families such as yours. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Richard Marotta, Ph.D.  
Headmaster

### **Back to School Information**

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| <b>Tuesday, September 5<sup>th</sup>:</b>    | <b>All faculty return at 9:00AM.</b>  |
| <b>Wednesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>:</b>  | <b>Orientation for all LOWER Division Students from 10:00AM-11:00AM</b>   |
| <b>Wednesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>:</b>  | <b>Orientation for UPPER Division students from 11:00AM-12:00 Noon<br/>Orientation for ALL returning sixth graders entering seventh grade<br/>and all NEW Upper Division students</b> |
| <b>Thursday, September 7<sup>th</sup>:</b>   | <b>First day of school.<br/>All students report to homerooms/classrooms by 8:20 AM<br/>Parents are invited to join the PTA for coffee beginning at 8:00 AM</b>                        |
| <b>Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup> :</b> | <b>All parents at Curriculum Night at 6:00PM</b>  |