



# GARDEN SCHOOL

Jackson Heights, New York

Richard Marotta, *Ph. D., Headmaster*

Summer 2016

Dear Garden Families:

I hope you are enjoying the summer as we at Garden prepare for the 2016 - 2017 school year, which will be Garden's 94th academic year. It is a good sign that our admissions season for the core program continues and a modest increase is expected in overall enrollment. Once again, we are having a working summer with another active Summer Camp and making updates to the program and facilities. I am pleased to share some of those with you in this letter.

In the Spring, the Board added an alumna trustee to its membership. I am delighted to welcome Emily Bienstock Belmonte, Class of 2004, who will serve also as a member of the Board Marketing Committee. A major development for the upcoming fall will be our New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS) accreditation visit in late October. This past school year was our self-study year which included the preparation of the comprehensive self-study report and an update to the Strategic Plan (available online). The report will be sent soon and you will receive updates as the accreditation process moves forward.

We have made some new teacher appointments to our faculty. Ms Cherie Wangenstein will be joining our Physical Education Department to fill the spot vacated by Ms Trotter. Ms Wangenstein has a BS in Exercise Science and is pursuing an MA in Physical Education from Queens College and comes to us from The Spence School where she also coached both volleyball and softball. Ms Amira Booth-Soifer will join our English Department in the place of Ms. Elkind, who retired after well over 30 years of teaching at Garden. Ms Booth-Soifer has an MA in Teaching English from Columbia University and taught at Stuyvesant High School and Kinneret Day School most recently. We welcome Ms Sarah Blakeley to our math department. Ms. Blakeley has an MA in Middle School Mathematics from City College and graduated from Bryn Mawr College with a BA in both Child Psychology and in East Asian Studies. We also added a new Science and Math position to our faculty. Mr. Gregory Veras has a BA in both Mathematics and Meteorology an MA in Teaching in PE and will teach science in grades 1 to 3, fifth grade math and join the PE department which will allow us to group PE classes more constructively. Mr. Veras comes to us via Martin Luther School in Maspeth where he also coached soccer and wrestling.

Finally, I am sad to report that, after 20 years of service, Ms Stella Stenos, currently our ELA instructor, has decided to leave Garden and take a senior administrative position with the Greek Archdiocese. We are appreciative of your years of service to the students and to Garden School and we wish you well in your next endeavor. Mr. Greig Roselli has been hired as the new ELA instructor. Mr. Roselli has over 5 years of tutoring and teaching English most recently at the Storefront Academy where he also taught ELA and holds an MA in Philosophy from NYU. Please join me in welcoming these new members of our faculty to the Garden School community.

I am also excited to announce that Brad Battaglia will join the Garden School administration team as the Director of College Counseling and Upper Division Head beginning in August 2017. Mr. Battaglia is currently the Director of College Counseling and Director of Diversity at Birch Wathen Lenox in Manhattan. He holds an MA in Education from Columbia Teachers College and a BA in Sociology from Boston College. Although Mr. Battaglia will be involved somewhat in this year's guidance work, until he joins us officially, Ms. Lisa Sohmer will provide the necessary college guidance this year to the senior and junior classes. She has already been in contact with these classes and will visit Garden for college guidance related events and meetings throughout the year.

We have also made some changes to our current faculty assignments. Our kindergarten teacher, Ms Ahlfeld, will now be teaching First Grade and Ms. Renner will join the upper elementary faculty as the Grades 4, 5 and 6 social studies teacher. Ms. Lauren Yandow, who has been teaching in Garden's PKFA for the past two years, will now be teaching our kindergarten program. Ms. Yandow has a BA in early childhood/childhood education and psychology from Hofstra University, is Certified to teach birth to sixth grade in New York, and is pursuing her MA in TESOL from Queens College. Our teachers are enthusiastic about these changes and looking forward to their new assignments.



Please put this year's Garden Gala date of Friday, March 31st into your 2017 calendars. This fundraiser, along with our Annual Giving campaign in the fall and the Walkathon in May, is one of our three biggest annual fundraisers. Fundraising is a critical component of all American independent schools. Each of you as independent school families has a responsibility to participate in giving and raising funds to the best of your ability. It is our fundraising that allows Garden to offer the finest education in Queens while maintaining among the lowest tuitions of any NY independent school. The goal, along with trustees, faculty, alumni and past families, is 100% community participation as we raise funds to support the mission of the school, enrich the educational program and upgrade our facility. Thank you in advance for your participation and support.

Garden's partnership with parents, both as educational partners and as community members, has always been strong and key to our success. This year, the PTA contributed substantial funds along with the school and individual donors to renovate and update the Garden School Library. The new library is looking terrific and its configuration will serve better the educational needs of the school. We are very grateful for the work of the Library Renovation Committee and for this type of support from the PTA whose ongoing fundraising efforts directly impact your family and child's education. Like every year, they need your help! I ask you, therefore, to please participate in school and PTA fundraisers, and also to attend the first PTA meeting in the Library on Tuesday, October 13th at 8:30 AM and learn how you can be involved.

Other upgrades to our facility over the spring and summer include new computers for the computer lab and an improved email system and wifi signal (expected any day). We have renovated the bathrooms in the Nursery and PK rooms and created a new dedicated space for the new Ham Radio Club. A new van was purchased that will ease congestion on our busses and improve our transportation reach, and a much improved system for meal payments will come online soon that parents and students will notice and appreciate, I am sure.

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 all for your continued confidence and trust, and for partnering with us to ensure your child's experience at Garden School is of the highest quality, and that Garden School's future remains strong, vibrant and sustainable for many years.

Welcome to our 94th year! I am looking forward to seeing all of you for the upcoming school year.

Sincerely,

Richard Marotta, Ph.D.  
Headmaster

#### **Back To School Information**

- Tuesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>:**                    **All faculty return to school at 9:00 AM.**
- Wednesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>:**           **Orientation for all Lower Division Students from 10:00AM-11:00AM.**
- Wednesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>:**           **Upper Division Orientation from 11:00AM-12:00AM**  
**ALL returning sixth graders entering seventh grade and NEW Upper Division students.**
- Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup>:**            **First day of school. All students report to homerooms and classrooms by 8:20AM.**

**We look forward to seeing all core program parents at Curriculum Night on Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>.**

The PKFA start of school schedule is as follows:

- Tuesday, September 6:**                **Orientation for Group A from 8:30-9:30AM**  
   **Orientation for Group B from 10:00- 11:00AM**
- Wednesday, September 7:**           **All PKFA students from 8:30-10:30AM**
- Thursday, September 8:**              **Full day schedule from 8:30-2:50PM**