



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

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Thoughts for the week

By Richard Marotta, Ph.D., Headmaster



There are many skills that form the basis of a successful educational and professional career. Perhaps none is more vital than that of problem solving. Whenever I attend an educational conference, inevitably someone begins discussing the 'art' of problem-solving and how important it has become to our students. Education is, after all, the act of problem-solving.

The emphasis on problem-solving stems from the daily, and sometimes long-term, challenges that we face in school. A student in a math class has to solve a problem through operations; in a science class, that same student has to solve a problem through experimentation; in an English class the challenge can be to solve the problem of a character's identity; in language, the problem can be to solve the problem of formulating responses to questions. This process is endless because it rests at the center of what learning involves and where education can lead us to in our daily lives.

When I think of problem solving, I remember how difficult it was for me to begin the process of working through an algebraic equation. However, I also think of the years I have spent as a teacher of writing, watching students hesitate with the beginning of an essay. We shared the same approach: we looked at the problem as a whole and we were intimidated because we confronted the whole rather than seeing the process of problem solving as a step-by-step procedure.

Today, when they are confronted by a problem, I tell students to take a step back and look at where you want to get with the solution and then take the problem apart piece by piece. So, whether the problem is a mathematical one, a literary one, or a social one, my advice is always the same. Go slow. Think about where you want to be at the end and then look at each step along the way.

Part of what inhibits the process of resolving a problem derives from our initial approach to that issue. The final sentence of the Garden School Mission Statement is, "Garden School fosters the self-worth necessary to succeed." My belief is that if we assume success rather than failure, we will then successfully resolve the problem and encourage and inspire others to do the same. If we begin with, 'this can't be done,' then most likely, it won't be done. However, if we assume success, then we unconsciously program ourselves and those around us with the idea that it is only a matter of time before we resolve the issue. The assumption of our own success can be one of the greatest factors contributing to our success as an individual, as a group, and as a school community.

The Annual Fund

Garden School's Annual Fund Drive will be beginning within the next week. I am happy to tell you that last year's Annual Fund raised over \$50,000. This year we hope to exceed that goal. Our Board of Trustees is leading the effort and has already pledged over

\$10,000 in gifts to our school. Please be on the look-out for the solicitation that will be sent out soon.

