



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Richard Marotta, Ph. D., Headmaster

Volume 92 Number: V

"Academic Excellence Since 1923"

Friday, October 17, 2014

Thoughts for the week

By Richard Marotta, Ph.D., Headmaster



In the [Fall issue of *Independent School*](#), the journal published by NAIS, Elizabeth Duffy explores what she believes to be the three most current trends in independent school education which schools must focus on in order to equip students for the twenty-first century world.

The three areas Ms Duffy identifies are a lifelong and creative understanding of technology, a complex and not trendy global perspective and the skill of adaptation to the rapidly changing conditions of our experience. She believes that independent schools should consider these three areas when shaping curriculum, activities, community awareness and problem solving models.

In reality, while Ms. Duffy's point of view applies to all areas of education, in the independent school world these trends can be addressed without the interference of the political and educational establishment. So, when independent school educators and families think of these areas, our first response might very well be, of course, we *all* have and use technology, we *all* talk about the global perspective and we *all* react to situations that require adaptability skills. Indeed, she writes, "many of these trends play to independent schools current strengths." I agree that independent schools, including Garden, are aware of these ideas and implement them throughout the curriculum.

Having said that, my sense is that identifying these trends is only the beginning of the process of developing curriculum for the future. Of the three areas she highlights, I believe the most important is adaptability. Adaptability is key to our ability to engage with and make the most of both the technological imperative and the global concept of being world citizens. We know from our experiences over the past twenty-five years that technology is an ever-changing construct. What was "cutting edge" technologically five years ago has yielded to further advancements, and so all of us including our students must be able to adapt with the new necessary skills. Similarly, the concept of global citizenship has evolved in the past twenty-five years with the ever-shifting landscape of world economics, power and developing global technologies. Again, our students will be well-served by their Garden school experience and their acquired ability to both broaden and refine their points of view while including the perspective of others.

Until recently, the school model hadn't changed significantly in almost two hundred years. The school was seen as the preserver of a tradition and not the creator of future traditions. Yet within the past twenty-five years, the idea of adapting the school to the conditions of the modern world has become a given. As our environment changes at a faster pace than ever before in human history, Garden School must serve the needs of its students in direct and practical ways. While it is extraordinary to think that what we do at Garden today may not be what we need to do in five years, it is critical for the adaptability factor to be cultivated into our programming.

The Garden School Mission Statement states that "we empower students... to meet the challenges of everyday life". As independent school educators, our responsibility continues to be to identify those quickly changing challenges and adapt to their reality.