



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Richard Marotta, Ph. D., Headmaster

Volume 92 Number: II

"Academic Excellence Since 1923"

Friday, September 19, 2014

Thoughts for the week

By Richard Marotta, Ph.D., Headmaster



As the school year begins, and as we begin to settle into the learning process throughout all of our grade levels, another aspect of education begins slowly to emerge. Sometimes this development is subtle and at other times not so subtle. As we begin to examine the traditional areas of study—math-science-English, etc—we also begin to engage in the process of self-reflection.

Each day, students in their classes while engaging with the subject matter at hand, inevitably ask themselves about the relationship between that subject and their own lives and feelings. It is not unusual for a student to ask, “Why are we studying this?” The answers to this question can vary from the practical to the abstract; however, the fundamental, almost the embedded answer, is the same. We study these subjects because they help to explain our lives.

Whether we are explaining the physical aspect of our lives in biology, chemistry, physics, or the temporal nature of human life in history, or the philosophical dimension of our lives in literature, the ultimate focus is always the same. How do these subject explain who we are, what we want and where do we hope to go. These existential questions may not be apparent to a student who is studying for a bio test; yet, deep within the decision to study these areas, is the human desire to understand the nature of human life.

Self-reflection can be an individual act or it can be a social act. When we as individuals reflect on our own lives, we tend to look at our past experiences, our current status and our future hopes. We look at what we consider to be our identity (whatever that may be); we examine our relationships, our hopes and dreams. When we self-reflect as a social being, we examine the ability of our social structure to support our lives, our aspirations and ultimately come to understand more abstract (yet concrete) ideas, such as justice.

When a society examines its past, it is usually in the hope of understanding our actions, of evaluating and even passing a moral judgment on them. When the history curriculum, *Facing History and Ourselves*, was first developed, it was an attempt to look at history objectively and morally without any aspects of fantasy, embellishments or innocence.

Each day at Garden School, our faculty are charged with engaging our students with these acts of self-reflection and our teachers ask the questions that connect the subject matter with each student's identity. In the fullest sense, the act of learning, which seems to have taken hold in our earliest human ancestors, is focused on understanding human nature and the world around us. Ultimately, education is an act of collective self-reflection.



DATES TO REMEMBER:

- **Thursday, Sept. 25 – Friday, Sept, 26 : School Closed for Rosh Hashanah**
- **Monday, September 29 – Wednesday, October 1 : Frost Valley Trip for Grades 7 & 8**
- **Thursday, October 2 : Photo Day for Lower Division**
- **Friday, October 3 : Photo Day for Upper Division**
- **Tuesday, October 7 : Meeting for Grades 8 & 9 at 6PM**
- **Monday, October 13 : School Closed for Columbus Day**
- **Wednesday, October 15 : PSATs for Grades 10 & 11**
- **Wednesday, October 15 – Friday, October 17 : Camp Herrlich Trip for Grades 5 & 6**

This Week's Events

Curriculum Night 2014

At Garden School's Curriculum Night last Tuesday, parents gathered in the gym and heard from school administration and the PTA President before heading off to meet with the teachers in classrooms and experience a compressed school day, complete with a meal stop in the cafeteria.

The Student/Teacher/Parent communication triangle is critical in ensuring a student's success. So, if parents missed this event, please make the effort to contact the appropriate teachers and find out what you need to know in order to effectively partner with the teachers and support your child's education.





Councilman Dromm Officially Opens Early Childhood Center

We were honored and delighted to have NYC Councilman and Education Committee Chair, Danny Dromm, visit Garden School this week and officially open our new Early Childhood Center with a ribbon cutting ceremony. We are grateful to Councilman Dromm for all of his support in helping Garden School with this new addition to the school and to our Jackson heights community.



Garden School Lego Robotics Club Underway

This week, students in 4th to 8th grades started their projects in the Lego Robotics Team taking place every Wednesday and Thursday afternoons from 3:30 to 5:00 PM at school. In late January, the students will compete in the 2104 First Lego League World Class Challenge where students will compete to see whose robot can complete a complex set of automated and remote controlled tasks.



Garden School at LIC Family and Kids Day

Garden School was a sponsor and a participant at last Sunday's Long Island City Concert Series Family and Kids Day. Many thanks to our service volunteers Caitlyn, Cheyenne and Valentina for helping with kid control duties and representing Garden School so well.





Music for Early Childhood

By: Tom Heineman (Music Teacher)

In Nursery, students are already approaching songs that number over a dozen! They are singing, stomping, counting, clapping, marching, dancing, and learning how to skip: a very diverse set of activities. They recite a nursery rhyme and applaud after every event of their own volition. Go nursery!

In every class thus far, Pre-K and Kindergarten students have had an opportunity to play maracas and shakers. As part of their personal development, students display good manners by waiting until every student has an instrument before picking them up to perform. Students have focused on differentiating between playing fast and slow or loud and quiet with the instruments. This was a point of emphasis in movement exercises, too, and Kindergarteners even discerned the difference between high and low sounds. Eventually this will lead to them making sound musical choices when playing, singing, or writing music.

Kindergarten students have already learned a number of folk songs, such as 'Home on the Range,' 'Oh Susanna,' and 'Abiyoyo,' a tune from South Africa that accompanies a story they've read in class. They discussed and learned about instruments that are mentioned in their songs, such as a trumpet and a banjo, and even began learning the parts of a guitar. Both the Pre-K and Kindergarten classes have been engaged in singing games that promote social involvement and working as a team, such as the 'Farmer in the Dell' circle game and the 'Paw Paw patch' song. In the latter, a student hides a stuffed animal (a classroom koala bear) during the first verse of the song, and a team of students looks for the hidden animal in the second verse. Students really enjoyed these games, and other singing games will be introduced in class in the coming weeks.



Grade 1

By: Jacquelyn Renner (Grade 1 Teacher)

Who's yellow, round, always hungry and helps First Grade with inequalities? It's Pacman!

First Graders understand that Pacman is hungry and always wants to eat the greater number. The students had several opportunities to manipulate Pacman to show which was the greater number. Each one came to the board to place Pacman correctly between two numbers. Then, students partnered together to use connecting cubes to compare amounts. They had to work together to build amounts and decide which amount was greater.

After working with Pacman for the lesson, the class made the connection between the shape of Pacman's mouth and the greater than and less than symbols. Each student demonstrated their understanding of inequalities by making their own poster using pictures, numbers, words, and symbols. Next week, the class will have their first look at word problems!





Grade 2

By: Stephanie Parker (Grade 2 Teacher)

In connection with our thematic unit on Friendship, the Second Graders enjoyed learning about two great friends, Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan. The students were astounded at the perseverance these two great women demonstrated throughout their lives. After reading *Helen Keller: Courage in the Dark* by Johanna Hurwitz, the students reflected on the obstacles both Helen Keller and her teacher Anne Sullivan overcame to communicate with one another. They were happy to learn the two remained friends throughout their lives.

The students have begun to learn to communicate with one another in American Sign Language. They learned to say "My name is", "Nice to meet you" and "You're my friend" along with practicing the alphabet. They observed the use of facial expression and body language that is crucial to communicating in American Sign Language by watching clips of deaf students perform some of their favorite songs. The students also enjoyed writing their names in Braille and using glue and glitter to raise the letters. They commented that although the students communicated differently, they were just like them! They noted that friends can be different but that is more fun!



Grade 3

By: Nilla Ingravallo (Grade 3 Teacher)



To initiate our mathematics study this year, the third graders have been building the foundation of whole-number operations by learning place value. They have been reading, writing, and using 4-, 5-, and 6- digit numbers in a variety of contexts. The students worked on comparing and ordering these numbers as well. Manipulatives, online resources, and place value charts allowed the third graders to visualize these concepts.

To reinforce what they have been studying in math, the third graders participated in cooperative learning and center activities the last couple of days. With a partner, they worked on projects and activities that required them to demonstrate and express their knowledge of place value concepts through different modalities. The first day's activities consisted of ordering sets of numbers and identifying number patterns. On the second day, each group visited a place value center that allowed them to explore this concept using technology, reading, writing, art and manipulatives.

These cooperative learning tasks also encouraged the third graders to work on the star quality of cooperation, which was the focus of this week. During this time, the third graders applied what they learned about cooperatively working with others.



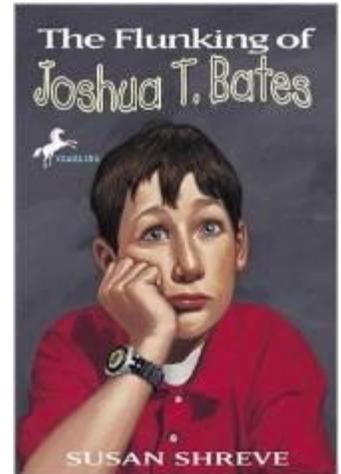


Grade 4

By: Phillip D'Anna (Grades 4 and 6 Language Arts and Social Studies Teacher)

As discussed at Curriculum Night, the immediate focus of the fourth grade has been routine. As fourth graders, the students are taking on more responsibilities as they transition from classroom to classroom, eat lunch in the dining hall, and visit their homerooms and lockers less frequently. Establishing a daily routine for the students will help to assuage some of the confusion of the day.

In language arts, the class began the school year with a review of the various types of sentences and the elements of a complete sentence. Looking to the upcoming weeks, we will begin our first class novel which is *The Flunking of Joshua T. Bates* by Susan Shreve. This is a story that many students relate to as we find that the main character, Joshua, has been retained in third grade. The class novel will require reading to be done both in class and at home; I encourage all of the students to read aloud as well as independently to foster and grow each student's reading skills.



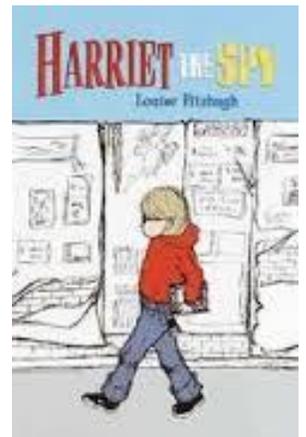
Social Studies has begun with lessons that review, discuss, and introduce various map skills. The fourth grade curriculum for social studies is US Geography. Map skills are an essential part of knowing how to interpret and use maps to find the states of our country. As we complete our study of map skills, we will begin our first unit of study, the Northeast Region. It is my expectation that as the class continues to work hard to learn the daily routines, they will also develop their own strengths as students and enjoy the fun and exciting activities that we will do in both language arts and social studies. I look forward to an outstanding school year with the fourth grade!

Grade 5

By: Sarah Smith (Grade 5 Language Arts & Social Studies Teacher)

The fifth grade scholars have grabbed this school year with gusto! A review of the four types of sentences as well as proper sentence structure had students exclaiming correct answers and striving to create interesting exclamatory, interrogative, imperative and declarative sentences.

One could hear many exclamatory sentences spouting from these young minds as they started to read *Harriet the Spy* by Louise Fitzhugh. This timeless novel portrays a young inquisitive scholar who journals about her surroundings and friends. One great lesson that students realize is that the world is a very diverse place filled with people from a variety of walks of life who learn how to handle the daily challenges of life. They continue to discuss the importance of friendship and family. It will be a wonderful literary adventure.





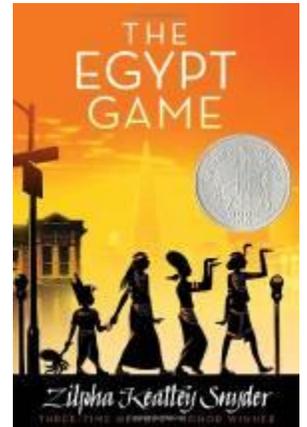
Grade 6

By: Phillip D'Anna (Grades 4 and 6 Language Arts and Social Studies Teacher)

The sixth grade has started off on the right foot. Already they've acclimated to their new schedules and environments and are taking charge of their responsibilities. In language arts, we are beginning with a short grammar review and reviewing the important writing elements. Writing development will be one of several foci of the sixth grade language arts class. Next week, we will begin our first novel, *The Egypt Game* by Zilpha Keatly Snyder.

In social studies we have finished our first small unit on map skills and have begun discussing culture, customs, and regions of the world. Shortly thereafter we will investigate our first river civilization, Ancient Egypt, in conjunction with our literature study of *The Egypt Game*.

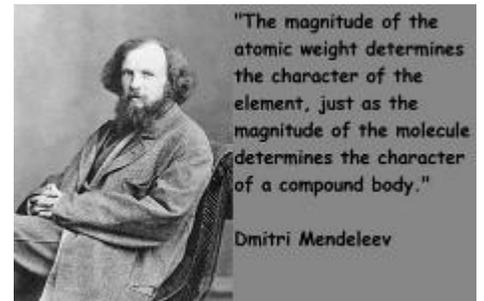
Sixth grade responsibilities are much different from those of fifth grade, and as such, the class should use the beginning weeks of school to develop successful work habits and strategies that will ensure their academic success. I am pleased to say that I see these steps being taken already. Remember that I am available for extra help in the mornings upon the students' request. Keep up the good work, sixth grade!



Grade 8

By: John Hale (Science Teacher)

The 8th Grade Physical Science class has just started work on a video project about Dmitri Mendeleev. This video project allows the students to be assessed in a different way. They will work cooperatively in teams to create a video about Mr. Mendeleev's life and how he developed the first useable Periodic Table. In conjunction with the project, the class is learning about the periodic table, periodic law and the basics behind chemical reactions. They are learning currently how to balance chemical equations and how to identify the 4 major types of reactions. All this information will be used as a focus point to the video project and we are all looking forward to seeing the 8th grade productions.



Grade 9

By: Marcia Elkind (History Teacher)

Forests and trees. Ninth graders are finding they must acquire specific information and understand the big ideas those details support. One of the major goals of the year is to hone students' ability to see cause and effect relationships between events of the past.

As they study how specific environments and geographic conditions led to the development of different civilizations, we begin with the big idea that a people's geographical location determines the type of society they develop. Will they be farmers? Not if they live in a desert. Will they build with wood? Not if there are not forests in their area. We will then link the effect of geography to the development of religion, government, art and architecture.

Their challenge is to learn specific information and the relevance of that information to the larger idea they are exploring. To see each "tree" in the forest clearly, but never lose sight of the whole "forest."





Grade 10

By: Richard Grusky (Chair of History and Social Sciences Department)

The Tenth Grade Advanced Placement European History Class has completed its review of the Ancient and Medieval Worlds. We are now ready to tackle the art of the Renaissance and the Modern Worlds with its discussions of Humanism, amorality, pragmatism, evolution and revolution.

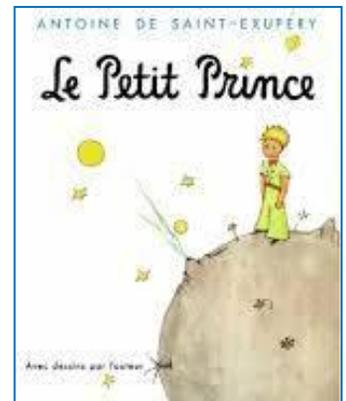
The transition to Modernism was made easier, thanks to the excellent preparation of Mrs. Elkind's Ninth Grade program. We look forward to a year of growth in the direction of the Florentine Whole Man.

Grades 11 and 12

By: Agustin Melara (Foreign Language Department Chair)

The Spanish IV/AP class has been reading, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, written by the 1982 Nobel Laureate Gabriel García Márquez. In this novel, students have been introduced to the concept of "Magic Realism", a literary style brilliantly adopted by Márquez in which the characters in the novel perceive magical elements as normal. Upon completing the novel, the students will have to decide *who* is responsible for the murder of the protagonist: the friends who murdered him or an entire society who knew of the assassins' intentions but did nothing to prevent the crime.

The Juniors in French IV have been reading Saint-Exupéry's most beloved novel, *Le Petit Prince*. This philosophical tale, directed at adults, relates the story of a little prince who has fallen to Earth in search of what is important in life.



Seniors at the Advanced Placement level have been analyzing André Gide's, *La Symphonie Pastorale* with Doctor Marotta. In this novel, the narrator (a Protestant pastor), struggles with his own moral ambiguities and religious convictions as he attempts to achieve personal happiness. The consequences of his actions will ultimately destroy the relationship between him and those around him.

Alumni Update

By: Lisa Sohmer (Director of College Counseling)

Members of the Class of 2014 are already making their mark on campuses in New York and across the country!



Martin at Oberlin College (OH)



Abbey at Hunter College (NY)



Zachary at University at Albany



Alumni Update (cont.)

Joseph Prio, Garden School 2009, began his teaching career at the Florida Atlantic University in September. Here Joe, right, works at the microscope with a freshman biology course. Mr. Prio is interested in marine ecology and is working toward his PhD. He graduated from SUNY Oneonta in 2013.



Griffin Girls Volleyball vs. Dwight School

The Griffin Girls Volleyball team showed poise, great sportsmanship and perseverance during their match against Dwight School.



Parents League of New York

By: Lisa Sohmer (Director of College Counseling)



As always, Garden School had a presence at the Parents League of New York's annual independent school fair.