



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



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Thoughts for the Week

By **Richard Marotta, Ph.D., Headmaster**



In thinking about today's column, the first thought that comes to mind was to write about the NYS AIS Team Visit , which begins this Sunday and lasts until Wednesday afternoon. Then I realized that I have been writing to you about NYS AIS for almost two years and have explained, I think, just about everything there is to explain. We have prepared for the visit with care and have prepared a wonderfully honest and reflective Self Study.

In the Self Study there is a section about Academic Program that essentially outlines and examines our academic program. As I reread this section in preparation for the visit, I was struck by the importance that our school places on reading. Every aspect of our academic day revolves around reading, whether it is a literature class or a math class, each element of the education process depends on reading.

All of us read for work, for pleasure, and for school; even when we drive we are engaged in reading, from the street signs to our speedometer. Without reading, our lives would be extremely different and dependent solely on oral communication, which is clearly less reliable and permanent than reading.

When I watch or listen to children reading or talking about reading, I am always struck by the way in which their imaginations respond to the narrative. Children love story telling and are very lively re-creators of what they read or here. For them, reading touches their imaginations and allows for the free-flow of ideas, of images and of worlds other than their own.

However, I think that this is true for adults as well. This fall I began reading Australian fiction. Since I had visited Australia this summer, I thought that it would be interesting to read some of their leading writers. I did, and in fact, I was so taken with the writing that I read six books within two months. What I realized through reading novels by Tim Winton, Favel Parrett and David Malouf, is that I was transported back into a landscape that I had only experienced for about ten days; yet the reading experience recreated an entire world of narrative environment that were even more vivid than the actual experience.

The power of reading for adults and children is staggering. We do it so often every day that we sometimes lose sight of how extraordinary an activity it truly is. For all of our students, teacher, parents - in short- for all of us, reading touches upon our minds as something miraculous. Reading recreates experience; creates new worlds; defines the dimensions of our minds and educates our imaginations. What a gift!

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