



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



Richard Marotta, Ph. D., Headmaster

Volume 94 Number: II

"Cultivating Success in Every Child"

Friday, September 23, 2016



Thoughts for the Week

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

As you know from previous newsletter articles, this is our accreditation year with our parent organization, the New York Association of Independent Schools (NYS AIS). Even though accreditation is voluntary, all good schools undergo this process for the sake of institutional growth and improvement. The most important part of the entire process is the year or two dedicated to self-study and self-reflection and our community has been involved in this self-reflection process.

As we move closer to the date of the NYS AIS visit from October the 23rd until the 26th, I can't help but think about the self-study process and all that it signifies to a school, or to any organization for that matter. The major part of this process involves self-reflection and self-assessment. While we have all heard these terms before, and I have written about them in the past, it is also important to recognize that these ideas go beyond being intellectual categories, and evolve into actionable categories.

To create a culture of self-reflection has been a goal for Garden School for the past several years, especially as we began to contemplate the reaccreditation visit. However, self-reflection seems to me to be the essence of a school and its overall curriculum, which includes both learning within and without the classroom. Every aspect of our daily life of study, should involve active self-evaluation of what we do and why we do it. In very concrete terms, when we are solving a math problem in class, we should be evaluating the reasons why we take certain steps. When we talk about a character in a story, we need to reflect on our insights and their implications. The same is true for our social interactions as well as the academic disciplines.

Our Visiting Committee, which will be chaired by Larry Weiss, the Head of Brooklyn Friends, will spend its time visiting classes, talking with teachers, students, parents and administrators. They will have read our self-study and will be using it and our mission statement as the context for their visit. Once they have completed their visit, they will write a Visiting Committee report. This report will go to the members of the NYS AIS's Commission on Accreditation; from there, it is reviewed by the Commission as a whole and finally it will go to the NYS AIS Board of Trustees for final approval. I was on the NYS AIS Board for eleven years and was on the Commission for six years. Based on that experience, I can assure you that the entire response to our self-study and the Visiting Committee's Report will be thoughtful and helpful.

What is most intriguing and exciting about self-reflection and this entire process of accreditation centers around the potential for growth and self-development. This is what we all desire in our lives, in our schools and in our children and students: to grow, develop and explore a vision of ourselves that we may not have been aware until we engaged in the honest process of self-reflection. Self-reflection is not a sign of self-doubt; it is a sign of self-affirmation.

Richard Marotta, Ph.D.
Headmaster