



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



Richard Marotta, Ph. D., Headmaster

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Thoughts for the Week

By Richard Marotta, Ph.D., Headmaster



The educational world has been buzzing with new ideas for more than three decades. The last thirty years has witnessed more studies, articles and innovations in education that hasn't been seen since the progressive education movement of the early twentieth century. Many of these ideas have fallen out of use; however some continue to be influential mainly because of their correspondence to what we perceive as the new reality of the educational experience and direction.

Ideas about global learning, direct experiential learning, left brain/right brain differentiation, multiple learning styles, emotional intelligence and many others have been discussed and argued over with great intensity. While no single idea has taken control of the educational process, some ideas have become part of the daily conversations in our school. One such idea that has merit is that concerning what has been called emotional intelligence.

I have long believed that some of the key elements in the formula for success are the ability to problem solve, focus on a task and collaborate with others. In recent writing about emotional intelligence, some of these ideas have been recognized as key components in developing a more systematic approach to this type of teaching and learning.

Josh Cobb, middle school head at the Grayland County day School in Colorado, has written an article for *Independent School*, entitled "Beyond Emoticons." Cobb's article begins with a question posed by a leading expert in technology, Alan November, asked the CEO of one of the largest banks in the world, what are the most important skills that you want or look for in an employee. November, a technology expert, was somewhat surprised by the answer: "Empathy."

The implications of this answer reach deep into our understanding of curriculum. As Cobb rightly assessed, the true meaning of the answer is "how do you teach students to understand the experience of others?" The most succinct summary of this idea comes from Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick, who sum up the goals of emotional education by suggesting that we learn to think

1. from knowing right answers to knowing how to behave when answers are not readily apparent;
2. from transmitting meaning to constructing meaning; and
3. from external evaluation to self-assessment

Costa and Kallick's summary touches upon some important ways of thinking about learning. We can see from their three ideas, that learning centers of transitions and transpositions; that learning is not static but dynamic and that learning moves from the external to the internal as part of the process of infusing learning with meaning that applies both to our world and to ourselves. These are the goals that we should set for ourselves as educators, because of the way in which these ideas when put in motion begin to prepare our students and ourselves for the ever-shifting world in which we live.

