



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



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Thoughts for the Week

By Richard Marotta, Ph.D., Headmaster



As you know, today was our first Faculty Development Day of the year. These days, during which the faculty participate in professional development, are so important to our fulfilling the mission of the school. These are the day in which our teachers and administrator meet to take a step back to evaluate our program through the primary method of self-reflection.

At today's meeting, we reflected on two main areas: first, the preparation for the NYS AIS self-study, which involves breaking up into our assigned subcommittees and discussing and writing reports on all of the aspects of the organization of the school, from record keeping to curriculum. The second portion of the day was spent in evaluating the first six weeks of school, of reviewing student progress, of reviewing curriculum initiatives, special projects and future projects.

These days play a particularly important role in an independent school. The process of adjustment and development always begins with the educational team of teachers and administrators conducting serious discussion about our program in relation to the Garden mission. Discussions are open, frank and thoughtful. Our goal at the end of the day is to come to a clearer sense of why we are doing what we are doing, and how could we improve individual, team, and institutional performance.

Our topics ranged from how each area of school life reflects the implementation of the school's mission. Today, and at this point in the self-study, we are not identifying solutions; rather we were starting the process of reflection and assessment that we continue throughout the year. Self-reflection is a complex process that requires a clarity of perception and is followed by everyone's commitment to making adjustments wherever necessary. As a part of that self-reflection, we looked at practices and evaluated them for their effectiveness. At the end of this process, we will look at what aspects of growth and development we need to implement. As I have written before, schools are works in progress.