



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



Richard Marotta, Ph. D., Headmaster

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Thoughts for the Week

By Richard Marotta, Ph.D., Headmaster



In many of the conferences and discussion I attend about education, there is always one session on the idea of ethics in education. The role of moral education in developing curriculum tends to be a hotly debated topic, because of the many complex nuances that emerge based on individual or collective belief systems. Schools usually take a careful position when thinking about ethics, while at the same time asserting the primacy of such values as kindness and honesty.

In some curriculum areas, such as our Bio Ethics course, questions of ethical choice form the basis of the field of study. Important and complex subjects, such as global warming or genetic engineering, can and are researched, debated and explored from as many points of view as possible. There is really no 'correct' answer to some of these issues; there is, however, the idea that a moral choice depends upon knowledge as well as belief. Our students need to gather the 'knowledge' before taking a stand on the issues.

In the area of social media, ethical questions abound in this essentially unedited activity. So many ethical questions have emerged around the access and use of social media that it is important for us to understand and then develop an ethical protocol for its use. We have seen so many personal and professional disasters result from the 'misuse' or 'unethical' use of social media that it is imperative we develop a set of ethical principles concerning its use.

As we move into the heat of the Presidential Campaign, we clearly see how the context for the discussion is the media and not the issues themselves. There has been a paradigm shift in our public discourse from an ethical and knowledge based articulation to a non-ethical media-driven image based presentation. The failure of public discourse to engage in discussion that embodied the ethics of language and thought has caused a downturn in our politics, resulting in a sound-bite level of thinking.

The mission of our school centers around assisting students to develop an academic, social and personal context. Developing a strong ethical framework in which to match decisions and with which to conduct their lives remains of paramount importance to all of us who carry out that mission. For all of us who work with the Character Education Program, who teach classes in which the ethical context is an important as the academic content and for those of us who have a vision that education leads from darkness to light, teaching, learning and embodying an ethical approach to life directs our actions.