



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



Richard Marotta, Ph. D., Headmaster

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Thoughts for the Week

By Richard Marotta, Ph.D., Headmaster



As we move into the second quarter of the school year, we also move into our second character value, Honesty, which will continue our exploration of the Character Education Program. Honesty will form the basis of the activities, the writing exercises and the reflective moments that our students will engage in during this timeframe.

For many of us the first thought that comes to mind when we think about honesty is fiscal honesty, non-stealing, academic honesty. These are, of course, all part of the idea of acting in an honest way. Our culture, history and society have often connected honesty with property rights and the sanctity of ownership. Throughout the history of our legal system, the emphasis on honesty as the protection of property has dominated our discourse and our implementation of jurisprudence.

While this is an important part of the idea of honesty, there are other components of this value that embody significant aspects of how we live our lives. For students, property honesty is important. However, such ideas as intellectual and academic honesty assert very strong influences within the daily life of the student. Academic

honesty means the respecting of intellectual property by not plagiarizing and always acknowledging the source of an idea. It also means respecting the integrity of another student's work during tests, homework or projects. Clearly, academic honesty forms the basis of any school's academic expectations for its students.

Another level of honesty that permeates a school is interpersonal honesty. Students, teachers and parents owe it to each other to function in ways that represent what each truly feels and thinks. It is important to present oneself and one's ideas in a straightforward manner. I am not suggesting that simplicity should rule; however, I am suggesting that no matter how complex an idea or a feeling may be, we owe it to each other to represent what we think in the most honest (and kind) way possible.

My final thought today about honesty involves the honesty of self reflection. For me, this remains one of the core values of being an intellectual, an academic, a teacher or a parent. Here, self-reflective honesty means always reexamining one's actions in the most rigorous way possible. If a teacher gives a test on which a majority of the students don't do well, then there are a number of possible reflections: the students didn't study, the test was too difficult, or the teacher didn't prepare the students correctly for this exam. All or none of these may be true; however, I am suggesting that no one answer be automatic or habitual. Instead, I would encourage an intellectual honesty and open moment of self reflection that should lead to an understanding that is not conventional, but genuine.

The same is true for students. If the student reacts conventionally and concludes it's the teacher's responsibility, I would expect that before reaching that conclusion that the student would first honestly reflect on how he or she prepared for the exam. Administrators, trustees, and parents also need to be self-reflective in very honest ways when something doesn't necessarily occur in the way planned.

Each one of us needs to engage in honest self-reflection, which is the beginning of knowledge and success.