



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



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Thoughts for the Week

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This past Wednesday through Friday, I attended the Annual Conference for the Heads of School in New York, sponsored by our state association, NYS AIS. Our Head Conferences is the largest and most important conference for those of us who lead school in the state. Each year somewhere between one hundred and one hundred and twenty Heads of School gather to discuss, evaluate and plan for the future our of independent schools. We meet at the serene Mohonk Mountain House, which is known for its quiet and contemplative atmosphere, free of televisions, radio and most other distractions. We do, however, beginning last year, have cell service.

Each year, the conference committee, led by Barbara Swanson, an Associate Director at NYS AIS, put together a program based on suggestions from Heads, from reactions to other conferences and from what has developed in the world of independent schools. These conferences always help us understand how the future of our schools depends on the recognition that certain trends and ideas can have an impact on what we do and why we do it.

This year's conference is no different. On Wednesday, we began with a session on "Why Liberal Education Matters." In this session, Dr. Michael Roth, President of Wesleyan University, will address the issue and the debate, surrounding a broad-based liberal education. Dr. Roth was the keynote speaker, whose remarks set the tone for the entire conference.

Thursday sessions always proved to be very timely for our schools. We began with a session, conducted by David Orr, Counselor to the President of Oberlin College. Dr. Orr examined the potential gap between what we teach and what world we live or will live in for the future. Following this session, we an extraordinary session, conducted by a nineteen year old former independent school student, named Aija Mayrock, who has authored a fascinating book, *The Survival Gide to Bullying*. Ms Mayrock's session focused on advice to Heads who are faced with issues of bullying in our schools. Thursday concluded with several other workshops: "Cyber Security," "Risk Management" and "Technology, Policies and Employees."

On our last day of the conference, Friday, we focused on the idea of leadership in our schools: "From the Top Down: Head of School Leadership and Diversity Efforts." After these general sessions, we broke into smaller groups to address particular topics in these areas.

All in all, this proved to be a very productive three day conference.