



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



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"Cultivating Success in Every Child"

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Thoughts for the Week

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Over the past several months, I have attended a number of conferences for Heads of School; some of these conferences were at meetings and others were part of online streaming sessions. I thought that it might be helpful for me to share with you some of the books that were being discussed by conference leaders, who in the regular course of their professional lives keep abreast with the most recent educational developments.

Beyond the University by Michael Roth, President of Wesleyan University, explores the idea of the importance of liberal education in the lives of students. Roth takes issues with our society's preoccupation with education for jobs and focuses on education for life. In fact, Roth argues that liberal education may in fact be the most effective way to prepare for life in the modern world, in which job skills change quickly and dramatically, necessitating more of an ability to learn and adapt than a predetermined set of skills. He writes that "liberal education, as I use the term, refers to the combination of the philosophical and rhetorical traditions of how one learns as a

whole person." Learning as a whole person creates the foundation for success in our new world.

Another book, *Hope is an Imperative*, by David Orr, distinguished Professor of Environmental Studies and Politics at Oberlin College, raises many question about environmental issues and how our schools and universities should begin to build curriculum that goes beyond the traditional ecologically based courses. Orr thinks that our educational models should really include the idea of the human future and that curriculum should explore what the very nature of the human is, will or should be for our students. Interestingly, the first section of his book focuses on the role of language in developing an understanding of the environment and of the future. All human undertakings begin with language and the way in which language defines the world around us.

The final book that I would recommend to you is *How to Raise an Adult*, by Julie Lythcott-Haims, former dean of freshman at Stanford University. Lythcott-Haims' books emerges from the every-developing trend of 'over-parenting' that is beginning to affect colleges and universities. Her anecdotal style, including her confession of her own moments of 'over-parenting,' offers a series of examples of how to develop independence and initiative in our children. Some of her ideas include avoiding over-praising, allowing children to make mistakes and encouraging children to stand up for their own beliefs as a first step in raising self-sufficient adults. She writes, that "raising a kid to independent adulthood ...is a biological imperative and an awareness of the self in one's surroundings is an important life skill for a kid to develop."

All three of these books offer challenging viewpoints. While we may not agree with each and every point, we will certainly benefit intellectually and personally from engaging these ideas in active and lively debate. Our world changes every day, introducing us to challenges that we couldn't conceive of last month or last year. The skill we need to face and manage these challenges lies in our intellect and our ability to gather information, ideas and viewpoints that advance our own encounter with the future.