



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



Richard Marotta, Ph. D., Headmaster

Volume 93 Number: XXII

"Cultivating Success in Every Child"

Friday, March 11, 2016



Thoughts for the Week

By Richard Marotta, Ph.D., Headmaster



As we move deeper into our preparations for the NYS AIS visit in Fall 2016, I can't help but consider the self-study process and what it signifies to our school, or to any organization for that matter. The major part of this process, and indeed one of the goals, involves self-reflection and self-assessment. While we are familiar with these terms, and I have certainly written about them in the past, it is also important to recognize that these ideas of self-reflection and self-assessment go beyond simply being intellectual categories and evolve into categories upon which we are called to act.

To create a culture of self-reflection has been a goal for Garden School for the past several years, especially as we began to contemplate the reaccreditation visit. However, it seems to me that self-reflection is the essence of a school and its overall curriculum, which includes both learning within and without the classroom. Every aspect of our daily study, should involve active self-evaluation of what we do and why we do it. In very concrete terms, when we are solving a math problem in class, we should be evaluating the reasons why we take certain steps. When we talk about a character in a story, we need to reflect on our insights and their implications. The same is true for the academic disciplines as well as our social interactions.

Our curriculum and activities should reflect a context in which we evaluate what we think and do. If a child is writing a paper on the causes of a world war, then those 'facts' need to be self-reflective and genuine. Meaning that any serious evaluation of an historical moment needs to include a truthful amount of 'facing history and ourselves.' This honesty must be part of all that we do and think. Sometimes this involves critical thinking; sometimes it involves critical self-assessment.

What is most intriguing and exciting about self-reflection is that it frequently leads to growth and self-development. This is what we all desire in our lives and in our schools: to grow, develop and explore a vision of ourselves that we may not have been aware of until we engaged in the deep and honest process of self-reflection. Self-reflection is not a sign of self-doubt; it is a sign of self-affirmation.
