



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



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Thoughts for the Week

By Richard Marotta, Ph.D., Headmaster



Today Garden School students engaged in the first Character Education exercise. After viewing a short film, *The Science of Character*, students participated in a responsive writing exercise and a discussion of the idea of values and which values seem to be the most important in our daily lives. This morning's exercise was the first of what will be our year-long project on the idea of values that are both personal and social. The four core values are: Kindness, Honesty, Inclusiveness and Independence.

Although these are the key values for the year, our discussions of these ideas will expand and recognize that many values are intertwined with each other and help explain more about the core value. For example, kindness, which primarily concerns our relationships with others, does touch upon honesty (emotional honesty); it also relies on independence, i.e. the strength to resist group pressure, and also crosses with inclusiveness as a way of

demonstrating collective kindness. The point here is that our lives form a complex series of interactions that include multiple values that share segments of meaning with each other.

In his book, *The Road to Character*, David Brooks writes about the difference between resume virtues and eulogy virtues. Resume virtues are those qualities that work toward our economical and career success; these are our academic and business skills that allow for success in our world of work. Eulogy virtues are those qualities that come from within; these are the virtues that emanate from within and concern ideas such as kindness and decency; they are not necessarily linked to our world success; however, they form the core, the heart, of being a successful human being.

In 1977, Frank Outlaw wrote a wonderful piece:

Watch your thoughts, they become words;
Watch you words, they become actions;
Watch you actions, they become habits;
Watch you habits, they become character;
Watch you character, it becomes your destiny.

Outlaw captures the essence of a discussion that has been taking place for centuries. What is character? What is fate? The nineteenth century writer Novalis, once wrote, "Character is Fate."

Our goal remains to help our students and faculty engage in this process of reflecting on character, to ensure that all of our futures happen in the manner in which we direct them. If character is fate, then our responsibility is to develop our understanding of that character.