



GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Richard Marotta, Ph. D., Headmaster

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Thoughts for the week

By Richard Marotta, Ph.D., Headmaster



As the school year begins, and as we begin to settle into the learning process throughout all of our grade levels, another aspect of education begins slowly to emerge. Sometimes this development is subtle and at other times not so subtle. As we begin to examine the traditional areas of study—math-science-English, etc—we also begin to engage in the process of self-reflection.

Each day, students in their classes while engaging with the subject matter at hand, inevitably ask themselves about the relationship between that subject and their own lives and feelings. It is not unusual for a student to ask, “Why are we studying this?” The answers to this question can vary from the practical to the abstract; however, the fundamental, almost the embedded answer, is the same. We study these subjects because they help to explain our lives.

Whether we are explaining the physical aspect of our lives in biology, chemistry, physics, or the temporal nature of human life in history, or the philosophical dimension of our lives in literature, the ultimate focus is always the same. How do these subject explain who we are, what we want and where do we hope to go. These existential questions may not be apparent to a student who is studying for a bio test; yet, deep within the decision to study these areas, is the human desire to understand the nature of human life.

Self-reflection can be an individual act or it can be a social act. When we as individuals reflect on our own lives, we tend to look at our past experiences, our current status and our future hopes. We look at what we consider to be our identity (whatever that may be); we examine our relationships, our hopes and dreams. When we self-reflect as a social being, we examine the ability of our social structure to support our lives, our aspirations and ultimately come to understand more abstract (yet concrete) ideas, such as justice.

When a society examines its past, it is usually in the hope of understanding our actions, of evaluating and even passing a moral judgment on them. When the history curriculum, *Facing History and Ourselves*, was first developed, it was an attempt to look at history objectively and morally without any aspects of fantasy, embellishments or innocence.

Each day at Garden School, our faculty are charged with engaging our students with these acts of self-reflection and our teachers ask the questions that connect the subject matter with each student's identity. In the fullest sense, the act of learning, which seems to have taken hold in our earliest human ancestors, is focused on understanding human nature and the world around us. Ultimately, education is an act of collective self-reflection.



Councilman Dromm Officially Opens Early Childhood Center

We were honored and delighted to have NYC Councilman and Education Committee Chair, Danny Dromm, visit Garden School this week and officially open our new Early Childhood Center with a ribbon cutting ceremony. We are grateful to Councilman Dromm for all of his support in helping Garden School with this new addition to the school and to our Jackson heights community.

