



Garden School Newsletter



Richard Marotta, Ph. D., Headmaster

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“Cultivating Success in Every Child”

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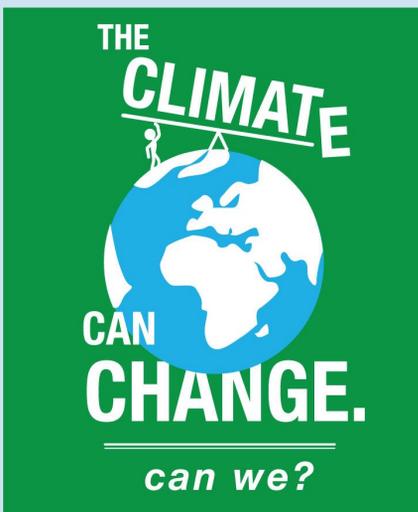
Thoughts for the Week

By: [Richard Marotta, Ph.D.](#),
Headmaster



This school year we have chosen Climate Change to be our school-wide educational theme. Having an annual theme allows our program and curriculum to galvanize around one particular idea that has educational and social significance and that will engage all of our student and teachers in a year-long conversation.

When we think about education, too often we think only of the idea that text books contain all that we need our children to know and that if they can repeat what they have studied, then they have learned something of importance. Of course there is a good deal of truth in the importance of learning what is contained in texts; however, that learning needs to connect the student’s mind to the reality of what is being studied. When we study history, we are studying details, ideas, trends and turning points in our lives. We need to be aware that history is not an abstraction but a hard reality about what human life has experienced. The same is true for science, math, language, literature and all of the other disciplines. While they frequently expose the student to abstract thinking, they all connect the student to the reality of human life. Science reflects the reality of the natural and physical world; math reveals the unseen but nevertheless actual relationships that govern our lives; literature exposes that inner working of our minds and hearts that drive so much of our lives. These areas of study do not remain abstract because they primarily engage in ideas, but they offer explanations as to the truth of human existence. Climate change has become one of the truths of human existence. Its impact on our lives can be seen during ordinary as well as extraordinary events. The shifting nature of weather has had a significant



impact on human life in terms of the loss of life and the economic costs that have been associated with major climatic events, such as hurricanes. Lifestyles can easily be altered by permanent shifts in the our climate; our oceans have been steadily warming over the last decades which has a serious impact on costly areas, weather conditions and wildlife. The permanence of pollutions has torn through our natural environment like a cyclone, learning parts of our oceans choking with plastic refuse. Our planet exists for us and for our future generations; we have an obligation to care for it just as we care for our children. Having students learn about climate change and the importance of conservation, recycling and reducing our carbon footprint means that they can develop an awareness of their and our responsibility to the environment. When the Italian government banned plastic water bottles in schools and moved toward using pitchers of water instead, they eliminated 60 million plastic bottles per year! By our calculations, in our school, we used about 24,000 plastic bottles per year. Our goal is to eliminate that use and make our ----->

contribution to steadily reducing the use of items that hurt our environment.

Connecting education to the reality of our world means that ideas become real; they become concrete embodiments of the conditions in our world. The great Italian film director, once said the ‘visionaries are the only truly realists.’ I believe this to be true. Schools, teachers, students and parents need to become visionaries. Only the visionaries who act in a way that recognizes the reality of human life, of environmental conditions and of moral realities will make our lives more beautiful, more compassionate and more sustainable. Today many of our students and their families participated in a mass demonstration in support of recognizing climate change and in demanding that all of us, individuals and all forms of institutions act to reduce the conditions that provoke negative changes in our environment. They are taking their education outside of the classroom and into the broader context of our community and our world. They have taken the first steps in becoming visionaries. Keep walking!



Mr. Roselli’s students visit the Queens Public Library in Flushing to register for library cards.



It’s not too early to purchase [an advanced copy](#) of the Garden School Yearbook.



Robert in First Grade wears a shirt that teaches us to be aware of our fragile earth.

Dates to Remember

- **Monday, September 23rd — Upper Division Photo Day**
- **Tuesday, September 24th — Lower Division Photo Day**
- **Monday & Tuesday, Sept. 30 & Oct. 1 (School Closed for Rosh Hashanah)**
- **September 24th - 27th — Mystic Seaport Trip (7th and 8th Grades)**
- **October 2nd - 4th — Camp Herrlich Trip for Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Grades**
- **Thursday, October 17th — International Night (From 4-7 PM in the gym)**

Teaching the Golden Rule: Treat Others the Same Way You Want to Be Treated by [Kristen Ahfeld](#) (First Grade Lead Teacher)

Social skills are critical in helping students to succeed socially, emotionally and academically. Good social skills are behaviors that will help students form healthy relationships with their peers. In class we are working on the 'golden rule' of treating others as you wish to be treated. The students are learning to make sense of our new environment and the world around them. It is our goal this year to provide opportunities for students to work together to become caring citizens of our class, school and world.

In class we read aloud the book ['Have You Filled a Bucket?'](#) by Carol McCloud, which teaches lessons about giving, sharing, and caring. The students have been practicing filling each other's buckets by giving compliments and being kind to each other. We continue to work on fostering positive interactions among our classmates and the broader Garden School community.



Prem S. and Syllas S. work together as a team and get ready for swim time at the Garden School pool area.

“Maps MAPS Maps” by [Rachel Vidal](#) - Third Grade Lead

Teacher

In Social Studies, the third graders have begun the year learning about maps. We’ve discussed the different types of maps and what they are used for. The children have been learning about absolute location, using latitude and longitude to locate places on a map. They’ve enjoyed using the coordinate system on country and world maps to locate specific cities. The third graders had to find Garden School’s coordinates using a GPS locator online – which happen to be 40 degrees, 45 minutes North and 73 degrees, 53 minutes West. This is the absolute location of our school!

Learning about maps helps children begin to understand what is going on in the spaces around them. Map skills contribute to the skill of reading images, as well. This means that a student is comprehending an image, rather than just observing it. Furthermore, learning about where different cities and countries are located will help children gain a larger world view than what they see in their daily lives.

This week the children have created their own map of a fantasy community. They invented fictitious towns and created elaborate maps with schools, water parks, libraries, airports, and more! The kids named their towns according to what could be found on their maps. Some of the names the children came up with are “Splish Splash Town,” “Hillyview,” and “Russian Military Town.” The third graders had to include a key with at least five symbols for their maps. Each map is unique and thoughtfully constructed. The maps are hanging in our classroom. Stop by and take a look. They are quite impressive!



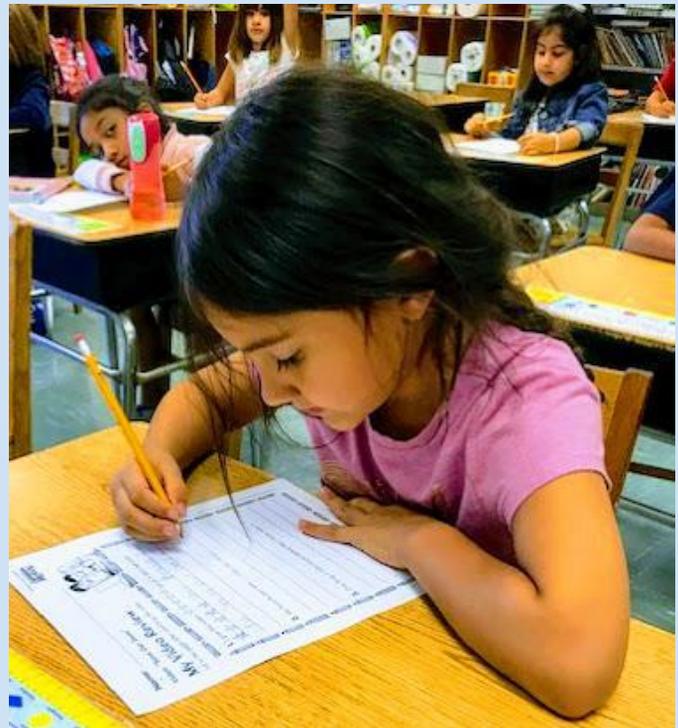
Julian R. and Zoe C. in Third Grade present their original cartographic masterpieces: Welcome to Swellview and Vancocoville.



The second graders have gotten off to a great start this year. Our social studies conversations have focused on the environment and our community by [Paula James](#) - Second Grade Lead Teacher

We have been focusing on our school community in particular. The students have been brainstorming ways we can help take care of our school environment. We talked about the importance of recycling paper and plastic bottles. We shared ideas about how we can reduce the amount of plastic bottles we use, and also took time to watch a short Scholastic News video about the problem we have with plastic straws. The children talked about all the pollution in the water, and how it was unsafe for animals too. The students voted on whether they thought paper straws were a good solution, and our discussions on environmental topics will continue throughout the school year.

The second graders also have taken a step to improve and beautify our community by planting flowers in the front of the school. Ms. Bruzzese joined us on Friday, and we were able to add to the beautiful flowering plants in the front garden. Each child was invited to dig and plant their own chrysanthemum. We will spend a short amount of our social studies time observing and caring for our lovely plants in the coming weeks.



Second Graders Maheen and Lety brainstorm ideas to help take care of the environment.



<--- Chuck Berry is Rock and Roll's great musical legend. Johnny B. Goode agrees.

Seventh Grade music class starts off the year breaking down and analyzing Popular music and Rock and Roll. The gist: music sound, and volume!

“Pop Music Jam Session” by [Tom Heineman](#) (Fine Arts Lead Teacher)

Music has a structure: sound, and volume, and music is organized around aspects of time, melody, and harmony. An understanding of musical concepts helps us talk about music as perceptive listeners. We then know what to listen for in music, to distinguish between and reflect upon specific aspects of what we hear, and to be able to intelligently speak and write about the sounds we hear. I've been extending this reach to Japanese musical traditions. We started with history. Then we thought about the written language of Japanese. Students wrote over a dozen characters in the Japanese language (which are representational symbols that originated near the Yellow River in China). Students were able to recognize some of the characters as they still resemble the things they symbolize (such as 木, which means 'tree'). For most of the students, it's a different way of thinking about language. When we learn about more recent Japanese musical developments and students are handed a set of lyrics in Japanese, I enjoy seeing them come to the realization that they know the meaning of several of the characters



馬 horse

In class we're also thinking about the shape of Japanese characters and how they visually represent what the characters mean.

Seventh and Eighth Graders Do a Pablo Picasso-related Climate Change Project by [Chris Zelles](#) (Art Teacher)

We are currently working on a Pablo Picasso inspired self-portrait. For this project students learned of Picasso's biography and the affects his art work have had on the world. Students were then given iPads where they researched various Picasso portraits, borrowing different elements to implement into their own portrait. The creativity on display has been excellent and end results should be fantastic.

Next week, students will be doing a Climate Change awareness PSA in a Picasso style. To prepare for this students will be learning about Picasso most famous painting, Guernica. I want the students to understand how this painting tells a powerful anti war story through symbolism, and then bring those elements into Climate Change awareness painting.

“What is a function?” by [Lauren Little](#) (Math Teacher)

11th Grade: A function relates an input value to an output, and more specifically it relates each input value to exactly one output. The first couple of weeks have been all about functions, where are they defined, how do we evaluate them, how can we combine functions? The students' understanding of functions will be important throughout the entire year as functions will continue to come up, not just this year but in calculus as well.

12th Grade: Sometimes we can't evaluate a function at a certain value of x because the function isn't defined, but we can say something about what value the function is approaching when x is near that value. This is called finding the limit, and it's what calculus students have been working on since the beginning of the school year. Limits are an integral part of calculus (pun intended!) and will factor into a lot of the coming year.

Mandarin Chinese in Nursery by [Kelly Yang](#) (World Languages Teacher)

Our early childhood children are learning different numbers and colors in Mandarin Chinese. The children go to the carpet and we sit and sing a rap number song in Chinese. As we sing the song, the children see the numbers in Chinese and hear me lead the song. The nursery children are working on their fine motor skills by showing the shape of the number using their hands. In this way, students are interacting with teachers and classmates by engaging in activities related to numbers and word building.

Tenth Grade English Is Off to an Engrossing Start to the School Year by [Amira Esposito](#) (English Teacher)

We are currently delving into “Night,” one of the books assigned for summer reading, a riveting and challenging memoir of the Holocaust written from the perspective of Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor. As a class, we have gone over the background history of the scapegoating of Jews (and other marginalized groups) in Europe before the 20th century, World War I, its aftermath, and the ensuing decades and how the history led to events that occurred before and during the Holocaust. We have since begun examining the memoir in depth, discussing such elements and questions as why people find comfort in the status quo, why people cling to what seems normal in the face of the unknown, and how people (such as Wiesel) might manage to find slivers of optimism and hope in the face of a seemingly hopeless situation (such as the one faced by Wiesel in WWII). The tenth grade is already proving itself to be an incredibly inquisitive, creative, and collaborative class and I look forward to hearing them share more of their great ideas through discussion — and seeing their great ideas in writing — as we continue the school year.



Flowers, Planting, Kids in Bright Color

In the Garden at Garden by [Paula James](#) (Second Grade Lead Teacher)



Buiar tends to the garden. Ms. Bruzzese came to help too! Look at that flower grow! Wow!

Mr. Vallario's Ninth Graders Learn to Shift their Writer's Voice When Writing a Literary Analysis

Students began work on a literary analysis on either one of the Summer reading books we read: William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. At Garden School we prepare students for college, so this process shapes their academic voices and their future college courses. We begin with the basics:

Rules for Literary Analysis

1. Introduce the author and text in a single topic sentence.
2. Summarize the text in two sentences.
3. Announce the theme and how it is important to the author and text.
4. Include a thesis statement with your theme, revealing to the reader the precise analysis of the text through the author.

These rules are a guide to use for the three drafts they will complete.

We read James Paul Gee's linguistic essay "What is Literacy?" Gee introduces us to literary terms such as discourse, acquisition, enculturation, and learning. They then applied this new knowledge to themselves and are in the process of drafting their literacy narratives, which take them through their earliest memories at home (primary discourse), as they record how they communicated in their first, second, and sometimes third languages through modeling. Communication includes how we develop, think and participate in customs and mannerisms unique to our households. These narratives showcase their voices, which will grow over the course of this school year.

The next section that they are writing is a secondary discourse of their choosing, whether it be the first time they kicked a soccer ball and how they became a member of a team and what that looks and feels like today, or the world of an online community, the possibilities are endless.

We are excited to begin Lorraine Hansberry's *The Raisin in the Sun* which is a day in the life of a low-income family who receives an insurance check from their patriarch. Hansberry's Broadway success was the first a woman of color, showcased her story and the south side of Chicago. The students are analyzing and discussing as we read in-class and at home.



"4, 5, 6 Rocks it during Pool Time" by [Michelle Ferreira](#)

Hi and welcome to all. We are starting the year by going to the pool until the weather changes and they have to be inside. In the pool we do go over the rules and what is required of them whether it's where you will be changing (girls or boys locker), how to behave at the pool, what's allowed and what's not allowed and even random buddy checks for safety. The students love the pool and use it as much as they can before it closes down for the season. After that we are starting our first unit we will be doing volleyball but a modify version of it for these grades we are playing Newcomb. It's a different version of volleyball which it basically focusing on throwing and catching but we do incorporate bumping, spiking, setting and serving if they can. The first two weeks we do explain the breakdown of each of the skills to them and they will be practicing it on their own and then with a partner in class while Mr. D and Ms. Ferreira come around to help them with any adjustments they may need. We can't wait to see what this unit will bring out and see the many talented students we have while playing this unit.