

Greek Language Education Initiative

Report on the Meeting of September 29, 2012, 2:00-5:00 p.m.

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Overview

Purpose

To introduce the proposed bylaws of the Greek Education Initiative of the Greater Washington D.C. area, discuss issues of high priority to be addressed by the subcommittees, and receive feedback. Discuss next steps and the formation of the Greek Education Regional Committee, which will spearhead the initiative starting in January 2013.

Meeting Participants

Leaders of Greek Schools, representatives from the area Churches, parents, Education Office Embassy staff, Prometheus Board members, and invited guests with interest and involvement in the topic.

Meeting Summary

A group of 30 stakeholders from the area Greek Schools gathered in the Frosene ballroom of the St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral for this important meeting (see Appendix I for list of attendees). The meeting began with a prayer offered by Father Steven Zorzos and introduction of participants. Ms. Maria Makedon, director of the Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in New York addressed the meeting. Mr. Lefteris Karmiris, president of the Hellenic Society Prometheus, welcomed the participants. Mrs. Tessie Catsambas facilitated the proceedings. The proposed bylaws were discussed and the participants provided useful feedback. Next, small break out groups were formed to discuss and evaluate the proposed initial priority topics.

The meeting concluded with a request to all schools to nominate their representatives to the Greek Education Regional Committee by the end of December.

Introductions and Meeting Expectations

As with the previous meeting held on Saturday, March 18, 2012, participants demonstrated continued interest in this initiative and brought their enthusiasm and talents to the discussion: knowledge, years of teaching experience, educational skills, passion for Greek language education, and a spirit of voluntarism and collaboration. The meeting expectations were the creation of a forum for open exchange of ideas and a long term, sustainable, and fruitful collaboration among the Washington Area Greek Schools and the Greek community at large.

Ms. Maria Makedon of the Archdiocese in her brief presentation conveyed Bishop Antonios' blessings and wishes for success and explained her efforts over many years in support of the Greek Language Education. She commented that the issues identified by our group were very familiar to her and are common concerns among many Greek American communities. Ms. Makedon also presented details of the "Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek" which is administered to the students of the Greek Schools in the New York Metropolitan Area. Currently, the Greek Schools in the Washington Metropolitan Area participate in the "Ellinomatheia tests" administered annually by the Center for Greek Studies in Greece. Finally, Ms. Makedon expressed her wish to have been informed by the organizers of this initiative at a much earlier stage of this effort. Responding to this comment, Mr. Karmiris stated that unfortunately the organizing committee was not aware of such protocol requirement. Overall, Ms. Makedon's presence and her presentation proved to be very informative and useful.

Discussion of the Greek Education Regional Committee Bylaws

As per the announcement of this meeting, the purpose of the Greek Education Initiative is ***"To provide a structure for Washington Area Greek schools for convening, information sharing, discussions, collaboration, and action on common issues related to Greek education"*** through the establishment of a Regional Education Committee. The draft bylaws were distributed at the meeting for evaluation by the group participants. Thoughtful comments were received and were incorporated in the attached revised bylaws (see Appendix II).

Discussion of Initial Priority Topics

Based on the conclusions of the March 2012 workshop (and subsequent developments since that meeting) a consensus was reached to establish a Greek Education Regional Committee for the Washington Area Greek schools.

The following priority topics were identified and presented for discussion at the meeting:

Initial Priorities:

1. Recognition from the Greek Ministry of Education
2. Promoting Ellinomatheia

3. Enhancing the demand for Greek language education
4. Supporting teacher training
5. Streamlined curriculum, books, modern technologies and methods
6. Sharing resources and communication

The participants formed break out groups to discuss the above topics in detail. The sections below summarize the reports back from two of the groups; reports from the remaining groups are not available.

Recognition of Greek Schools by the Greek Ministry of Education

The Issue: According to Law 4027 published in the Greek Federal Register on November 4, 2011, the Greek Ministry of Education has increased significantly the hurdles for recognition of Greek Schools outside of Greece. As a result, existing and new Greek School program recognitions in the U.S. may be in jeopardy. All Area schools have expressed interest in better understanding of the issue of school recognition and are seeking clarity from the Education Office.

At the meeting, Mr. Marmarinos and the staff of the Education Office provided helpful information about this new law and other directives which cover the recognition of Greek Schools by the Ministry of Education. Due to the limited time, the matter was not sufficiently dealt with at the meeting and the schools requested additional clarifications and if necessary a separate meeting with the Education Office focused on this issue.

Teacher Training (report provided in Greek)

Συζητήθηκε η ανάγκη παροχής επιμορφωτικών σεμιναρίων στο διδακτικό προσωπικό των σχολείων γύρω από θέματα σύγχρονης μεθοδολογίας, εξάσκηση σε διαδραστικά μέσα διδασκαλίας κλπ.

Για την επιτυχία αυτών των σεμιναρίων θα χρειαστεί να εξεταστούν και να καθοριστούν οι συγκεκριμένες ανάγκες του διδακτικού προσωπικού ώστε το πρόγραμμα να ανταποκρίνεται στις ανάγκες αυτές. Η συνεργασία των δασκάλων είναι απαραίτητη προϋπόθεση για την επιτυχία του προγράμματος.

Οι κυρίες Κοσμίδου και Πετροπούλου εξέφρασαν τη θέληση να πρωτοστατήσουν στην εκπόνηση του προγράμματος. Αρχικός στόχος είναι δύο επιμορφωτικά σεμινάρια και δύο συναντήσεις μεταξύ εκπροσώπων ΓΣΕ κατά τη διάρκεια του σχολικού έτους 2012-2013.

Οι κυρίες Δρόσου και Κοσμίδου συμμετέχουν από τον Ιούνιο του 2012 στο πρόγραμμα "Διαδρομές" του Κέντρου Ελληνικής Γλώσσας. Η πρόθεση και επιθυμία τους είναι να μεταφέρουν στους συναδέλφους των Ελληνικών σχολείων τις γνώσεις που αποκομίζουν από το πρόγραμμα σε συνδυασμό με την εκπαιδευτική τους πείρα.

Η κ. Πετροπούλου, εξέφρασε τη επιθυμία να αμοιφθεί το διδακτικό προσωπικό που συμμετέχει σε επιμορφωτικά σεμινάρια. Θέμα προς περαιτέρω συζήτηση και απόφαση είναι κατά ποσον το διδακτικό προσωπικό θα αμοιβεται για να παρακολουθήσει τα σεμινάρια.

Next Steps

1. Each School and each Pre-School to assign its representatives (up to three) to the Greek Education Regional Committee by December 24th, 2012 (see membership section of the attached bylaws). The nominated names should be sent to Mrs. Elina Karmokolias ekarmokolias@yahoo.com.
2. The Greek Education Regional Committee will be formally established at an upcoming meeting in January 2013 (additional information will be provided shortly, but tentative date is Saturday, January 19th.) The Regional Committee would endorse the bylaws at that meeting.

Thanks to Tessie Catsambas and Dimitri Karmiris.

Mrs. Tessie Catsambas has volunteered to be the professional facilitator of this discussion. Tessie is a mother of two girls who recently went through the Greek Program at St. George. She was Chairperson of the School Board Committee and under this capacity she worked closely with the teachers to support the school. So, she brings very useful and relevant experience on this topic. Tessie is also a professional facilitator and she was the facilitator for both meetings/workshops.

Assisting Tessie is **Mr. Dimitri Karmiris** who is a graduate of St. George Greek School and speaks Greek fluently. Dimitri volunteered his time to assist Tessie in her facilitation. We are very thankful to both Tessie and Dimitri for their willingness to help.

Prometheas Greek Education Committee:

Mr. Tony Alexis, Mrs. Barbara Kakaes, Mr. Lefteris Karmiris, Mrs. Elina Karmokolias,
Dr. Nikos Kastanos, Dr. Elisavet Vrahopoulou

Attachments:

Appendix I: List of Participants

Appendix II: Revised bylaws

APPENDIX I

List of Meeting Participants, September 29, 2012

Name	Identification
The H. S. Prometheas	
Lefteris Karmiris	President
Christos Loukaitis	Vice President
Elina Karmokolias	Secretary
Frank Kitzantides	Treasurer
Tony Alexis	Member, Education Committee
Nikos Kastanos	Member, Education Committee
Elisavet Vrahopoulou	Member, Education Committee
Tessie Catsambas	Meeting Facilitator
Dimitri Karmiris	Assistant Facilitator
Greek Embassy: Education Office	
Antonios Marmarinos	GEE0, Director
Katerina Drosou	GEE0, Staff
Mahy Kosmidou	GEE0, Staff
St. Sophia School	
Fr. Steven Zorzos	St. Sophia Priest
Andriana Kalapothakos	School Coordinator
Fotini Economides	School Liaison
Alexander Alexandrou	School Director for Adults
St. George School	
Lena Petropoulos	School Director
Katerina Papaioannou	Ex SB Chairperson/parent
Marilena Michalas	Preschoolers Director
St. Katherine School	
Sophia Tsangali	School Director
Chris Christou	Paideia Preschool
Hellenic School	
George Philipopoulos	School President
Myrofora Anastasi-Frantzis	School Director
Roula Gioldasi	Teacher
Evangelia Dimitropoulou	Teacher
Gennisi Tou Kyriou School	
Athanasia Dacey	School Director
Sts. Constantine & Helen School	
Ifigenia Kambanis	School Liaison
Other	
Maria Makedon	Dir. Archdiocesan Education Office
Pandelis Psoras	Teacher
Mary Pittas	Greek Program at MD University

APPENDIX II
Washington Area
Greek Education Regional Committee

Purpose

To provide a structure for Washington Area Greek schools for convening, information sharing, discussions, collaboration, and action on common issues related to Greek education.

Background

Based on meetings that took place in March and September 2012 with representatives from all Area Greek schools, Greek Orthodox churches, parish and parent groups, the Greek Embassy Education Office and Prometheas, a consensus was reached to establish a Greek Education Regional Committee for the Washington Area Greek schools.

Implementation of the Committee's decisions or recommendations is ultimately left up to each of the schools. The purpose of this initiative is to benefit each school through exchange of information and ideas

Membership

The Greek Education Regional Committee for the Washington Area Greek schools will consist of representatives from the Greek Schools, the Greek Embassy, Prometheas, and the wider community as follows:

1. Each Greek School and each Preschool will provide one of each from the following stakeholders:
 - The Director or an educator appointed by the Director
 - A parent appointed by the School Board
 - A person serving as liaison between the School Board and the Parish Council or serving on the School Board
2. One person from the Greek Embassy Office of Education, non voting
3. One person from Prometheas, non voting
4. An additional six members at large by invitation because of special skills and talents they may bring to the work of the Regional Committee, non voting

Voting: One vote per school (regardless whether they have a preschool program or not)

It will be a goal of the Committee and subcommittees that most issues will be resolved by consensus.

Upon formation of the Greek Education Regional Committee, an Executive Committee shall be formed to include a president, a vice president, a secretary and a treasurer. All members of the Executive Committee will be appointed by the Regional Committee for a two-year term starting in September of each school year, with the 2012/2013 school year being the first.

Subcommittees will be formed with the goal to address the different initiatives and propose recommendations to the Greek Education Regional Committee. Each Subcommittee shall have a Chair or co-Chairs and a secretary. Membership will be open to all school parents, educators, and parish communities.

Frequency and Location of Meetings

The Greek Education Regional Committee will meet once in each calendar quarter. The meeting location will rotate among Schools. Dates and times of meetings will be communicated through the Area Schools and the Prometheas website and newsletters; the meetings will be open to anyone interested.

Subcommittees will determine their own meeting schedule, depending on the goals and milestones of the Subcommittee's initiative (possibly once a month.)

Secretariat

Prometheas will be the secretariat for the first year. This support will give the Committee time to decide about how it wants to run itself.

Initial Priorities

The following topics will be addressed by the Subcommittees:

1. Recognition by Greek Ministry of Education
2. Streamlined curriculum, books; Modern technologies and methods
3. Enhancing the demand for Greek language education
4. Supporting teacher training
5. Promoting Ellinomatheia
6. Sharing resources and communication

The Greater Washington Area Greek Education Regional Committee will continue to set priorities and create Subcommittees to investigate topics of mutual interest among the Schools and make recommendations or come up with its own topics and priorities, as it deems necessary.

In summary, the Greek Education initiative is built on collaboration and mutual support among area schools. Important issues are prioritized and addressed through the work of the Greater Washington Greek Education Regional Committee and associated Subcommittees.