



### Message from the President

I am eager to share with you that, albeit the challenges this year, we have had a successful beginning. We started school online September 8-11 and then went on to face-to-face teaching and learning on September 14th. Beginning October 9th we were back to online teaching and learning for MS/Academy and on the 16th with ES. This decision abides by



the safety and security protocols of the government, but also ensures that our requirements, as defined by Middle States Association (MSA), including the number of instructional days are adhered to. The student's resilience has been incredible as they adjust to continuous changes and parent support has been tremendous in helping navigate the online platform, particularly for the younger grades.

The leadership team has been positioned to promote the school Mission and Vision daily, while ensuring that instruction is both optimal and there is continuous movement towards completion of the required work. Along with our administrators and team of Division Chairs and Department Coordinators, we continue to move forward on the Sustaining Excellence trajectory for our reaccreditation. Via our school-wide Action Research processes aimed at securing the next accreditation, ACS Athens will continue to ensure reflective practitioners, who strive for best practice approaches to teaching and optimal student outcomes.

Thank you to all those who have joined our parent meetings, we appreciate the feedback and always take your suggestions into consideration, as we pivot and tweak programs and processes. With this newsletter I would like to share with you just some of the wonderful things taking place.

Wishing you safety and health

Peggy Pelonis, Ed.D.  
President

### Message from the Board Chairperson

On behalf of the ACS Athens Board of Trustees, I welcome you to the 2020-2021 academic year. The ACS Athens administration and staff began the year in a "different" way with virtual classes for the first week of school and on September 14th students were welcomed to the campus for face to face teaching and learning. This school year is and will be different in many ways, but I am happy to see that teaching and learning is taking place, that our students are happy and cooperating with all the parameters put in place for their safety and the safety of the entire community.

Given the circumstances this year and in response to occasional questions from the parent community, I would like to provide some information about the Board of Trustees and our role as regards the school. The BoT is comprised of 18 members, 6 of whom are US-based Trustees. An Executive Committee consisting of seven Trustees is authorized by the full Board to conduct business on a more regular basis between the three full Board meetings.

The scope, purpose and role of the Board of Trustees have fiduciary responsibilities on behalf of ACS Athens. Our role is to advance the mission of ACS Athens, set policy and direction and work with the ACS Athens President. Further to this, the BoT works to ensure the financial viability of this institution, including fundraising in order to continue providing educational excellence for our student population. The management of the school lies with the President and her leadership team. The BoT does not represent any particular body or voice. Rather, we are responsible for strategic planning that will ensure the future of the school.

For any questions regarding management and daily operations of the school please refer to the ACS Athens President or individual school principal.

Suheil Sabbagh  
Chairperson, ACS Athens Board of Trustees

## News & Events

### Enrollment

ACS Athens has reached an all time high in terms of enrollment. As of October 29, 2020 there are 1,087 students enrolled at the school. Clearly ACS Athens has enhanced its already stellar reputation, with last year's online practice and by maintaining high academic standards and citizenship.

### Elementary School Math Studio

The new Elementary School Math Studio is in place. The Math Studio Teacher has been collaborating with homeroom teachers from grade 1-5 and supporting student needs in small groups or one-on-one basis.

### ESL/EFL

The ESL/EFL programs have been significantly expanded, particularly in the Elementary School. The structure and content of the program will provide students with the support necessary to achieve English proficiency quickly. The program's success over the years is due to a unique design that supports students in achieving language proficiency in 3-4 years as opposed to the 7 years necessary as indicated by the research data.

### Literacy Specialist

A Literacy Coordinator has been appointed JK-6 to work with teachers on improving overall literacy (including grammar, phonics and writing). The specialist is highly qualified and holds degrees from Columbia University and Vanderbilt University USA and has worked in the USA in similar positions. The JK-6 Literacy Coordinator is closely working with each grade level, both teachers and students, and positively impacting literacy skills through all levels.

## AP/IB Results

	May 2018	May 2019	May 2020
IB Diplomas Awarded	43/44	43/43	50/50
Average Diploma Score	36	35,91	36.9
Medium	35	37	37
Highest Score	44	43	43
Lowest Score	29	26	28
Scores above 30	97%	93%	98%
Scores above 40	19%	18,6%	27%

Despite the tumultuous year, and the cancellation of IB exams, our student results solidified their success via their academic performance which was excellent overall. Faculty delivered curriculum effectively ensuring academic success despite the challenges. Faculty's commitment and hard work materialized in these final results.

Students attending the ACS Athens AP Calculus AB class had an average score of 4.0/5 and the average in calculus BC was a 5. Most universities provide credit for scores of 4 and above, while other universities accept scores of 3 and above. For the 2019-2020 academic year 68% of the students taking AP exams scored 4 and above and 37% scored 5 with an average of 3.98 (out of 5) with lots of 5's in calculus AB, calculus BC, Physics 1, Statistics, Spanish and German.

## Media Literacy

A Media Literacy framework is being developed for all grades and subjects. Piloting this year in the Academy, and later in Middle School and Elementary, teachers will utilize the best resources on Media Literacy, to equip students with the necessary skills as they transform into critical consumers of media messages. A task force is formulating standards and benchmarks of an academically solid and meaningful plan. The Media Literacy framework will also be showcased at the upcoming Accreditation process.

## Assessment Coordinator

A qualified Assessment Coordinator has been assigned to assist and guide faculty in best aligning curriculum with assessments. The Assessment Coordinator has been a faculty member at ACS Athens for more than a decade, teaching sciences and coordinating the ES science lab.

## Artificial Intelligence

An Artificial Intelligence curriculum K-12 is in process. In addition to the theoretical background students will achieve, there will also be an AI lab allowing students to put theory into practice

## ACS Athens Virtual

Since September 2019, more than 73 ACS Athens students have enrolled in the 17 fully Virtual courses developed and taught through the ACS Athens Virtual Moodle platform. All ACS Athens Virtual courses are listed in the Program of Studies. The course selection has been expanded to include the Greek Language and Culture program with 5 credit courses available to our students, the English Language Acquisition (ELA) program with 4 courses for those who learn English as second or third language. Lastly, last summer we introduced the Virtual IB Preparation Courses offered through the Summer Learning Enhancement program of the IIC.

## United Nations Day Celebration

The UN Day Celebration has been a tradition in our Middle School and has worked as one of our Service projects. The Global Goals for Sustainable Development were established by the U.N. at a historic Summit in September 2015. We commemorate this day with our students getting assigned a Global Goal and via their lessons, they brainstorm on how to create a service project that meets their goals. We are excited to continue this work in our advisory classes this year.

## Two New Courses at the Academy

We're very excited about two new courses that were added this year in the Academy, both of which have attracted a great deal of interest and highlight the innovative programs of ACS Athens electives available for students:

**Media Literacy, Communications, and Production**

<https://tinyurl.com/y222v4ye>

**Print Publications 1 & 2**

<https://tinyurl.com/yys7xh8>

## ACS Athens PTO

The ACS Athens PTO continues to Connect, Support and Inform as we move to online schooling. Please connect and share your news with us on our fb Community Share Page <https://bit.ly/2K8HjLv> We offer support through our monthly Parent and Principal's virtual meetings <https://sites.google.com/acs.gr/acs-athens-ptoweb-site/home> and we keep you informed with our monthly newsletter [https://www.acs.gr/parents\\_families\\_pto\\_monthly\\_newsletter/](https://www.acs.gr/parents_families_pto_monthly_newsletter/) We look forward to hearing your feedback at [pto@acs.gr](mailto:pto@acs.gr) and seeing you online.

## Halloween Celebration in the Middle School

To incorporate more fun within the school, since we couldn't have the Halloween Carnival due to COVID, the MS Principal set aside time for students to become creative with Halloween. Each advisory was supplied with decorations and paper to create an elaborately decorated DOOR that was displayed the whole week before Halloween. The students were encouraged to just be 'kids' and dress up in costumes on Friday, Oct. 30.

## College Acceptances

We are very proud of our student accomplishments and faculty support towards achieving our college/university admissions goal. Below are some of the prestigious schools that our students are now attending: United States: Arizona State University, Barnard College, Berkley College of Music, Boston College, Boston University, New York University, Northeastern University, Rollins College, Tufts University, University of California Berkley, University of California, Los Angeles, University of Delaware, University of LaVerne, Washington State University and more.

United Kingdom: City, University of London, Durham University, Imperial College, King's College London, Oxford Brookes University, Plymouth College of Art, Queen Mary University of London, Queen's University Belfast, University College London, University of Bath, University of Bristol, University of Edinburgh, University of Essex, University of Nottingham, University of Surrey, University of Sussex, and more.

Other Countries: American College of Greece (Deree), American University of Paris, France, Bocconi University, Italy, Brock University, Canada, Eindhoven University of Technology, Netherlands, Leiden University, Netherlands, Les Roches, Switzerland, Royal Academy of Art, Netherlands, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, University of Nicosia, Cyprus, University of Ottawa, Canada, University of Toronto, Canada, and more.

For the entire list of university acceptances, access the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yf7wvm8b> Congratulations to two of our student athletes for being accepted to Stanford University and Western Michigan University with full athletic scholarships.

## Celebration of the 2020 US Presidential Elections

In celebration of the 2020 US presidential elections, the 10th grade American Studies Combo classes hosted a series of debates and discussions to showcase the political platforms for the November election. The videos were shared with other classes, including the eighth grade American studies classes, so that other students can be more informed about the US election process. The Division of Humanities hosted a school-wide ACS Athens Mock Presidential Election on November 3. All students had the opportunity to vote electronically, and the ACS Athens ballot totals were compared with those of other states in United States as well as the nation as a whole. We hope to widen the awareness of students about the American political system and to increase their knowledge of the political platforms included within the American political spectrum.



## The ACS Athens Academy Resilience Award

The office of the Academy Principal is proud to announce a new award that will be presented to 1-2 students from each grade each month: The ACS Athens Academy Resilience Award. Students who demonstrate outstanding resilience and a growth mindset by displaying progress in one of the following areas: a) confidence and focus on positive actions related to what is within one's locus of control, b) demonstrating adaptability and optimism, c) supporting others' resilience through strong relationships or showing a sense of community, d) demonstrating a healthy and balanced lifestyle that supports "bouncing back" when things get tough, e) Living a sense of purposefulness with a focus on goals that inspire self and others.

## Facilities

The Annex building is coming to completion as one of the strongest structures on campus. Classrooms are fully functional. The surrounding playgrounds will be renovated next. Additionally, the school analog phone system is changing to digital. Also, new network equipment and classroom/outdoor furniture have been purchased.

“Opportunities to find deeper powers within ourselves come when life seems most challenging”  
Joseph Campbell

## Significant Improvements on Campus

In order to ensure the proper functioning of classes, outdoor spaces and other areas on campus in light of the latest restrictions, we have purchased the following:

- Individual desks and chairs for ES
- A significant number of chairs and tables for the outdoors
- Heavy professional umbrellas to provide shaded areas on campus
- Renovated

the waiting area on the second floor of the Administration Building

- Other shaded structures were purchased to ensure that students are dry when it rains.

## Additional virtual learning support and upgraded areas of our IT infrastructure:

- BigBlueButton - Cloud Servers: we have upgraded our online teaching platform for Academy, Middle School and Elementary School. This platform is used to host and support our synchronous teaching with Moodle.
- Seesaw Cloud Service Elementary School Digital Portfolio: This platform is an integral part of our teaching model used to manage student class work and homework and to provide timely feedback to students and parents through sharing drawings, word or PDF documents, videos, photos, and other links.
- Media Studio Computer Upgrades: used for school productions and media class projects
- Academy Network Rack Restructured and Replaced
- Fortinet upgraded our backup line from 70mbps to 350mbps: this guarantees redundancy of our internet connection in case primary line goes down. (Went down 3 times in the past 6 months).

## Generous Donations

We would like to thank our many supporters for their generous donations as follows:

- Grant to purchase COVID-19 supplies - Office of Overseas School
- Majority funding for a new digitized phone system - Danaos
- Grant for COVID-19 supplies - Abbvie Pharmaceuticals
- Furniture in administration waiting area - IKEA
- Athletic Scholarships
- Academic Scholarships
- Masks - Chinese Embassy
- Name-a-Seat supporters

## Other Grants

We recently received an Erasmus grant supporting ACS Athens in a school exchange partnership with four other European schools (Belgium, Austria, Germany and Italy). This program, Echoes of the Future, focuses on the development of a Global Citizens Program through the TED-ED club model which fosters

critical thinking, communication, creative writing and innovation in its participants. Two of our faculty members have led this grant request and have been collaborating with the other schools in Europe. As things evolve, more information will be shared with you.

## Back to School Night

Back to School night took place virtually on October 5th and 6th for ES and on October 14th for MS and HS. We have received positive feedback from you, our parents, and I would like to thank our faculty, staff and administration for their commitment to executing these events in a professional, informational, yet different way. Bravo to all!

## Accreditation

We have begun the next phase of the Accreditation process. The Internal Coordinators, introduced the next phase of the Action Research process to all faculty/staff members. A timeline has been created with specific tasks to be accomplished per time frame. More information will be provided soon.

## Youth to Youth Program

The full-time Y2Y program offered in collaboration with The HOME Project organization through the Shapiro Foundation donation is renewed for a 3rd year. In addition, the Part-time Y2Y program offered on Saturdays continues for the 5th year offering social integration opportunities to unaccompanied refugee minors through their English, Greek, Art, Computers, and athletics classes. At the same time, our ACS Athens students through their role as teaching assistants in the classes above, enhance their learning, empathy, and social growth by contributing to better the conditions of those in plight.

## Student Distinctions and Highlights

- Academy student wins the First Place in the Under-18 category at Bloomsday Creative Writing Competition 2020, with her moving account of "Moving Day".
- Academy Junior athlete accepted a full athletic scholarship at Stanford University, getting a rare one-year-early offer by the world-renowned university.
- Academy Junior interviews US Congress candidate and participated in 17 Sustainability Global summit.
- Academy Junior participates in Global Goals Summit.
- Academy Senior is featured in national TV documentary for his robotics skills and innovation and is featured in Forbes magazine.

## Global Goals Summit

ACS Athens President, Board members, faculty and students had a strong presence in the EU Global Goals Summit sponsored by Ideagen in June 2020 as well as the 17 Days of Sustainability panels on Quality Education and Empowering Young Women aired September 17-October 9, 2020. Watch the videos here:

### EU Global Goals Summit

Day 1: <https://bit.ly/3lBTDSd>

Day 2: <https://bit.ly/3f356aV>

Day 3: <https://bit.ly/2lJtBhv>

### United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

SDG #5: <https://bit.ly/2UwDu4l>

SDG #4: <https://bit.ly/385vWlB>



## Health & Safety

As we are living through unprecedented times, it is important for our community to be prepared and knowledgeable with relevant information. Since the onset of the pandemic, from the previous academic year, the Crisis Management team is diligently working to provide as many resources as possible to our entire community. Such resources and initiatives include our COVID-19 Return to School Handbook (with hygiene habits and protocols), constant communication by our Health Office personnel, the COVID-19 Anxiety Self Management Guide and most recently, a visit by IASO Hospital Health professionals to our Elementary School classes with the purpose of creating awareness, providing important information as well as teaching our young students how to properly wash their hands and use their masks. Health and safety for our entire community is of utmost importance at all times.

## After School Activities & Sports

Prior to the lockdown, numerous after school activities and sports had begun including tennis, swimming, robotics, karate, dance. To date, 192 ES students and 102 MS/HS students were participating in recreational activities; with some students participating in more than one activity, for a total of over 300 participants. Finally, 218 MS/HS students pre-registered for tryouts for competitive fall sports teams. Approximately 140 student athletes are now members of our sports teams. The first virtual sports activity, the 3K run/walk took place with the participation of many student athletes and faculty/staff.

## Belief Statement

We believe that:

- ACS Athens is a student-centered institution in the pursuit of academic excellence, building upon each student's unique talents and abilities.
- Student learning is a shared responsibility of the student, the school and the family.
- Students learn and develop best in an environment of cooperation, belonging and trust.
- Diversity takes many forms and that respect for and acceptance of diversity is a source of richness in our community.
- Possessing a strong sense of civic responsibility and an ethic of service is fundamental to effective global citizenship.
- Education exists to promote intellectual, emotional and physical wholeness and ethical decision-making.
- Our community exists to provide opportunities for all of our students to reach their full potential.
- Learning is a life-long process.

## Media Presence

ACS Athens was featured on:

- Open TV news for our online teaching practices, May 2020
- ERT (the national channel) for our online teaching practices, May 2020
- Cities of the Future <https://bit.ly/3pYlApF>
- Student-featured on ERT TV documentary about how he developed an interest in Robotics during his time at ACS Athens
- Students and Alums took part in two global panel presentations moderated by ACS Athens President on Quality Education and Empowering young women. Access the following links: <https://bit.ly/2UwDu4l>
- President was interviewed on NGTV, New York prime time for ACS Athens, online teaching and learning, November 2020.

## Our Mission Statement

ACS Athens is a student-centered international school, embracing American educational philosophy, principles and values. Through excellence in teaching and diverse educational experiences, ACS Athens challenges all students to realize their unique potential: academically, intellectually, socially and ethically — to thrive as responsible global citizens.

## International School Heads meetings

ACS Athens President was invited to present at International School Head meetings on five different occasions on the topics of: online teaching/learning and best practice preparation for opening school in light of COVID-19:

- The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS)
  - Near East South Asia (NESA)
  - Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS).
- Furthermore, the Academy for International School Heads (AISH) extended an invitation to lead a group of international school heads through the lockdown.

## Special Issue of International Schools Journal

We have initiated a special issue of the ISJ which is focussing on publications related to online teaching. If you wish to secure an copy of this journal, access the following link: <https://www.isjournal.eu/>

## Our Vision

Empowering individuals to transform the world as architects of their own learning