

THE OLIVE PRESS

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Ramallah Friends School's Monthly Newsletter

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RAMALLAH FRIENDS SCHOOL



edunation Why?

Two years ago, RFS chose to adopt Edunation as our school management and communication web-based software supported by a mobile application that would allow easy communications between students, teachers, parents and administrators. As IT and mobile technology move ahead at lightning speed- we decided to join in. The goal was to make Edunation our go-to resource of centralized information, where parents and students have one-click access to any information that they need regarding their children's school life including conduct, absence, tardiness, academic details, grades, report cards, exam schedules, home assignments and all school announcements. The platform also opened a two-sided communication channel where parents are encouraged to communicate with their children's teachers via Edunation's messages feature. We have gladly reached a point where this platform is now a virtual space where all students, parents, teachers and administrators can reach all information regarding RFS in one place, with one click- or a little more.*

Besan Jaawan '01
Development and Communications Manager

Communication as Key to Community

Letter from Head of School

Welcome from a rather cold and wet Ramallah. I have recently returned from the US where I had the opportunity to attend the Friends Council of Education Head of School Conference. This was an ideal opportunity to meet people from other Friends schools and to look at ways RFS connects with Friends schools in the US. I also had the opportunity to meet numerous Friends Meetings who support RFS. What I have learned is that RFS has relationships throughout the world and many people care deeply about the school and its future.

This issue of the Olive Press is based on the theme of communication. We talk a lot about communication in schools and how important it is and what effective communication looks like. The primary function of a school's communication with parents is to ensure a better understanding of the journey their child is going through. Effective communication creates interest

and ensures parents feel part of the school community and so we try to develop an open and inclusive policy for reaching out to parents that helps build a stronger link between the school, the students, the teachers and the home. Managing communications is key to an effective school. Many problems, in and out of school, can be directly traced to whether information was communicated, how it was communicated, and who communicated it.

In the past communication has been about getting letters out to parents and trying to get them involved with all aspects of the school's running.



Now we use websites, social media and twitter to assist communication and the creation of dedicated school applications such as Edunation are where things have really begun to change quite dramatically. Effective communication creates a much stronger bond between parents, pupils and teachers to form a strong community that works together to produce the best in education. **I believe the most effective communication is still talking together and I welcome parents to come in and discuss any issues or questions directly with the teachers and administration of the school.***

Adrian Moody
Adrian Moody - Head of School



RFS Head of School during his visit to Washington DC, USA

Edunation... Hopes and Plans for the Future

By Salim Zughayer – RFS IT Manager

Edunation is a learning & collaboration platform that helps our school leverage their performance and realize the full potential of the students, educators and resources.

The following are some of the main goals Edunation helps us achieve:

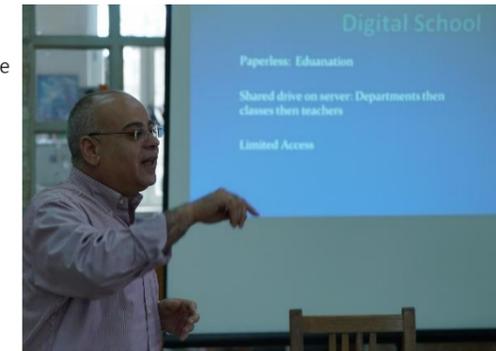
- Intuitive platform for managing learning, teaching and administration.
- A social learning tool that allows students and teachers to interact beyond the confines of the classroom.
- An interactive space for communication and networking between teachers, students and parents.
- An integrated system for the management of the administrative processes.

Through Edunation, we seek to access and manage real-time operations related to education:

- Improve student learning outcomes and performance.
- Automate organizational operations, teaching and student assessment.
- Secured social learning environment.
- A platform for individual and group learning.

As a web based portal, Edunation is a safe cloud computing environment:

- No need for any hardware purchases, software licensing and installation.
- Easy to use and access via any personal computer, tablet and smartphone.
- Content & data are saved and stored on a secure and remote database-accessed and browsed anytime,



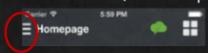
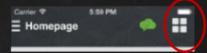
Zughayer in a teacher workshop about Edunation

The following are a few of Edunation's plans for the future- as stated to the OP by CEO of Edunation Firas Jabbour:

- New mobile application to be released soon.
- Online registration feature.
- Assessment of MYP skills, general reports, academics, analytics.
- Unit planning feature.
- E-Assignments.
- Specialized reporting for LSP students.



Top Ten Tips when using Edunation:

- 1- To find attachments (files or photos sent to you) press menu (these 3 horizontal lines left to homepage button)  then go to **My Backpack** → **Files** (here you will find all attachments).
- 2- To find your child's assignments, exams schedules and deadlines press your child's name (profile) and scroll down beyond **Basic info** to find **Grades**, **Report cards**, **Assignments** and **Exams, Absence and Tardiness**.
- 3- To change the language you view/use your Edunation profile in, go to menu → **Settings** → **Change Language**.
- 4- To view teachers' office hours schedule go to **Latest News** on the left side column.
- 5- To send a short message to your child's teacher stay on the **Homepage**, scroll down to **Today's schedule** and write a comment under the name of the lesson taught by your child's teacher. Or click  and then select the teacher's name.
- 6- If you would like to stop the emails you receive from RFS regarding updates and announcements on your Edunation account go to your **Profile**, scroll down then edit **Allow email notifications** to YES or NO.
- 7- To stay updated on what your children are learning in class press  then choose the subject you would like to look at, kindly note that some of the lesson plans are uploaded by teachers.
- 8- The platform archives your child's report cards from previous years and saves them for your easy access or print.
- 9- All announcements and notifications are saved. You can click **see all** to view all previous notifications or announcements for the current academic year.
- 10- Edunation app is available for Apple and Android.

Visit Edunation website, [linked here](#), at least once a day, and you will find solutions and tips for using the app...
Follow the official Edunation Blog for more information- [at this link!](#)*

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Alumni in the Spotlight

By Lama Murra – Alumni Relations

Ramallah Friends School 1994 alumnus, international fashion designer and runner-up on US Project Runway (Season 4) Rami Kashou stopped by for a short visit this month.

While touring the Upper Campus, Rami spoke with Art students, took photos of historical artifacts and took note of how the school's facilities have developed over the last 20 years.

"I had a wonderful time and I am very grateful for the warm welcome from RFS staff." Kashou expressed joy to visit his school and reminisced about his old school days here in the 1990s. Kashou told the OP that RFS' commitment to inspiring creativity affected his career in fashion design. He gladly shared the story of his first fashion show that he had organized as a student in RFS' Khalil Totah Auditorium: *"I was only 16 and the RFS encouraged my desire in producing a Palestinian heritage themed fashion show. It was a pivotal moment that boosted my confidence and showed me that others believed in my uncommon passion for becoming a fashion designer someday. I am grateful for the school's support of such diverse interests and aspirations in its students."*

Earlier last month, Kashou, in cooperation with Al-Qattan Foundation, participated in the Recycled Competition Fashion Show that was held in RFS' Tabari Hall (Lower Campus).*

Our Journey Towards Edunation

By Wafa Asmar –
Administrative Assistant
Upper School Campus



When RFS adopted Edunation as our new online platform more than a year ago, the transformation process of actually making it our online platform was not an easy task. The large size of data and information to be uploaded, filed, and customized was only the very first step of a long rigorous and exciting process.

Our journey with the platform began officially after RFS announced to parents and students that we will be making Edunation our new online platform. With that began the foundation phase of collecting and administrating all the required data, and then filing it and administering it into accounts. With every step we took forward new problems and surprises appeared. The next phase demanded that we administer 2000+ usernames and passwords, and it was followed by guidance and training on how all our stakeholders can benefit best from the platform.

For the school's administration, this required more of us in that it is a general school management program which needs high customization to fit our academic needs and school mission at RFS. As well as customizing the platform according to PYP, MYP, and IBDP requirements. This transformation required our time and energy and still does, as it is an ongoing process.

As the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, I believe we have already taken quite a few steps towards making daily school life easier, better-informed and more beneficial for all our students and parents.*

Edunation in the Eyes of School Administrators

Frieda Khayat – Lower School Principal

As we continue our work on developing new improved channels of communication between all stakeholders of the RFS community, we find that Edunation has gladly become our platform for all aspects of school life. The road to Edunation has not been an easy one and we continue to adapt this platform to meet our needs at the Lower School in particular as we journey further and closer to achieving the official PYP Authorization. Our ultimate goal is to make use of this platform to its maximum potential.

While working and using the platform as school administrators, our relationship with parents and teachers continues to grow and our communication channels are widened and more profitable for all those involved. Leaving the age of issuing important school announcements by sending them on little pieces of paper home with our students- and mostly worrying about it – is a great step that we could not have taken without Edunation. It is here that I wish to share a few of the great assets of this platform.



Through Edunation we can now easily and quickly do the following:

- Send out urgent announcements.
- Process and retrieve data about staff, students and parents such as telephone numbers and emails.
- Provide clear statistics about teachers, parents and students.
- Give a clear view about student loads, home assignments, exams and behavior.
- Monitor teachers' progress.*

Edunation in the Age of Misinformation

Riyam Kafri – Upper School Principal

We live in the age of information, and misinformation for that matter, and I feel obligated to share as much information with parents as possible to avoid confusion, and miscommunications on one hand and to offer them transparent access on the other hand.

It is our duty not only to catch up with the latest technologies, but to also offer our busy, overworked, and tired mothers and fathers access to their children's educational journey through the one thing we use the most, technology. So, we chose Edunation, with the goal to make information accessible to you at any time. The decision on how involved you want to be with your child's education is entirely up to you, but it is our job to make sure you have the tools to do that.

Offering information is not only a technical issue, it is a pedagogical standpoint on transparency. Today you have access to assignments, course outlines, subject overviews and more. You receive notifications when your child is late to class, and you can

follow up, should you choose to, on a daily basis. This was not the case three years ago and most parents complained that they knew very little about their children's educational journey. It may feel at times that you are flooded with a roaring river of emails, and that sorting through Edunation is a fulltime job, but in my opinion this phase in implementing the program was necessary, because we needed to test the program technically, and to create a culture of communication. We all agree that the program can be improved, and we will continue to develop it so it becomes more convenient, friendly and accessible for use. And maybe, just maybe, using Edunation will become as natural as using Facebook one day.*

All RFS Alumni, Graduates, and Attendees are invited to our 1st Annual Alumni Christmas Dinner – Buy your tickets now!!! Call us @ 022952286 or Imurra@rfs.edu.ps

RAMALLAH FRIENDS SCHOOL
Alumni Relations

Invitation to:

Alumni

Christmas Dinner 2017

Friday, 7:00 p.m. 22/12/2017
Capers Restaurant, Ramallah

Tickets now on sale at the Ramallah Friends School
For more information check www.rfs.edu.ps

Parents, Teachers, Students Speak About Edunation

May Abu Assab (RFS Parent): "Communicate and then communicate again, I told the teacher when she criticized my son two months after the beginning of the school year. How was I to know the exact details of the lessons and home assignments and evaluation if we did not communicate. And every time I used to meet with teachers I felt lost and unable to contribute in solving academic and conduct related problems, especially after RFS began administering the new plan- I was lost in it and within it, I used to make daily calls to classmates and teachers to better understand what assignments and exams where about. When Edunation came along in a form of specified daily documentation for every detail, I found it as a solution to these problems. There I could easily find lesson plans, home assignments and exams schedules, administrative announcements, and most importantly notes and comments from teachers that I could easily follow-up on.

Now, as parents, we do look forward to more improvement of the platform and hopefully for it to become more user-friendly so that we can reach a point where email notifications are no longer needed."

Lila Ibrahim (English A Language & Literature Teacher): "One benefit of Edunation is that by posting grades for all assignments, not just exams, parents and students can easily track their progress. Posting grades saves me time since parents can see when their student fails to turn in homework or low quiz grades. The platform is a great communication tool, simplifying interaction between parents and teachers. American universities often use Blackboard or Course Era (similar to Edunation) so it's a great training tool for students. We're giving students a lead with college-level material in the IB program, and Edunation allows them to get accustomed to using an academic organizational

platform. These advantages assist students' future success"

Nadine Bahour (student): "Change is never easy, especially when you are changing a routine of years. The shift to Edunation required students, at least myself for one, to change their daily routine of receiving and sending emails for all school related documents and news to an unfamiliar interface. It wasn't quick or easy to adjust to, but I must admit it has grown on me. The difficult transition was followed by regular checks of my account for homework assignments, tests, grades, and updates. The portal also features tabs I didn't have access to, such as reminders and teacher comments. A change like this

proved to me that, although it seemed pretty impossible to adjust to in the beginning, it was doable. So, here I am working on my computer with Edunation open on the next browser tab."

Silvia Mustaklem (English Teacher Lower School): "What I like about Edunation is that it allows me as a teacher to communicate with parents, add lesson plans, assign homework and exams, check attendance, share newsletters, submit grades, view my students' workload, and more, all in one place. It brings convenience in that it allows me to focus less on paperwork and worrying about how to best communicate a message, and focus more on the actual lessons. The platform is by no means perfect, it still has many bugs and missing features that I am certain will be ironed out soon."

Upcoming Dates and Events

- December 2nd
RFS White Gifts Family Christmas Dinner
- December 4th – 14th
2nd tuition payment due (Grades 10th- 12th)
3rd tuition payment due (Grades KG – 9th)
- December 4th
LS – Report cards distribution
- December 9th
LS- Parent-Teacher Conference.
- December 11th
US – Start of Mid- Year Exams for grades 6-12
- December 16th
LKG-UKG Christmas Carols Performance
- December 18th
1st -2nd Grades Christmas Carols Performance
- December 19th
3A, 3B – 4th Grades Christmas Carols Performance
- December 20th
3C, 3D – 5th Grades Christmas Carols Performance



- December 21st
US – Last day of Mid- Year Exams for grades 6-12
- December 22nd
[RFS Annual Alumni Christmas Dinner](http://www.rfs.edu.ps)
- December 23rd – January 9th
Christmas Holiday

*** LS – Lower School
*** US – Upper School

When everything seems dark,
consider you may be the light.
Quaker Proverb

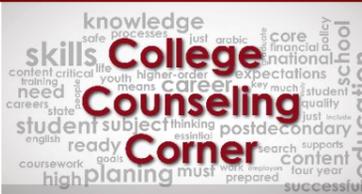
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By Chris Akel – College Counselor

College Application 2018 Primary-Season Due Dates:

- December 15:** Some early action deadlines in the US.
- Jan. 1-15:** Regular decision deadlines for 80% of all US Colleges.
- Jan. 15:** UK UCAS deadline
- Jan. 1-18:** Many Canadian Universities' Deadlines including UBC and UofT.

College Counseling Support:
December 15: All college counseling requests for Dec. 22-Jan. 9 must be made by December 15. After this time, Chris Akel the College Counselor will be unable to support students in their applications. This includes: personal statement draft requests, transcript submission requests, supplemental essay requests, research requests, etc.

College Representative Events: Over 20 university representatives have visited campus this year, but less than 100 students have taken advantage of these opportunities, even though attending every event would have only required 1-2 hours of time. Your students are responsible for their college admissions.

For all students applying to attend the colleges that visit campus, attendance to representative events are mandatory!*