

# THE OLIVE PRESS

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Ramallah Friends School's Monthly Newsletter

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### New Beginnings:

#### RFS Launches 1<sup>st</sup> Arabic Reading Platform: "Yalla Neqra - Lets Read"

New beginnings this month as another RFS initiative comes into the light with the launch of, in cooperation with Al Nayzak Organization, the first and only Arabic Reading Platform for students aged 5-8 years in Palestine.

"This project is aimed at improving our students' skills in the Arabic Language and we also hope to share it with the larger Palestinian educational community". - Adrian Moody (Head of School)

The project is sponsored by Paltel Group as Golden Sponsor and Bank of Palestine as Silver Sponsor, and under the care of Palestinian Minister of Education Dr. Sabri Seidam and the Ministry of Education.

The first phase could not have been accomplished without their assistance and donations, and the applications will be offered for free to all Palestinian schools in September. "When we began working on PYP skills in 2013, we found that while studying the Arabic language our students faced challenges in connecting sight words with spoken words causing weaknesses in their reading and writing skills- and that is where the idea of an Arabic reading platform first appeared." - Duha Masri (Head of KG and PYP Coordinator)

The platform offers Arabic story books registered in appropriate levels for students in grades UKG, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> to listen to and read on tablets and smartphones.

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## Season of Change

Letter from Head of School

I would like to welcome you to a brand new semester. January is first month of the year on Gregorian calendar and it is named after the Roman god Janus. Janus was the god of gates, doors, doorways, beginnings, endings and time. Most often he is depicted as having two heads, facing opposite directions; one head looks back at the last year while the other looks forward to the new and so he simultaneously looks into the future and the past.

I think that this is very appropriate – the idea of looking forward and back at the same time. We are always encouraging our students to reflect because we believe that this is a very important part of the learning process. This is a good time of year for our students to take stock of things, to think about where they are going and where they have been and to check bearings and make sure they are on course.

We should all do that. In August I had some goals that I wanted to achieve and plans about the path I intended to get there. Over the break I had a look at what I thought I had achieved and what I thought I hadn't. Reflection is important. It is important to relook at who we are and what we represent and it is a continual process of looking forward and looking back. Being new in any school means you need to adjust plans as you become familiar with the school and its context and you need to adjust goals as new information come your way. The long term vision for the development of the school remains the same but the path begins to take different turns.

Although we have five months remaining in this academic year we are currently in the process of making preparations for the new academic year. It is important to plan well ahead and looking at staffing, preparing budgets and developing policies is part of this process. I want to announce one change for the new academic year.



Recently I asked for feedback about the school structure because the calendars on each campus were different. We have decided to run 2 semesters (4 quarters) on both campuses for the next academic year. This is in line with the school mission that we are one school in two locations. All holidays, professional development and significant calendar events will reflect this alignment. I am intrigued how the weather in Ramallah can change so rapidly. In many ways the changing seasons reflect the seasons in the life of the school. It has been said that for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter. Change is an inevitable part of life as are the seasons of the year. There is an appropriate time for everything.\*

Adrian Moody

Adrian Moody - Head of School

## Head of School Office's Departments Plans for 2018

### Information Technology Department

By Salim Zughayer – IT Manager

Firstly I would like to thank all RFS teachers for showing proficiency in dealing with Edunation platform. It has proven very useful for our students on one hand and easy to use for parents on the other. We are currently in the process of implementing major changes to the application/platform.

In 2018, the IT Department is committed to provide and develop all types of software needed by students, whether through classes, or through extracurricular programs aimed at enhancing students' creativity and innovation such as Engineering for Kids, applications, Robotics and networking.



Moreover, we will develop students' radio programs to be aired on the new school radio, which will be launched soon from the Upper School campus studios. Finally, it might be noteworthy to mention that RFS is now considering a partnership contract with "Cisco International", so that we can use its curricula, equipment, as well as its labs in school.\*

### Finance & Human Resources Department

By Nafez AlKouni – Finance & HR Manager



The Finance & Human Resources Department will work through its current vision to upgrade the existing financial programs and evaluate Human Resources programs so that this management can be able to provide various and well developed financial and administrative reports that will assist in the financial and administrative decision making process in school. A new section has already been established to be in charge of the follow-up of employee and some student affairs. The goal of these programs and activities is to actively engage in implementing the school's strategic vision. Our department also seeks to carry out such upgrading functions through the optimal use of the RFS internal resources, including its human resources and many others. As such, an internal shift has been implemented recently in order to create a position of a Human Resources (HR) Department Officer. The timeframe to implement the HR software is by the end of the current academic year including the process of providing the necessary training for the administrative as well as the operational staff.\*

### Facilities and Projects Department

By Farhat Muhawi – Projects and Facilities Manager



In 2018, we are focusing on three main goals: Make our campuses green, accessible and safe. We plan to install photovoltaic cells to fulfill educational and environmental goals and reduce the current running cost of electricity.

On the Upper Campus we will finally have a fully equipped athletic gym and dance studio, as well as a running track and players area and lighting poles on the soccer field. The campus's electrical networks and data fiber optics infrastructure will also be upgraded.

On the Lower Campus, four new classrooms on the third floor of KG building will be ready for students by the beginning of the next academic year and the floor of the basketball field will be repainted.\*

### Communications Department

By Besan Jaawan – Communications and Development Manager

Our newly established Communications Department (CD) started 2018 by officially launching RFS' Memorabilia Project; aimed at offering specifically designed RFS souvenirs for our community including alumni, students and Friends in Palestine and soon in USA.

We also welcomed newcomer and interpreter *Mai Ayoub* as the newest member on our team. RFS' Alumni Relations and Communications Officer, my colleague *Lama Murra* is seen every day searching RFS campuses enthusiastically for *Kodak* moments of RFS' incredible projects and activities to share with our community all around the world.

In CD, it is our pleasure to share once and again the success stories that our students and staff create together every day. But our work does not stop there, we work on strengthening Alumni Relations and organizing Alumni related events, motivate local and international media outlets to feature RFS and its many successes, and do much more that is not always obvious to those outside our offices. In this issue we offer you a glimpse into the hearts and minds of our community on their hopes and dreams for the New Year.\*



## Alumni in the Spotlight

By Lama Murra – Alumni Relations

During Christmas break, Swarthmore College's Peace and Conflict Studies Professor Sa'ed Atshan (Class of 2002) visited the Upper Campus with a group of students and professors from Swarthmore College.

A proud RFS graduate, Dr. Atshan believes that a Friends School education cultivates a sense of freedom in their students, freedom of imagination and freedom to broaden each individual's horizon and creativity.

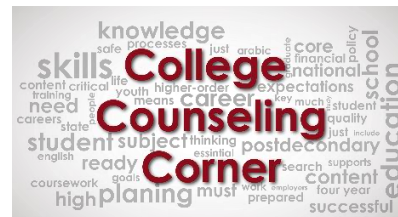
"If you are RFS alumni, you're able to do anything" – Dr. Atshan

Dr. Atshan told the OP that his decision to attend a Quaker college was greatly affected by Quaker values and ethos he had learned at RFS. His experience at RFS made him appreciate Quaker education and led him to attend, and later teach at, one of the top 20 colleges in the United States- Swarthmore College.

Thinking about his school days, Dr. Atshan said that joining the Drama Club steered him towards a journey of self-discovery which he is grateful for. He emphasized that the school's wide variety of extracurricular activities played a vital role in building students' self-confidence and later leads a lot of the school's alumni to become significant characters within local and international communities. Dr. Atshan says that every time he comes back to visit RFS it feels like coming home and creates a sense of responsibility for him to give back to the school. During the past decade, Dr. Atshan has co-founded two successful summer programs at RFS; "I Know I Can Summer Academies" (English and SAT prep courses for grades KG-11<sup>th</sup>) and "Go Palestine International Summer Camp" (A summer experience for diaspora Palestinian youth and friends).

Dr. Atshan ended our interview with a piece of advice to future RFS alumni in general and Class of 2018 in particular:

"Experience another context, cultivate your independence and represent Palestine on a global scale" – Dr. Sa'ed Atshan.\*



By Chris Akel – College Counselor

**Upcoming Application Dates:**  
February Ongoing: Applications to most Canadian Universities and final US universities (usually February 1st or 15th).  
February Ongoing: Applications for universities in Europe (excluding American Universities) open  
March 30-April 2nd: US Ivy League schools release Regular Deadline decisions  
April Ongoing: Most Regular Deadline decisions released in the US and some from Canada  
April-June Ongoing: UK release conditional decisions from Jan. 15th Regular Decision Application  
June-July Ongoing: Applications for Middle East universities (including in Turkey and for Birzeit) open

**College Counseling General:**  
11th Grade CC Meetings: All 11th graders will be scheduled a meeting with the counselor this spring. Meetings will begin February.

**11th Grade SAT dates:** 11th graders preparing for school in the US and some Canadian universities should prepare to take their first SAT this spring. The CC Office advises all students to take the May 5th, 2018 exam, to provide plenty of study time. Next SAT dates are:  
- March 10th, 2018  
- May 5th, 2018

**PSAT for 10th Grade:** RFS will again be administering the Practice SAT (PSAT) this spring, for 10th graders only. This will take place on March 10th, and registration will begin in mid-February.

**Exchange Program Updates:** For 8/9th graders who have applied to an exchange program, these decisions will be released the first full week of February 2018.\*



## Dreams and Accomplishments in Lower School 2018

By Frieda Dahdah – Lower School Principal

It's 2018! RFS is now 149 years old! What might have been a dream a century ago is a reality today! It's a vibrant new year for RFS to transform dreams which were conceived impossible into realities. We dream to inspire our youth to aspire to achieve their dreams. We dream to nourish each soul with character and humanity to graciously embrace life. 2018 holds many new beginnings that were once just dreams. After years of hard work, PYP authorization is on its way. The IB Authorization team will visit our campus in March to culminate the efforts of each and every member of our team. If authorization is granted, RFS will become the first school in Palestine to offer the IB Primary Years Program (PYP). And another dream will come true! As our dynamic world is constantly changing, RFS is catering for the needs of today's digital kids. Educational entertainment is crucial in fueling kids' development in all aspects of life. "Yalla Neqra" an online Arabic reading program will be launched in collaboration with Al-Nayzak and sponsored by Paltel Group, and Bank of Palestine. At a click of a button, our children and many in the world will have access to hundreds of



delightfully illustrated books and compelling storytelling. Integrating technology is another dream that has been realized at RFS. The construction of an additional floor will create four innovative 21st century classrooms for our 100 third graders. Spacious and beautifully configured, these classrooms will be furnished with the necessary tools to inspire learning. The learning space will foster student ownership of learning by creating opportunities to inquire and pursue their own interests. Ramallah Friends School continues to dream to empower students to own their learning. One hundred and forty nine years of making dreams comes true, RFS doesn't just get older, it just gets greater!\*

## A Double Legacy

By Samah Hussein – MYP Drama and English Teacher

Since I came to the RFS in 2007 I always wanted to teach in a different way. I wanted to show students that learning extends beyond four walls of the classroom. I wanted to teach students that they can tackle important personal issues. This year, after 10 years of teaching, I have realized that these same students who are graduating right in 2018 have really made an impact and challenged me in many different ways both in the classroom and on the stage. These students will travel far and wide, but a part of them will always be with me. This proves that the legacy of RFS lives on through the students and their accomplishments. I see this legacy presented within my own home, through my twins and their life experiences at RFS.



As a mother and a teacher, I am excited to welcome this year as another opportunity to inspire our youngsters to be creative, active, and fulfill their dreams. With my twins and their classmates getting ready to put on their Graduation robes, 2018 brings me hope as we send out yet another group of remarkable young men and women to cross the stage and enter the "real" world to make us proud as Class of 2018.\*

## RFS Students Share Their Hopes and Dreams in 2018

"I hope this year will bring peace to everyone, especially children in war zones and conflict areas." – Tamer /9<sup>th</sup> Grade

"I believe that every day is a new beginning for everyone and there is so much we can do every day." - Sara Abu Yusef /10<sup>th</sup> Grade

"I hope to become a successful young woman, and be able to take better decisions" – Class of 2018

"I hope to become more spiritual" – Class of 2018

"I want 2018 to be the year of change. A year of change on the personal and relationships level." - Nada I. /10<sup>th</sup> Grade

"I wish that Palestine would find its freedom and for the whole world to find peace." - Maria Awwad /9<sup>th</sup> Grade

"Pursue Medicine School abroad" – Class of 2018

"I hope in 2018 we can play a greater role in society and volunteer more for a better Palestine." – Adnan / 10<sup>th</sup> Grade

"In 2018 I want to commit to going to the Gym." - Yazan Abu Hijleh/ 11<sup>th</sup> Grade

"Achieve the IB grade I'm aiming for" – Class of 2018

"I hope this year more people will become aware about the food industry, the reality about animal treatment and cruelty." - Nour Eid/ 11<sup>th</sup> Grade\*

## Expected Accomplishments in Upper School 2018

By Riyam Kafri – Upper School Principal

The ringing in of a New Year brings with it hopes, dreams, New Year resolutions and most important of all plans. The Upper School Campus is no different; 2018 is already filled with the promise of new experiences and adventures. February will bring with it the launch of a school wide project called "My Notebook." The project aims at developing note taking skills as a life-long skill for our students.

We also hope that in 2018 the Upper Campus will see the opening of both the learning quad and the outdoor learning center which will include bird watching, a pond for ecosystem studies, whisper tubes, a sun dial, a fixed place for the school bonfire and more. We aligned the design of this center along with the curriculum to ensure that our students get the maximum benefits of its use.

There is much to look forward to on the Upper School campus in 2018, but we will also be saying goodbye to this year's graduating class, who has been one of the most cooperative and committed classes to have come through the diploma program.

They have managed to capture their teachers' hearts and mine especially and I will for sure miss them.

**As in any dynamic place the Upper Campus is filled with the hopes and dreams of the people that inhabit it and bring it to life every morning. Most of all we hope and pray for peace and love to prevail all over Palestine so that we may continue to encourage our students to dream and dream big.\***

## New Beginnings

By Maisoun Elian – PYP Teacher

Cooperation, belonging, tranquility, caring, solidarity and many other emotions are combining us as teachers, administrators, and staff members working together to provide the best for our school and our students. In 2018, we are closer than ever to achieving RFS vision in implementing the International Baccalaureate Program for Primary Years (PYP) for grades LKG- 5<sup>th</sup>.

Taking steady steps as one team we head towards obtaining the official IB PYP Authorization, because we deserve it.

We are busy as a beehive, working towards our goal through daily trainings and guidelines, weekly workshops and regular meetings; one entire body that plays its role in the most optimal manner possible under a leadership keen on distributing meaningful roles and responsibilities in order to improve the school's academic level.

This year, like every year, we hope to raise our students as thoughtful and giving individuals. We want our students to step out of the school gates as seekers of knowledge with open critical and creative minds, capable of solving problems and comparing them, making logical decisions, accepting the viewpoints of both individuals and communities, and credibly aware of their realities and surrounding situations without any bias.



A new year brings us closer and closer towards building confident and enthusiastic personalities, which are capable of dealing with unfamiliar and mysterious situations bravely and independently. Moreover, we are keen on building personalities that have the passion to explore new roles, come up with new strategies and ideas, and are able to express them with confidence and creativity in more than one language by acquiring a variety of communication styles while they are effectively and willingly cooperating with the others all enjoying a process of teaching and learning.\*

## Upcoming Dates and Events

February 1<sup>st</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup>  
3<sup>rd</sup> tuition payment due (old students)

February 17<sup>th</sup>  
**No school (LS and US)**  
Professional Development Workshops

February 28<sup>th</sup>  
LS – End of 2<sup>nd</sup> Trimester  
US – Last day of school for 12 IB students.

March 5<sup>th</sup>  
US – Start of final exams for 12 IB students.

March 10<sup>th</sup>  
LS – Distribution of Report Cards  
US – PSAT exams for 10<sup>th</sup> grade students

March 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>  
LS – Parent Teacher Conferences  
\*\*\* LS – Lower School  
\*\*\* US – Upper School

March 20<sup>th</sup>  
US – Last day of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter

March 24<sup>th</sup>  
US – No school for end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter



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

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*Continued from front-page:*  
The 1st phase of the platform will be offered for free to Palestinian public and UNRWA and private schools as a comprehensive level-reading resource for students and teachers. Currently as a pilot, the platform will be tested and used by four schools, including RFS and a public school. Stemming from our Quaker principles and RFS Mission in helping each person recognize their responsibility towards society, our desire is to distribute this platform/application amongst all Palestinian students for our larger community to asset from in reaffirming our children's connection with their mother tongue.\*

Besan Jaawan '01  
Communications and  
Development Manager

