



Reason to Celebrate! RFS Named an IB World School



By Mohammad Habbas, Math Teacher and MYP Coordinator

Previously when seventh grade English students were assigned *Romeo and Juliet*, accompanying classroom activities were limited to reading and interpreting the complex Shakespearean text. To most students, this was an arduous task that left them bored and unengaged.

Collaboration between the English, Art, and Technology departments has made the classroom a much more vibrant place this year. Studying the text now includes drawing, designing, and acting. Students have ventured into a new world as they study the text through these various mediums and plan to perform the play in April. They have designed a stage set, designed and sewed beautiful costumes, acted out various roles in the classroom, worked on creative writing assignments, analyzed the play's theme and conflict through classroom discussions, and created invitation cards and brochures for their big performance.

Another example of these tangible changes to our classroom curriculum was seen in the eighth grade history class. A true measure of understanding is being able to teach what you have learned. Thus, while students were studying the ancient Greeks, they simplified what they were learning into short stories with simple sentences and pictures, suitable for kindergarteners. They then spent one morning at the kindergarten, sharing the stories with their younger schoolmates (pictured above). This activity made very clear links between teaching social science and service to the community.

These changes and many more came about as a result of our school's acceptance into the International Baccalaureate's (IB) Middle Years Program (MYP)—a program that emphasizes concepts of human ingenuity, innovative approaches to learning, community and service, social and health education, and the environments we live in.

In 1999, the Upper School received authorization to offer the IB program in grades 11-12, and we were granted the highly regarded MYP authorization on Feb-

continued on page 2

Friends School Newsletter

Spring 2012



Katie Terrell Wonsik



Shari Veach

Welcome to the Ramallah Friends School newsletter! Friends United Meeting has recently undergone a change in leadership, bringing on board Colin Saxton as our new general secretary. Under his leadership FUM staff members have felt open to changes on many levels, including the look of this newsletter. In March, Joyce Ajlouny, RFS director, was in the FUM office in Richmond, Indiana, where this newsletter is edited by Katie Terrell Wonsik and designed by Shari Veach. These three women put their heads together to bring you a fresh look, while continuing to bring you important updates, photos, and features from the Friends School. We hope you enjoy this edition!



Ramallah Friends School
Quaker Education in Palestine
since 1869

P.O. Box 18606
Jerusalem, Israel 91184
Tel: +970.2.295.2286
Fax: +970.2.295.8320
Web: www.palfriends.org

Friends School Newsletter Editors:
Joyce Ajlouny, Friends School Director
Jumana Thalji, Assistant to Director

*Photo on the cover: An eighth grader
teaching kindergarteners about
the ancient Greeks*

Ramallah Friends School is a
ministry of Friends United Meeting



Above: Seventh graders examine the costumes they drew and designed for their rendition of Romeo and Juliet

Reason to Celebrate! RFS Named an IB World School

continued from page 1

ruary 20, 2012, for grades 6-10. This gives us the green light to refer to our school as an “IB World School”—the only such school in Palestine and one of a handful in the Middle East. Following many years of preparing to meet the International Baccalaureate Organization’s high standards, staff and faculty are celebrating the fruits of their hard work and accomplishments.

For more about the IB MYP, visit: <http://www.ibo.org/myp/>.



Lower School News in Brief

By Hendrik Taatgen, Lower School Principal

Library Renovation and Reading Month

Significant progress has been made in making the library a more inviting place for children to read. With the help of parents and students, Librarian Tala Karkar has created reading and study corners using comfortable seating arrangements, including beanbags and colorful carpets. New curtains will brighten up the entire room, and one corner is designated as an audio-visual space where children can listen to music and watch educational films. In January, the library hosted various activities during Reading Month. Students used “passports” to keep track of the books they were reading, parents participated in read-aloud sessions, and professional storytellers captivated students with dramatic renditions of fairytales, folktales, and other stories.

Landscaping Project

Decorated with almond and fir trees, the Lower School campus is one of the most beautiful spots in Ramallah. Yet its location on a steep hill has for many years been a cause of safety concerns. Last summer we began creating terraces on the hillside with stairs and railings. In mid-February, the project was completed with the addition of decorative planting boxes and benches. Teachers are already making plans to use the largest terrace as an outside classroom when the weather warms up. (See photo on outside cover, page 8.)



*Above: Lower School students reading
in the library*

continued on page 3

New Building, Same Quaker Values

By Duha Masri, Head of Preschool

I have served the Ramallah Friends School for twenty-eight years as a teacher and head of preschool. In those years I have seen, in action, what an education at the Friends School has to offer students and the community as a whole.

The kindergarten building that has served students for generations could no longer be sustained with the transformational growth and needs of our students. We teachers, students, and parents are humbled and grateful for the loyalty that the old building has provided for all these years. But it was time to move into the new building that was finally opened at the beginning of this school year.

Our new building has made it easier for us to provide an environment that will support different teaching approaches, students who have disabilities and differences in learning styles, physical and emotional capacities, ways of perceiving the world, and abilities to communicate and relate to others. Further, this will allow us to offer our education to even more students from the community.

It has been difficult to say goodbye to a building that has transformed the lives of 130 students each year; a building where, twenty-five years ago, I taught the children who are now parents of our current students. However, while buildings change and programs evolve and students grow, our foundations, built on our Quaker values, remain unmoved and are the reasons for our perseverance.



Kindergarten students in front of the old KG building

continued from page 2

Effective Educational Program

An effective educational program is designed to fit together like the pieces of a puzzle. Last October, faculty adopted a “homework policy” to confirm that homework is given to students for the purpose of practicing or deepening an understanding of concepts learned in class; homework is not meant to be busy work. Our next step was to issue a planner to help students organize their homework assignments, and for parents to keep track of these assignments. For years parents have been complaining that their children’s book bags are too heavy. Recognizing the seriousness of their concern, we adopted the “2/2 homework rule”: no more than two homework assignments per day, no more than two tests or exams per week. Homework planners are a useful way to ensure that this new rule is followed. We also purchased a batch of hallway cabinet spaces, called “cubbies,” for students to leave the books that they don’t need to take home. The final piece in the puzzle was to create a homeroom period at the end of the school day, during which teachers instruct students in these new end-of-day routines.

Curriculum Changes

Understanding by Design (UbD) is the overall framework of our curriculum improvement efforts. It is a planning device that asks teachers to specify in advance what they want their students to learn. Student learning takes various forms but is focused on understanding concepts and demonstrating mastery of skills. Assessment of student progress no longer relies solely on tests, quizzes, and exams, but is primarily authentic and performance-based. Teachers are becoming adept in designing UbD unit plans that integrate various subjects in interesting lessons. Students become enthusiastic learners when they are challenged to use their creativity and imagination.



Above: Lower School students engage in math activities in a successful “Understanding by Design” lesson presented by their math teacher, Miss Maha Atallah.

My Visit to Friends Schools in the U.S.

By Mahmoud Amra, Upper School Principal

For over twenty years, working at the Ramallah Friends School, I have had the chance to meet many visiting educators and students from Friends schools in the U.S. I have learned from them about their schools, how they incorporate Quaker values and traditions, how they implement a Quaker approach to education, and how they provide excellent education for their students. I have benefited greatly from the long conversations and interaction with fellow educators from these schools.

This year I was privileged to spend two weeks visiting some of these schools in the U.S. and actually see firsthand what I have been hearing and reading about for all these years. I started my visit by spending five days at Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C. I met many members of the faculty and the staff. I was honored to attend the weekly Meeting for Worship, many classes, and hold conversations with the students.

Following that visit, I attended a two-day workshop at Pendle Hill for educators new to Quakerism, organized by the Friends Council on Education. Prior to registering I was hesitant to participate since I am not new to Quakerism. After attending the workshop, however, I am glad that I signed up. I have learned new things about Quakerism and Quaker education, and got to know more than twenty teachers and administrators from different Friends schools across the U.S. Interacting with the participants in the workshop was a unique learning experience. It was clear to me that we share a common pride in working at our Friends' schools. Attending the workshop gave me the feeling that we, at the Ramallah Friends School, are not alone.

For the remaining days of my trip, I visited the Friends Council on Education, Westtown School, William Penn Charter School, and George School in Philadelphia. I also met with their administrators and teachers to learn about the schools and how they are functioning.

I was overwhelmed with the generosity, kindness, and hospitality of all the Friends who hosted me. RFS is a leading educational institution in Palestine, and this trip gave me much energy and many ideas to continue in this work.



Upper School News in Brief

By Mahmoud Amra, Upper School Principal

MUN Conferences

Our Model United Nations (MUN) club managed to participate in six MUN conferences this year, in Greece, Qatar, the Netherlands, India, and two in Jordan. Approximately fifty students participated in these conferences, representing countries from all over the world. In these conferences, participating students researched major topics concerning different countries, developed position papers, and argued their opinion. Through such activities the school aims at fostering understanding of different cultures and points of view.

Community Service

Over the past few months, the Upper School has organized service projects for our students in Al-Amari Refugee Camp, Al-Jalazon Refugee Camp, Al-Mazra'a Al-Sharqiya Village, Al-Jahhaleen Bedouins Area, Beit Sahour Town, Al-Nabisaleh Village, and Ne'lin Village. Students visited several charitable organizations in these locations, learned about their communities, and helped farmers in picking olives. In addition, the Student Council raised funds through bake sales and several other activities to support Alnahda Women's Association, which aims at developing teaching and training programs for disabled people and children with special needs.



Above: RFS students participate in olive picking as part of a community service project in the village of Ne'lin near Ramallah City.

continued on page 5

A Word from Our Students

By Areen Bahour, Upper School Senior

“Here’s to the rest of our lives.”

“It is not the end; it is only the beginning.”

These are the usual senior year quotes that we are told to try to help us embrace the future. These quotes make me think about time; time that does not give its own self the opportunity to settle down and be in the present. Time is merely a silhouette that passes us by, and decides to slap us in the face just a few months before we graduate, sarcastically screaming, “Hey you! Reality check!” Time’s up.

The Friends School has been more than a home to me. We entered the school twelve years ago with backpacks that were heavier than us. At the Lower School we played tag and had “junk food picnics.” We then came to the Upper School thinking we owned the world. Since then, which seems like decades ago and yet feels like yesterday, we’ve been on the most thrilling rollercoaster around: growing up. Here we are today, leaving as totally different individuals. We still hold on to the innocence and silliness we had, but we have grown up in ways that even we might not fully realize.

I walk around this school and think of every incident that happened here and happened there. I think about the people I’ve met, the memories I’ve cherished, and every single thing I have been through. The past six years somehow flash into my head all at once. And then, they are gone, replaced with the darkness of the idea that it’s all over. The only static element is the smile I see on our faces.

Being a part of the Friends School is something I wouldn’t replace if I had to do it all over again. It is the best community one can grow up in. It allowed us to flourish in our own ways, and to see life from different perspectives. It really did prepare us for the “rest of our lives.”

And here we are welcoming the future, cherishing the past, and trying so hard to hold on to the present. Class of 2012, we were taught to change the world. Trust me, we will!



Areen Bahour will be attending MIT in the Fall of 2012

continued from page 4

Student Exchange Program

The school was once again proud to announce scholarship exchange program opportunities in partnership with four schools in the U.S.: George School, Penn Charter School, Sidwell Friends School, and Westtown. The four Quaker schools have generously offered to accept one student each and to provide scholarships for the academic year 2012-13. The Upper School is now in the process of selecting students for this opportunity.

Sports for Life

We have contracted the organization “Sports for Life” to manage our afterschool sports program. Starting second semester, the organization will provide coaches for basketball and football (soccer) to work with different groups of students on developing their skills in these sports. (See photo on outside cover, page 8.)

Westtown School Students in Ramallah

For the third consecutive year, we hosted a group of students and staff members from Westtown School, Philadelphia. The group of eighteen students and four staff members spent six days in Ramallah with host families, attended classes with our students, visited the Friends Play Center at Al-Amari Refugee Camp, attended several lectures and documentary films, and participated in sports activities with our students. The partnership with Westtown School is growing year after year and is enriching the experiences of students at both schools.



Above: Westtown students learn Debkeh (folk dance) from RFS students.

From the Director's Office

By Joyce Ajlouny, RFS Director

Strategic and Action Planning

Only a thirty-five minute car ride away, we traveled from a very chilly Ramallah to the desert warmth of Jericho, where we held our strategic planning retreat. Samir Hulieleh—RFS board member, alumnus, and parent—offered his winter home and pampered us with wonderful food as we deliberated the future of our school. A joint team encompassing board and staff members met and planned the next five years.

While some questions posed dealt with immediate academic concerns, others were more strategic in nature. Members did not shy away from questions such as: should we start a two-year liberal arts college? Should we re-establish a boarding school element? All of the queries challenged us to think about how to leverage our successes and move the school to the next stage in its history. An inspirational introduction by Samir helped us recognize the importance of focusing on an educational program that encourages students to think, learn, and discover for themselves, especially in this fast changing technological world that we live in.

We did not end up with an elaborate final document that focuses on our long-term future, but a simpler one that addresses the pressing issues of the day. It incorporates all of our thoughts and decisions, but rather than a “strategic plan,” we consider it our “improvement action plan,” that we intend to follow, monitor, and update as we go along. We didn’t feel we had enough time to tackle the big questions, but hope to discuss more strategic issues in the near future.



RFS Board of Trustees and staff members at the strategic planning meeting in Jericho

Commercial Development

The FUM-RFS joint development team has been working hard to finalize the paper and legal work relating to our commercial development project. It’s been a very sharp learning curve for many of us as we review the lease agreement, memorandum of understanding, development service agreement, register a new special purpose vehicle (i.e., company), prepare financial projections, apply for the loan, review the building design, contract the best bidder, and market and find good tenants. We are excited to see our to-do list diminishing as we now wait for the loan funds to arrive from the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC).

We thank all the FUM staff, Trustees, and General Board members, as well as our pro bono lawyers from Vinson and Elkins, for their hard work and commitment to see this project through. With this project, we hope to be able to generate funds that will help increase our endowment and operational revenues to the school.

Honorary Board Membership

The Ramallah Friends School Board of Trustees honored two special people who have been instrumental in raising awareness and funding for the school. The first is Mr. Khaldoun Tabari, RFS student in the late 1950s, who donated over \$220,000 to help complete the new multi-purpose hall at the Lower School. The second is Ms. Hala Jayousi-Malhas, an attendee in the late 1970s, who was instrumental in organizing two fundraising events in Dubai during the past five years. Together with her husband, Rami Malhas, she has given generously to the school. We are grateful to our new honorary board members, knowing that they will continue to help raise awareness in support of our school.

Participate in the future of the Friends School, with your tax-deductible gifts!



☐ Yes, I would like to contribute to the Ramallah Friends School:

☐ Scholarships and Child sponsorship*

☐ General Award (any amount) \$ _____

☐ ESJ Award (min. \$2,500) \$ _____

☐ Preferences (age, gender, other): _____

☐ Where most needed \$ _____

☐ Enclosed is my total contribution of U.S.\$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail _____

U.S. \$ Gifts: Tax-deductible gifts should be made payable to the Ramallah Friends School and sent to: **Global Ministries, Friends United Meeting, 101 Quaker Hill Drive, Richmond, IN 47374-1926, or online at www.fum.org.**

Sterling (£) Gifts: should be made payable to the Quaker International Educational Trust (QUIET), noting "for Ramallah" on the back and saying if Gift Aid may be claimed, and sent to: QUIET, Yew Tree House, Church Street, Bloxham, Banbury, OX15 4ET or Brian Morphy at QUIET, Tel: 01 295 720019; e-mail: brianmorphy@tiscali.co.uk.

*Donate either to the General Award Fund (partial, any amount) or ESJ Award Fund (full). Tuition fees for 2011–2012 range from U.S. \$2,500 to \$2,700.

For further information and inquiries, feel free to contact our office at development@palfriends.org or Tel: +972-2-295-2286, www.palfriends.org.

Support RFS through Online Giving!

Through an initiative aimed at saving money and resources, we have begun to shift much of our correspondence online. Donations can now be made with the click of a mouse on our **completely secure** online donation page (designed and supported by eCommerce, a U.S.-based company). Donations made through this secure site are U.S. tax-deductible; please visit our web page for other donation methods. As always, we will never share your information with a third party. Visit www.palfriends.org and click "Donate" for more information.

Friends School, Ramallah/AI-Bireh Scholarship Donors, Restricted and General, October 1, 2011–February 29, 2012

Donor Thanks

We would like to thank the following people for their recent donations to Ramallah Friends School:

Aboad Contracting Co
Abramson, Nicholas & Helaine Meisler
Ajlouny, Joyce & Ziad Khalaf
Ajlouny, Paul & Randa
Al, Husam Abdel
Al Sabe Inter Co
Alihassan, Bayan
Alliss, Adli & Carolyn
Alnahhas, Yazan
Anderson, James & Janet Leslie
Anonymous Donors
Ashley, Joan
Ashley, Paul
Association of Writers
Babcock, Phyllis
Baramki, Hani
Bargothi Company
Bates, Joseph & Mary Louise
Beane, Marian
Belmont, Peter & Mary Zulack
Bewley, Eleanor
Binghamton Community Friends
Birmingham Monthly Meeting
Bismarck Friends Meeting
Bjorkman, Leonard & JK
Bond, Norma
Bonnyman, Gordan & Claudia
Booth, Tracy & Donald
Bostian, Ray & Martha
Bourns, Ruth
Braun, Jens & Spee
Brenner, Alan
Brokaw, Fran
Bronner, Marian & Sylvia
Brummett, Kris
Burstien, Barton M & Leslie G White
Cadwallader, Eves & Iola
Cairo Amman Bank
Carpenter, Marshall & Mary
Carter, Max & Jane
Cazden, Courtney B
Chakoian, Dave & Lynn
Chamberlin, John & Shannon

Chappaqua Monthly Meeting
Chivers, Mary
Cincinnati Friends
Clark, Katharine & Brian
Colwell, A Stacie & Rick Canning
Compton, Beverly
Conservative Friends
Cook, Rajie & Margit
Coppock, Linda & James
Costello, Tom
Covington, Miriam
Cradler, Christine & Lawrence Ferguson
Crofts, Daniel & Betsy
Curless, Lewis & Joy
Danfoura, Haneen & Hanna
Davidson, Ann
Davies, Colin & Mary Ellen Lane
Davol, Drs Peter B & Anna L
Dayton, John W
Dodd-Collins, Ann
Dodson, Mark P
Donovan, Shawn
Dover Friends
Dyson-Cobb, Margaret
Dyson-Cobb, Peggy
Erickson, Patty & Mark
Eyratten, Annie
Forinton, Ulrike
Frederick Monthly Meeting
Friends Seminary
Fullerton, Howard N
Gardner, Sidney
Garner, Sallyann
Germanacos, Anne
Ghazi, Hani
Ghazzawi, Diana
Gilfoyle, Nathalie & Christopher YW MA
Gilmore, Elizabeth
Gordon, Jean
Grant, Charles & Cathy Miles
Grantham, Grey & Shelby

Grass Lake Medical Center
Greensboro First Friends
Groff, Elizabeth
Grunko, Michael
Hallowell, Karen
Hallward, Maia
Halsted, Ted
Hanna, Imad & Sheela Herr-Hanna
Hanover Friends Meeting
Harb, Charles & Rita
Hatanaka, Anita Louisa Beck
Hunter, John & Susan
Hawthorne, Margaret & Bruce
MacDougall
Henderson, Scott & Jennifer Perkins
Herreid, Richard & Karen
Herskovits, Annette & Peter
Solomon
Higgins-Biddle, Lesley & John
Hillman, Gene
Holden, Christine
Hooper, Sheila
Hulpfonds of Netherlands YM
Hunter, John & Ruth
Husseini, Ismail M
Indiana Yearly Meeting
Indianapolis First Friends
Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative
Irish Quaker Faith in Action
Isaacs, Nancy & Charles
Ithaca Monthly Meeting
Jane, Aziz & Sufia Kaddouri
Jaquette, Stratton C
Jerusalem Real Estate Investment Co
Johnson, Sarah M
Kanost, Margaret
Kanwisher, Nancy
Kass, Seymour & Judith
Keiser, Elizabeth
Khalaf, Ashraf & Fahima
Kishek, Rami
Kreitem, Rhonda & George

Kristensen, Eric W
Kroeber, Jeff
Lamb, John H
Lanker, Caroline & Gary
Lathrop, Donald & Marion
Lawrence Monthly Meeting
Leary, John & Catherine
Lemle, J Stuart
Liske, Kurt & Margaret
Little Rock Meeting
Live Oak Friends Meeting
Lowe, Anthony & Judith Upchurch
Mabbs, RD
MacArthur, Hugh & Rhea McKay
Manousos, Anthony
Marshall, Barbara B
Masri, Jane
Masrouji, Iyad
Matossian, Dr Mary Kilbourne
Maury River Friends Meeting
McCosker, Timothy J & Phebe
Mertic, Elizabeth
Middletown Monthly Meeting
Miles, Rebecca
Mims, William C
Mitchell-Olds, Cheryl
Monego, Thomas & Sarah
Morris, Macy & Esther
Mountain View Friends Meeting
National Beverage Company
Nelson, Marjorie E
New Brunswick Monthly Meeting
New England Yearly Meeting
Nicholson, Bertha May
Nishioka, Takeo & Linda
Nolan, Bernard & Brenda
Nomura, Stephen K
North Carolina Yearly Meeting
Nutting, Peter
PADICO
Palestine Investment Fund
Palestine Mortgage and Housing Corp

Perkins, Jennifer & Scott Henderson
Pettingell, Judith & Wesley Harris
Phillips, Charlotte & Oliver Fein
Pierce, Arden & Hiram
Piotrowski, Patricia & Robert White
Poleske, Lee
Poston, Chip
Praetorius, Robert
Qavi, Mohammad Abdul
Quaker International Education and Trust (QUIET)
Quaker Service Sweden
Quakers Peace and Services
Raiford, William Newby
Rains, Richard & Judith
Rasoul, Faysal & Areej
Rawitscher, Joyce McKelvey
Reeve, Judith
Riordan, Olivia L & Phyllis Babcock
Robertello, Mary Jo
Roberts, Thomas & Ursula
Rodley, J Houge E
SAD, Jamal A
Salamy, June & Henry Krisch
San Francisco Friends Meeting
Santa Barbara Friends Meeting
Schweik, Suzan
Seese, Elsie
Severance, Shannon R
Shaterian, Larisa
Shea, Alexandra & Aaron Colin
Shepherd, John & Kathy
Southwest Friends Financial Dev Corp
Spottswood, Robert & Deborah Pullin
Starr, Dinah
Stettenheim, Joel & Signe Taylor
Stichting Doopsgezind we
Sturm, Alice
Suhail, Dr & Diane Hawit
Sussman, Peter
Swarm, Lee Ann
Tempe Friends Meeting
Thomas, Lee

Tjossem, Lawrence
Todd-Williams, Steven & Mary Ann
Totah, Nabeeh I & Barbara Noble-Totah
Tracy, Thomas & Mary
Updegraff, James & Helyn
USAID/ASHA
USFW First Friends of Whittier
USFW International
Qavi, Mohammad Abdul
Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting
Vaughan, William
Wahroonga Friends of Sydney
Wells, Anne W & Robert L
Wenner-Calhoun, David & Amanda
West Knoxville Friends Meeting
Western YM Financial Trustees
Westover, Chris & Laurance Simpson
Wilderness Friends Meeting
Wilson, Jean
Wilton Monthly Meeting
Wood, Frank & Raquel
Wood, Pamela D & Sharifa Elokda
Wood, Wilbur & Loreta
Wrixon, Gerard
Xavier, Marjorie

In Memory of
Delbert Reynolds by George Assoua
Sami K Suleiman by Penelope Mitchell
Mildred E White by Lois Jordan

In Honor of
Dan and Shelley Stickell Miles
by Steve and Ingrid Miles
Colin and Laurie Church
by Joan and Sam Baily
Our grandchildren
by Bill and Genie Durland
Brave kids under occupation
by Fida Ibrahim
Hendrik Iatgen by Emric Kapa
Donn Hutchison
by Stephanie Judson and Sandy Rea

Ramallah Friends School
c/o Friends United Meeting
101 Quaker Hill Drive
Richmond IN 47374-1926

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Richmond IN
Permit No. 747



Above: Students stretch before a soccer game at our sports field.

Far right: New stairs with a railing and planting boxes.

Right: The school's organic garden is producing many seasonal vegetables.



Spring 2012 at Friends School