



Quaker Education in Palestine since 1869

English Instruction at the Lower School!

By Dr. Kenneth Hulslander, Lower School Principal

When I talk to people about the Lower School, I am often asked about the role of English instruction at our school. Many tend to think that because so much of the teaching at the upper school is done in English, that the same is true for us. The reality is somewhat different. We teach core subjects in Arabic with an English science class added at the intermediate level. Based on that, one might think that the school would be running a regular English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Actually, it is something far more nuanced and challenging than that. In one of our first-grade, English classes, there are students who are nearly bilingual and others who are just starting to learn English. In a fifth-grade class the same sort of configuration is found making the situation challenging for teachers. In order to meet these challenges the Lower School English staff were the first in the building to start the move to a fully standards-based learning community.

Because our sixth-grade students will move to the upper school where everything is taught in English, it is imperative that we have a strong, comprehensive English program. The Lower School has gone a long way this year toward the establishment of a high-level, dynamic program that can now be tracked over time for adjustments and improvements.

As of today, we have finalized the list of objectives/standards for the program and are now fine tuning the rubrics that are related to each of the objectives/standards. Indeed, the teachers from the English program have mastered the process to the point that they are now helping teachers from other programs write their rubrics and identify their standards. We have also rolled out Raz-Kids, an on-line reading support program from Reading A-Z that helps students practice reading and comprehension skills at their level while building vocabulary and practicing grammar structures. This program has been so successful that we have had several enquiries from other schools about the program. There is a teacher/student interface that allows teachers to monitor students' reading level, see how many minutes they are on the program each week and see the results of the online tests they are doing. We are also rolling out the writing program from Reading A-Z which supports the writing process in English.

Friends School Newsletter

Spring 2014



Upper School Sports News

The high point of our sports program this year was the participation of our boys and girls basketball teams in a major tournament in Jordan during the second week of March. Teams from several Middle Eastern Countries participated in the tournament and the school community was very proud of our girls' team who achieved second place in the tournament.



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Photo on the cover:
 Dr. Kenneth Hulslander with the students on campus

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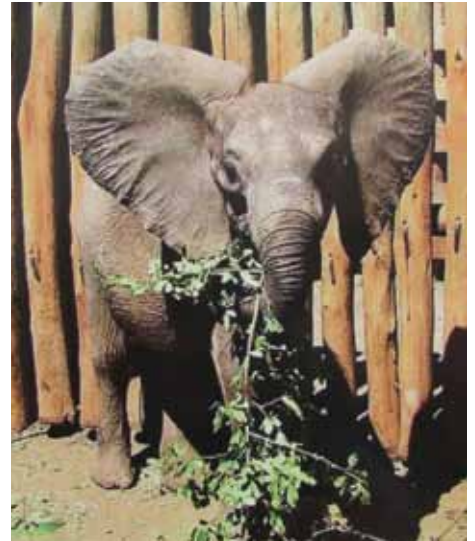
Adopting Rorogio!

By Duha Masri, Head of Preschool

The children in our kindergarten are engaged in a project that reflects genuine understanding of our school's core values of integrity, fairness, respect and justice. Each year we explore academic themes that provide opportunities for the children to collaborate with their teachers, peers and families. This encourages children as they begin to believe that living by these core values empowers them to become ethical leaders and global citizens. They also learn that the time to begin is ... now!

This year's theme is on the shared responsibility we hold for our planet. Students began with learning and research. They went far beyond mere academic knowledge by considering how to be personally involved.

During the research and learning phase, children came across the ivory trade of tusks in Kenya which often orphans new-born elephants. Our kindergartners were concerned and looked for a way to take action. With the help of teachers and parents, we got in touch with The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (<https://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org>) who cares for orphaned elephants.



Rorogio was orphaned by poachers and adopted by kindergartners.

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Lower School News in Brief

By Kenneth Hulslander, Lower School Principal



Lower school students at their break time

I am in my eighth month of service at the Lower School and am happy to report a continued positive evolution of the projects undertaken by the Lower School staff and myself.

Primary among these projects is our move to a completely standards-based learning community and grading system. Our goal is to have objectives/standards and assessment rubrics in place across the curriculum by the end of the current school year. This process is being done in a way that completely supports the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP) process in our school.

Speaking of PYP, in January of this year, Duha Masri and Frieda Khayyat attended PYP coordinator training in Amman, Jordan. They were accompanied by seven teachers who attended implementation workshops and visited PYP schools in Amman before returning to Ramallah. Everybody came back energized and with a much deeper understanding of the PYP process and the work that we needed to do.

I am also happy to announce that there are some great construction/improvement projects going on at the Lower School. We just recently completed a new playground area near the entrance gate on Friends Street. Not only does this project pro-

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Children learned that caring for orphaned elephants is made possible by people who step forward, leading them to decide to adopt one. They made and sold holiday cards in the community to raise money and spread awareness of the damage done by ivory trade. As a result, the Ramallah Friends kindergarten now sponsors Rorogio who was born on August 10, 2012, and was orphaned by poachers in Kenya. But she is a very robust little elephant who was lucky enough to be rescued thanks to many people who ensured help came her way and now continue to care for her until she can become independent.

The children did not stop with adopting Rorogio. They are now engaged in conversations with their teachers, families and school partners on how to support a local zoo in Qalqilya, Palestine. Such opportunities for children to know and care for their world are pivotal to us here at the kindergarten of Ramallah Friends Schools. Our children recognize that these opportunities are important to their commitment in solving problems, and that it is possible for them to care for humans, animals and the planet.



A poster created by kindergarten students about Rorogio

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vide students with a new place to play, but, thanks to a substantial donation from OshKosh, we also have new playground equipment and an all-sand play area. We are very excited about the potential of this space. In addition, we are in the process of rebuilding the outdoor drinking fountain area. The new site will be more functional and much more esthetically pleasing. This transformation has also allowed us to widen the stairs to the lower playgrounds and add some accessibility features.

Finally, so you know that we are not all work and no play — in January around 50 teachers, staff members, the assistant principal, Frieda Khayyat and I went a one-day excursion to Golan Heights. We visited a Druze community on the Syrian border, a fortress from the time of the Crusades and the source of the Jordan River. We had a great time and are already planning our next trip to Haifa this spring.



Lower school teachers during their school trip to Golan Heights

MUN at the RFS!

By Olivia Grugan, Upper School English Teacher and Director of MUN club

As the director of the Model United Nations (MUN) club at the Ramallah Friends School (RFS), I have learned that our students are different.

In October, our club hosted a speaker from an educational company for MUN called “Best Delegate.” He came to the Upper School from the United States and gave a two-hour workshop on MUN skills. Towards the end of his presentation, the workshop leader asked our students, “What do you think of the UN?” As I’ve learned to expect from Friends School students, many hands shot into the air. The first student that was called upon said, “I think it’s ineffective.”

As any strong teacher would, the speaker didn’t show his initial reaction and asked the student to elaborate. Soon a handful of students (including some of the members of our MUN board) were explaining why they think the UN represents an unfair balance of power between nations, why it is incapable of providing many of the services it promises and how it could be made better — or even, what institutions could exist in its place and be far more effective.

After the workshop was over and most students had left, this facilitator admitted to me that he has led this same workshop at countless schools in many countries. In all of his experiences he has never had students share this opinion. I asked him what the typical response has been. “Students generally talk about how impactful, transformative and effective the UN is,” he responded. But at the Friends School, for the first time, he heard students criticize the institution itself.

So what does this incident say about our students?



RFS students attending the MUN conference in India

Well, first of all, it says the students are everything that teachers want them to be: independent thinkers.

It says these students won’t settle for “good enough.” They are committed to finding ways to make things better.

It also says that while they are the idealists we all expect teenagers to be, they are also realists who won’t allow adults to fool them into thinking things are under control. They understand they are entering a world that is going to need a lot of work.

I’m excited to see what they will do about it.

Upper School News in Brief

By Mahmoud Amra, Upper School Principal

IB Program

The school has been identified this year by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) to carry out a five year extensive self-study and complete a program evaluation questionnaire. The process requires the participation of all stakeholders: governors, staff, parents and students. All teachers and staff members who are involved in the IB Diploma program have completed their part of the self-study. We are now in the process of receiving feedback from parents through a questionnaire that was developed in cooperation with a specialized center managed by a parent who volunteered to help. Once all the feedback is gathered from all parties, the school will send a detailed report to the IBO who will evaluate the implementation of the program at the school and send us back a report with the commendations and recommendations.

MUN Conferences

This year, the members of the Model United Nations (MUN) club worked throughout the entire summer preparing for the second MUN conference in Palestine that took place in November. The MUN Conference was very successful with many participants from several Palestinian schools. Our students also participated in MUN conferences in India, Jordan and Turkey.

Students Exchange Program

The school, once again, nominated two students for each of our partner schools: Westtown School, Sidwell Friends School, George School and Penn Charter School. These four Quaker Schools have generously offered to accept one student each and to provide scholarships for them. Each of these schools will interview the two nominated students and select one of them to study there for the academic year 2014-2015.

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I Learned a lot about “walls” this Fall

By Joseph Grugan, 11th grade Upper School student

As a child, I was generally content to remain inside the walls that surrounded me. I played sports, practiced guitar and attended church. I never tried to step outside my walls until this summer when my sister suggested I move with her to the West Bank of Palestine to complete high school at the Ramallah Friends School. When I made the decision to go with my sister, I knew I was breaking down almost every wall that had surrounded my life. There were many things for which I was prepared to be unprepared. I was ready to adjust to a new schedule, a new language, a new culture, a new climate and new food. But I was not prepared for “The Wall.”

It wasn't until I was standing beneath the Israeli separation wall, staring up at the eight meters of cold, grey concrete, that I was really able to grasp what it meant not to be free. The wall I was standing under keeps my Palestinian classmates from participating in Model United Nations in Jerusalem. It closes off certain marketplaces to entrepreneurs from whom I buy produce every week. It separates my neighbors from their families. The wall will continue to determine what Palestinians can and cannot do for the foreseeable future.

I have gained a greater appreciation for my freedom since moving to Palestine. As a person who can choose his own walls, I can study where and what I like. Soon I will return to the United States to study at an American university, where I look forward to sharing my story of life behind the wall.



Joseph Grugan, an 11th grade Upper School student

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Christmas Celebration

Our students celebrated Christmas this year by organizing a Christmas Carols evening which was attended by hundreds of students and parents. The audience enjoyed and participated with our choir in singing traditional Christmas Carols.

White Gifts

The school's white gifts committee managed this year to raise over US \$6000 during the months of November and December through bake sale and other fundraising activities. The money was then donated to charitable organizations and some families who are in need.



Bake sale at the Upper School

From the Director's Office

By Joyce Ajlouny, RFS Director

Quaker Links

Our school would not have survived 145 years of turmoil and hardship if it weren't for our noble Quaker mission which is further fermented by the various and precious partnerships we have with Friends from around the globe.

This winter the school had the pleasure of receiving Colin Saxton, FUM's General Secretary, and Eden Grace, FUM's Director of Global Ministries. Being that they were both fairly new to their positions, this was an important visit that further familiarized them with the school community. It was heartening to see them interact and build relationships with the students, teachers, administrators and board members. I could see the pride in their faces as they saw firsthand what a profound impact FUM's work, through the Ramallah Friends School, has on the lives of its students and the wider community. Reading newsletters and reports don't have the same impact as visiting because "seeing is believing" and more importantly "seeing is feeling" how individual lives are touched. The school community enjoyed connecting with Colin and Eden and asked them to return often.

Back in the US, I had the pleasure of attending the Bethesda Monthly Meeting's (BMM) Spring Fling — a lively annual event that generates funds for our scholarship fund. This program has been in place for over thirty years, thanks to the initiative of BMM member China Jessup and the efforts of many that continued to sustain the program. Attending the function was quite a treat as I really enjoyed the social interaction, food, auction, music and the friendships formed. However, I was most touched by the "behind the scenes" effort of those who organized the event this year and throughout the past three decades. I wish I could have brought our students with me to show them that there are many who care about them, pray for them and raise funds that help transform their lives. For now, they'll have to make do with my word . . . and some pictures.

At the same time, the Ramallah Friends Schools had the pleasure of receiving delegations of students, staff and board members from sister Quaker schools in the US. Four of these schools provide a full annual scholarship for one of our sophomores to attend their schools. We recently received news of the generous scholarships our students are provided from Quaker colleges, like Earlham and Guilford.

Such partnerships, along with those from the various monthly and yearly meetings and from F/friends who continue to send us support, greetings and prayers, are essential as we continue to move forward as a leading school in Palestine. They are an important reminder of our remarkable Quaker testimonies that ensure our students are given hope, dignity and the opportunity to reach their potential as value-led learners and human beings.



Bethesda Monthly Meeting's Spring Fling to raise money for scholarships of Ramallah Friends Schools

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*

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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 2013-14 range from U.S. \$2,800 to \$3,100.

For further information and inquiries, feel free to contact our office at development@rfs.edu.ps 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, November 1, 2013 - March 31, 2014

Donor Thanks

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Above: The new playground at the Lower School



Above: RFS choir singing at the Christmas Carols evening



Right: Fourth graders at the lower school wearing the Palestinian national costumes during one of their projects

