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Letter from Head of School

Adrian Moody – RFS Head of School

I wish you a warm welcome from Ramallah Friends School. I am now coming into the end of my first year here in Ramallah. Time has passed quickly as I have come to become familiar with the school, its community, and its culture.

I am pleased to inform you that we have been contacted by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) with the outcome of our

elementary staff brilliantly led by Duha Masri as the PYP Coordinator and the senior leadership of the lower campus.

The authorization of the IBO is a sign that we are developing as a school and that we are striving to improve. RFS is one of the few IB World Schools in the region that offers three programs of the IBO.

We recently celebrated Easter in Ramallah. As someone new to Ramallah, I have come to understand that Christian denominations celebrate Easter on the Eastern calendar and Christmas on the Western calendar. I was lucky this year to be able to celebrate Easter on both calendars. I think what struck me most was that Christians and non-Christians celebrated Easter together as one. It was a time of great joy.

As a Christian from a theological background I went to the Mount of Olives to visit the Garden of Gethsemane. This is the place of the agony in the garden. There are eight olive trees in the garden and it is said that they were witness to Jesus' anguish as he prayed alone before his betrayal. We celebrate Easter because it represents to us



RFS Launches First Arabic Reading Platform in the Region

January 29th marked the launching of RFS initiative "Yalla Neqra", a digital reading platform in Arabic (ages 5-8). The platform is sponsored by Paltel and Bank of Palestine in coordination with the Ministry of Education, and we aim for it to reach all Arabic speaking students in Palestine and beyond. The platform offers Arabic story books registered in appropriate levels for students in grades UKG, 1st, 2nd to listen to and read on tablets and smartphones.*



recent PYP Verification visit and that the IBO has approved our school for authorization to offer the Primary Years Programme. This is a great achievement and comes from the hard work and dedication by the

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Teaching Young English Language Learners at RFS

By: Amanda Rukab Khalaf – KG English Teacher

Since 2010, I have been teaching English to Lower Kindergarten and Upper Kindergarten students. These several years have been a pleasant learning experience for me and have taught me what it means to be an educator. I have become familiar with identifying my students' linguistic and academic needs and adjusting classroom instruction accordingly to accommodate these needs. Students have different learning abilities and it is my duty as a teacher to find ways through teaching that can help a student grasp what is being taught to them. Whether it is through storytelling, the use of realia, or even a song, there are different strategies that can be used to help strengthen a student's comprehension and knowledge of the target language. "If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn" - Ignacio Estrada

The key is to make learning English fun and engaging for 4-6 year olds by creating a vibrant and colorful classroom environment. Students are greeted individually with a 'good morning' as they enter the room, where in return I am greeted back with 23 good mornings. The line leader takes charge and goes over the morning calendar with his/her classmates joining in as they sing along to songs about the days of the week, the seasons, the weather, and the months. Everyone's favorite time is story time. While they all sit still with eyes wide open listening carefully to the story, I enjoy looking at them as they attentively absorb every word that I read to them. Every class ends with about 3 minutes of dancing, where they are free to express themselves



Amanda with her students.

through song and dance. It's important for my students to enjoy English class, because if they enjoy English class, they will love the English language, if they love the English language, then they will surely learn English.*

Lower School News in Brief

By: Frieda Dahdah Khayat
Lower School Principal

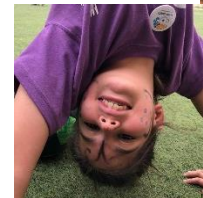
- White Gifts Program marked another success this year with students, parents, and teachers participating in weekly bake sales to help raise money for those less fortunate than ourselves.

Another form of our community service program included 3rd and 4th graders visiting Al-Amari Quaker Preschool and several humanity and inclusion institutions.

- In seeking all methods on becoming friendly to the environment and reducing running cost we are collecting donations for the installment of Photo Voltaic cells. Environmental awareness activities included celebration of World Environment Day in March and students participated in planting and cleaning. We organized educational games aimed at raising awareness on water consumption in February, in coordination with the Water Authority.

- Construction of the additional floor above KG building is expected to end by May 2018. Hopefully, this floor will be ready for the academic year 2018/2019.

- Parental involvement was significant this year with many parents volunteering in various activities and sessions. Volunteering parents helped in painting new outdoor floor games in the school yard for students to enjoy and learn, while a number of parents were kind to conduct vision screening for all LKG, 1st and 5th grade students, and others volunteered to bake cookies and colour Easter eggs with KG students before holidays.*



Upper School News in Brief

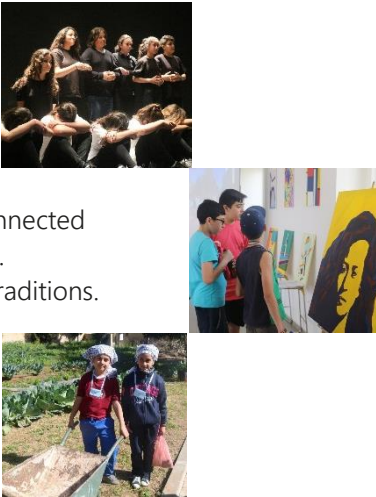
This is a most exciting time of the year for the Upper School. College acceptances start rolling in and this year, class of 2018 secured acceptances in top institutions worldwide. We also have four Ivy League acceptances. This is truly impressive especially that acceptance rates at Harvard and other schools for regular decision dipped down below 3%. We are proud of Class of 2018 and hope to continue to usher future generations into excellent educational institutions worldwide.

- As part of our Action and Service program for the middle years program, grade 8 students connected with a neighboring elementary school and worked with them on establishing an organic garden. Our students hosted first graders, talked to them about gardening and Palestinian agricultural traditions. This activity is an ongoing project that will hopefully continue next year.

- Grade 10 students participated in a debate competition a couple of weeks ago and did very well. Most valuable lesson taken away from this experience is the importance of basing arguments in facts which requires research skills. Research skills are part of the Approaches to learning skills we target within our IB programs.

The annual Open Day was held on the 20th of April and it included various fun activities including sports, arts, drama and science.*

By: Riyam Kafri
Upper School Principal



IT Department Accomplishments 2017-2018

By Salim Zughayer – IT Manager

Our work and responsibilities at RFS' Information Technology (IT) Department is spread out over two campuses and covers more than 45 classrooms serving almost 200 staff members and 1400 students. We began the current academic year by setting a yearly plan with specific goals, and we are glad to be ending this year with many accomplishments. As part of RFS' mission



towards achieving Excellence in Education, where Quaker education calls for high academic standards and a willingness to experiment with new methodology and curricula, and in line with our commitment to bring

innovative educational methods to Palestine we have taken many IT- related initiatives this year. We officially initiated a relationship with Microsoft and will be introducing students, teachers, and staff to free access and use of Microsoft's Educational applications.



We also joined the international Cisco Networking Academy, joining more than 9000 institutions in 170+ countries around the world that are certified to offer the Networking Academy's curriculum. RFS' afterschool programs now offer two separate programs in cooperation with Mind Craft Innovation Studio Palestine, aimed at inspiring children to build on their natural curiosity through hands-on learning in Engineering for Kids, which bring science, technology, engineering and math to kids in a fun and challenging way,

and Robotics which brings easy-to-use coding software and engaging STEM challenges to young students. Inside classrooms, Middle School students are learning hands-on Multimedia production through smartphone technology while Lower School students learn coding among other necessary computer skills. Major changes are continuously implemented on RFS' Education platform and it has proven very useful for students, parents and teachers alike. We look forward to more accomplishments next year.*

CONTINUED FROM COVER PAGE

Letter from Head of School

new life, hope and salvation for all. Easter would not have been possible without Good Friday. George Fox started Quakerism in a time of great social upheaval and war. He rebelled against the religious and political authorities by proposing an unusual and uncompromising approach to the Christian faith. He travelled throughout Britain as a dissenting preacher, for which he was often persecuted by the authorities who disapproved of his beliefs. It is Easter that reminds us that suffering is an unavoidable part of life. Based in Ramallah RFS is a school surrounded by the conflict that affects all of Palestine and as such the Quaker values of peace and non-violence are an important guide for us. Peace is not just the absence of war and violence – it is more than that. It is about our day to day relationships with our families, our neighbors, our students and our colleagues. Peace is about how we cope with people we may find sometimes difficult and different from ourselves. It is about accepting there are different ways of doing things and that different does not mean worse. It is about right relationships. It is an important understanding that we bring to our students and our community. At RFS we have a community living and working together to create a truly unique experience. It is an experience so unique that it lasts through the ages and has long lasting effect in people's lives. It is an experience that offers opportunities to students that change their world and will, in turn, lead to change in Palestine and beyond.*



Public school students visiting the Upper School's organic garden and participating in environmental activities with RFS students.



Parent volunteer participating in teaching KG students about Environmental Stewardship.

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FRIENDS IN RESIDENCE: VOLUNTEERING AT RFS

And it is the teachers like Linda, a 5th grade teacher who wrote an article, who was at a workshop I did today and someone who I will be helping with her students. I am seeing first-hand how hundreds of children are being given amazing opportunities at this school and are being prepared for life with an excellent education and experience that RFS offers. This school is a place of hope for the future. The children have such amazing support from their families, teachers, staff and Quaker Friends. It is a privilege to be here in person and to represent the hundreds of friends who can only love and support from afar.*

Participate in the future of Ramallah Friends School. With your tax-deductible gifts!



U.S \$ Gifts: Tax-deductible gifts should be made payable to Friends United Meeting 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 Quaker International Educational Trust (QuIET), noting "for Ramallah" on the back and saying if Gift Aid may be claimed, and sent to: QuIET, 5 Dene Terrace West, Wylam, Northumberland, NE41 8AZ or Averil Armstrong at QuIET, Tel: 01295 720019; e-mail: averilarmstrong@hotmail.com

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*Donate either to the General Award Fund (partial, any amount) or ESJ Award Fund (full). Tuition fees for 2018-19 range from U.S \$2,700 to \$4,120. For further information and inquiries, feel free to contact our office at development@rfs.edu.ps or Tel: +972-2-295-2286, www.rfs.edu.ps

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HORIZONS

By RFS Student Basil Mari



The Upper School's scholarship exchange program with George School (PA), Westtown School (PA), Sidwell Friends School (DC), and Penn Charter School (PA) in USA gives one RFS student the opportunity to spend one academic year at each of these very reputable Quaker schools in the US.

I had never been to America before I reached Westtown School in Philadelphia. My travels were mostly solitary, but this time I had my brother at my side. We stepped into the streets of Philly. As I witnessed the hefty infrastructure and breathed in the air of a model large American city for the first time, I became overwhelmed with curiosity. My dorm, called Guerster house, had no shortage of great friends from all over. My friends were Japanese, American, Indian, Indonesian, and Chinese, something I could never dream of back home. I walked the streets of Philly with the person pictured below, my best friend, Jason. Walking in a city is the most intimate activity one can be in exploring it. It's the distillation of the desire that was kindled

in me—to experience these urban expanses as raw as one could. These curiosities were also intellectual, motivating me to learn all I could about conflicts and politics in both America and the world. The school system played no small part in allowing me to satisfy these curiosities. The school system provided us complete freedom to create our own curriculum, as challenging as each one desired. With courses like computer science, mobile app development, and creative writing, the school had a wide range of specific and interesting courses fit for every student's interests. My classes were not particularly challenging—especially when compared with the IB program, it was a walk in the park. That said,

there is nothing stopping a challenge-hungry student from taking Calculus 3, Physics 3, and *The Wire*. I, personally, enjoyed the luxury of free time and the constant company of friends, as I lived my days, rather than break my back with coursework. Before, during, and after my wonderful experience, I wondered why anyone would prefer their home to braving a new world.

I encourage all students, no matter the grades or the English capabilities, to apply. If one does not neglect political awareness, this opportunity will do immeasurable good to expand his worldview. Living halfway across the world, with a remarkably diverse student population, in the highly political USA, with urban cities—particularly unfamiliar to us as Palestinians—as close as 20 minutes away has made me an immensely more worldly person, and I expect it will do the same to all who are as curious.*



Donor Thanks

We would like to thank the following people for their recent donations to Ramallah Friends School (continued on page 7):

Abdel Wahab Khateeb
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FRIENDS IN RESIDENCE: VOLUNTEERING AT RFS

By Janice Olsen



The Friends in Residence Program seeks to increase Quaker presence at RFS by supporting existing programs and strengthening international ties with Friends around the world. Volunteers are welcomed into the RFS community and given the opportunity to experience many aspects of Palestinian life.

I have been blessed to be volunteering at Ramallah Friends School. I am member of Bethesda Friends Meeting which has supported this school for many years. When I heard that Friends United Meeting and the school welcomed volunteers, I saw this as an opportunity to contribute

my skills as an occupational therapist/ handwriting specialist. My experience here has been amazing. I am so grateful. Palestine is beautiful and full of friendly people who have welcomed me into their lives. What does it mean to come to a Quaker School in Palestine? It is not the

buildings that make the school – it is the community. It is the teachers, the parents and especially the children. It is the children that have touched me the most. The children that I used to look at in the brochures are now children that I know - Dalia, Yafa, Adam, and many more. It's as if they all came to life for me.

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