

THE OLIVE PRESS

RAMALLAH FRIENDS SCHOOL MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

#STAY_HOME_AND_SAVE_LIVES



Realize Potential | Fulfill Dreams | Share Hope

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Ending a Challenging School Year Apart but Together...

Letter from Head of School

This is the last Olive Press for this academic year. I am writing at a time when the official school year is about to close although the last time the school community was together face-to-face was three months ago.

We have all been working remotely since that time. When I look back at the Olive Press written in August I said "RFS is a school situated in a difficult region. It provides an education unparalleled in Palestine. It is also a sanctuary – it is green and lush and gives the opportunity for our children to interact in the safety we provide."

Who could have foreseen the immense upheaval that would engulf the world just a few months later?

There are many things that can be said about these times but at the top of the list is my desire to say how immensely proud I am of the RFS community. **Much has been asked of our students in the last few months. They have shouldered massive changes and disappointments and yet transitioned quickly to our collective effort of fighting the spread of Covid-19.**

RFS is more than a physical sanctuary. It is a community which, through these most difficult times, has shown itself to be strong.

To the class of 2020 we give our congratulations and our best wishes. This is not the ending that you hoped for or deserved. But know that you are following in the footsteps of countless generations of RFS graduates. At RFS we have a connection and we are a community, not only for our time together at school but for life. The fact that some are now scattered does not change that.

I believe we will see that 2020 will have strengthened our community. Like generations of our students who have sustained their friendships nurtured at school for a lifetime, we will pull through this together, despite our early separation and we will be together again.

Wishing you and your loved ones wellness and peace and good health,

Sincerely,

Adrian Moody



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Alumni in the Spotlight – Maisa Zeedani

By Besan Omary Jaawan – Development & Communications Manager

Meet Maisa Zeedani, Class of 2003!

Maisa is now an instructor at Stanford University in San Francisco, USA. After finishing her doctoral program in clinical psychology at Wayne State University (Michigan), she pursued a three year combined clinical-research fellowship at Stanford in pain medicine.



While at RFS, the Class of 2003 were one of the first few classes to embark through the IB program- and they had to do so during the toughest years of the Second Intifada. However, Maisa is fond of her memories here:

"I really enjoyed High School; the educational experience, the social environment, the teachers, and my friends. I have always been somewhat of a nerd, and teachers at that time helped me recognize that I had potential to achieve my goals."

At Stanford, Maisa spends her time either investigating on her research grant and other projects or seeing patients as a pain psychologist.

She is licensed for clinical practice and was awarded a Career Development Award from the National Institute on Drug Abuse to conduct research on patients with chronic pain who are taking prescription opioids.

After fulfilling her dream to study Psychology, Maisa describes it saying: "It has been an adventure, and it's important to know that for studying in the USA, you are not able to practice or get licensed without a graduate degree so it's a long process, but certainly worth it in the end if its where your true passion lies!"

Even today, Maisa thanks her RFS teachers for supporting her to aim high which she says helped set her up for future success. A mother of one son, she tells students to: "Always challenge yourself, step outside of your comfort zone and live in the moment!" *



My Experience in Online Teaching

By Silvia Nassar Mustaklem – LS English Teacher

Mixed feelings hit me when I was notified I will be teaching online. The excitement of hearing my students' voices was countered by the worry that I would miss bonding with them and reading their facial expressions and body language. I would miss the liveliness of the classroom.

Face to face interaction plays a major role in shaping the learning experience. While teaching online, I noticed that the loss of this interaction affected the learning experience, however, it did not hinder the learning process from moving forward.

Online teaching has some advantages such as flexibility and convenience. It also allows for inclusion of lots of visuals, videos and online games as a core to the lessons.



Above all, what really made the process successful was that the connection between my students and me was maintained during isolation, which caused a positive impact on the wellbeing of all of us.*

A Look at Our History

1994
An improved ethics curriculum, titled "Health and the Human Spirit" was piloted at the Boys School.

1995
A special education program, now the Learning Support Program, was established to help students with learning disabilities. It was the first inclusive special education program in Palestine.

International Baccalaureate Program
In the mid-1990s the school's Board of Trustees decided to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum to junior and senior students. It was the first IB program in Palestine and placed the RFS Upper School among the best in the world.



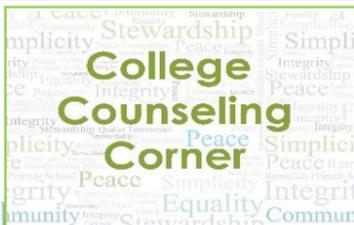
In 1997, American Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited RFS Upper Campus and met with students and staff during her visit to Palestine.

1998
A new uniform was introduced for both schools. Girls and boys wore the same gray pants and striped shirt, with an option of shorts and skirts at the Lower School.

A new science building and four new classrooms at the Upper School were completed with support from the United States Agency for International Development/ American School and Hospitals Abroad USAID/ASHA.



*To know more about history of RFS please visit our website www.rfs.edu.ps



College Counseling Corner

By Chris Akel – College Counselor

Shout outs!

Despite the unprecedented interruption of the Coronavirus, the Class of 2020 is graduating this year with offers that rival the previous three years! Alf mabrook to our seniors!

Admissions data:

- 181 Total Offers
 - 32 Offers from Top-10 Ranked institutions in the US, UK, Canada, and Europe
 - MIT
 - University of Toronto
 - Kings College and more!
 - 22 Offers from the Top 100 US institutions
 - Boston University
 - Swarthmore College and more!
 - 10 schools of medicine, law, and engineering
 - 17 countries, breaking all-time school record
 - \$4.5+ million in financial aid, with 17 full demonstrated need awards
- General:
- College List: Students should focus this summer on researching colleges for their [College List](#). Check out [Niche](#), [UCAS Search](#), and find more online.
 - Virtual Information Sessions: This spring, many students attended 150+ university online sessions, and this is set to continue over the summer and fall.
 - See the [College Counseling Handbook*](#)

Lower School Principal's Letter: Distance Learning as a Choice under Exceptional Circumstances

By Frieda Dahdah Khayyat – LS Principal

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 around the world and the closure of all sectors, the date of March 5th 2020 marked a transitional point in the educational sector in Palestine. Just as the disruption of schools was announced, and what that entailed due to the announcement of state of emergency for more than two months, our school was quick to find alternatives to ensure the continuity of communication between our teachers and their students.

Creating an educational emergency plan was one of the first initiatives to be completed, and then the efforts were put together to create an active online teaching platform. This came as a first and surprising experience of its kind for all of us. At the beginning, even the availability of devices was not a given for all members of our community including teachers, staff, parents and students. Education platform was quickly activated and online training sessions were organized for teachers according to grade levels starting with Fifth grade and ending at the KG level.

Distance learning began during the first week of school closure and we started working on a schedule for online lessons focusing on basic topics such as Arabic and English and Math and PYP in addition to one counseling lesson every two weeks. This system enabled our teachers to stay connected to their students and they were also able to prepare specific lessons aimed at facilitating the concepts that were included in the study plans within the required levels.

Counseling e-lessons, for Grades 5th-2nd, were focused on discussing feelings and wishes students had while under quarantine, and how COVID-19 had caused big changes in our daily lives. A physical health e-lesson about puberty was given by the school nurse to fifth graders, to prepare them for this stage of life and how to be able to deal with it as a natural stage of life everyone goes through, and how it affects the body and mind etc... Specifically since these students are transferring to the Upper School.

The school has worked very hard and with great efforts to make this new teaching experience a success that leaves a positive mark on all our students, even though it was the first of its kind under an unusual situation everyone was living through.

Faced with the changes and complications of life, distance learning has now become a high priority for anyone who works in schools. And working on this process and improving it is not only an option but rather an inevitable strategy for bridging a gap in the world of teaching and learning, and a real fact which demands being prepared for it and its techniques as a substitute for when students cannot reach their school campuses, and this leads us to ask an important and open question: What will happen to teaching in schools in the future? *

Lower School Library Corner

By Nadine Haj Abed- Lower School Librarian

As parents face the uncertainties of school closings and the disruption or cancellation of children's activities due to COVID-19, the Lower School's library continued its service even from the safety of our own homes.

Free library resources such as read aloud stories, online educational games and virtual museum tours were sent to the parents so that children and families can access online.

An invitation was sent for parents, grandparents and students to join by reading and videotaping a story for children. And the videos were published on the school's Facebook page so that all the members of our community could enjoy them together.

Another library activity was an activity book that allowed the students to describe themselves and feelings during this difficult time, it contained advice on how to stay healthy and students had to write down their daily agenda during quarantine so it can be used as a reference for the future.

Living under quarantine was a challenging experience for all of us... Hoping and wishing the best for our students in the future.*

Middle School Virtual Library

By Carmen Abdul Hadi – Middle School Librarian

My dear students and families, I hope my message finds you in good health. It seems we're not going to get together until the end of this school year...but we're still connected and we can keep in touch.

I have created for you the Middle School Virtual Library. Here is the link: <https://sites.google.com/site/rfsmiddleschool/home>

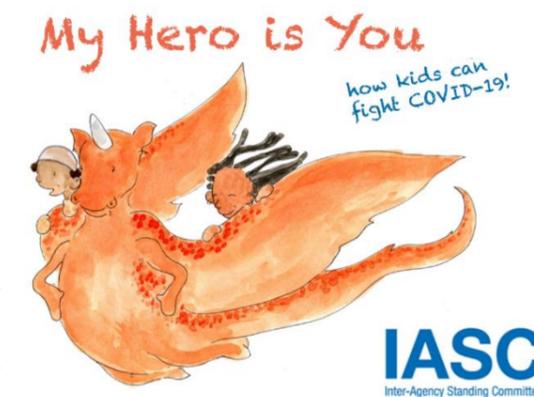
I'm so grateful to have shared the library with you this year... and I can't wait to see your beautiful faces again! It's difficult to know what the future holds but keep your spirits high and this too shall pass!

You are heroes..and I wish I could have read this book to you...Please ask your parents to do it on my behalf!

[My Hero is You, Storybook for Children on COVID-19 \(English\)](#)

[My Hero is You, Storybook for Children on COVID-19 \(Arabic\)](#)

I hope you will stay safe and healthy and strong! *



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

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Upcoming Dates & Events



June 1st – 4th
Registration for new students 2020-2021
@ Finance Office between 8 am - 2 pm

June 8th – 25th
Registration for current students 2020-2021
@Finance Office between 8 am – 2 pm

June 17th
Report Cards Distribution

