



Quaker Education in Palestine since 1869

George Fox University's visit to RFS!

By Scott Headley, Dean of Education at George Fox University



George Fox University professors with the RFS staff

What happens when you take three professors from George Fox University (GFU) in Oregon, USA, and send them to Ramallah in Palestine, to work with teachers at the Ramallah Friends School (RFS)? Professors Keelan LoFaro and Lynette Elwyn, along with Scot Headley, Dean of Education at GFU, found out recently when they traveled to Ramallah at the invitation of Joyce Ajlouny, RFS Director. What happened was friendship, discovery, collegiality, challenge, hope, laughter, and rich conversations. The three Americans were asked to develop and deliver a professional development program to middle level educators at RFS tasked with implanting the Middle Years Program (MYP), the middle school curriculum approach of the International Baccalaureate Program. RFS has long been an International Baccalaureate School, although the MYP is relatively new to RFS.

Over the course of a nine-day period, the American team worked with RFS teachers and staff in a combination of large group meetings, small group work sessions, individual interviews, and classroom observations. Featured areas addressed in the professional development program were interdisciplinary planning, instruction,

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Friends School Newsletter

Spring 2016



Personal project drawing about Women in Arab Society through the last decade. By RFS student Selena Hussein. Read story on page 5.



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 Quaker Education in Palestine
 since 1869

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*Photo on the cover: Personal project drawing
 by RFS student Selena Rabah*

Ramallah Friends School is a
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George Fox University’s visit to RFS!

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curriculum, formative and summative assessment strategies, communication, and collegiality. When the Americans were asked about their motivation for traveling to Ramallah, Scot Headley said, “ This is my third trip to Ramallah. I continue to be impressed with the dedication of the teaching staff at the Friends School, and we wanted to find a way to enter into meaningful engagement and mutually beneficial activities with colleagues in Ramallah. I can tell you that at the conclusion of our trip, my colleagues and I have learned about conditions in Palestine, the good work of the teachers at the upper and lower school, and are excited about continuing our association with them.”

Teachers warmly welcomed their American counterparts. A warm and comfortable relationship was established between the groups. Teachers commented on the encouragement they received and their desire to continue to work together to improve professional practices.

At the conclusion of the program, Americans and Palestinians alike agreed to continue dialogue at a distance and committed to finding ways of growing this budding collaboration. Conversations are already underway to determine if and when this might be possible.



*George Fox University professors
 with the RFS staff*

Lower School News in Brief

By Frieda Dahdah Khayat, Lower School Interim Principal



Christmas: Five wonderful Christmas performances took place in December. A great number of parents attended and enjoyed the lovely decorations and costumes made by the students from recycled materials. (See photo above.)

Movie nights: A movie night was organized by the librarian for the first grade in December and one for sixth graders in May.

Resources: A lot of educational resources were purchased this year to ensure differentiation in learning and to enhance inquiry based learning.

Hebrew course: As a means of reflecting our belief in serving the community, we started a Hebrew language course for parents in the school in February.

IT accomplishments:

- **Coding Club:** in cooperation with a Palestinian Communication Company, the school started the Coding Club for fourth graders that allows students to develop problem-solving skills, logic, and to enhance their creativity.

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Lower School Environmental Club Raises Awareness

By Miraj Othman, Lower School Social Studies teacher

*“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.
The next best time is today.”—Chinese proverb*

The Lower School Environmental Club works to raise environmental and health awareness at the school. A small group of students established the club in 2010, with my support. This year, there are 35 members who are 4th to 6th grade students.

The club was inspired by the City of Ramallah’s “Healthy and Environmentally-Friendly School” project that encourages reclaiming agricultural land, rationing water, energy use, recycling, and raising environmental awareness.

The Environmental Club has brought this newest project to life. Our students reclaimed land by creating an organic garden in a neglected area of the school campus. A drip irrigation system minimizes water consumption, and sixth graders built a greenhouse from recycled plastic bottles.

The garden allows our students to extend their learning beyond the classroom walls—a Primary Years Program (PYP) curriculum standard. Students reflect the PYP learner’s profile by being inquirers, communicators, principled, caring, and knowledgeable. All work in the garden is done during classes so students can experience the PYP themes of “Sharing our Globe” and “Where We Are in Place and Time.”



RFS teacher Miraj working in the organic garden

In the garden our students are demonstrating responsibility, respect, independency, enthusiasm, and commitment. They plant, water, weed, and care for the garden that has over 12 different vegetables. They sell garden produce to teachers and parents, with proceeds going to buy more seeds and supplies.

On April 16th, I will be working with the Environmental Club hosting Environment Day. We’re competing in the City of Ramallah’s contest for the most environmentally friendly and healthy school. During the day, students and parents will learn about the environment and healthy eating, enjoy food grown in our garden and drink fresh-squeezed juice. This special day is just one of the short-term benefits from having an organic garden on campus!

Lower School News in Brief (continued from page 2)

- **Edu-nation:** The school started using a new teachers/parents/ students portal through a new application called Edu-nation to enhance better communication between teachers and parents regarding subjects, materials, grades, attendance, conduct, behavior, and many others issues.

Professional Development: Several in-house professional development sessions were held in the school this year.

- In February, a one-day training was carried out on how to “Teach like a Champion,” as a follow up on last year’s workshop on classroom management and methods that support the educational process.
- Twenty-one teachers and administrators attended a two-day workshop on “Making PYP Happen in Classroom” in English given by an IBO trainer from Turkey.
- In December, the principal and Head of Kindergarten attended the three-day “Teacher Skill Conference” in Jordan.



Lower school students participating in the bake sale for the White Gifts program

White Gifts Program: The White Gifts program continues to serve our community and reflects the Quaker value of empathy. The students, parents, and faculty managed to collect approximately \$11,100 through donations and bake sales. The money collected was distributed to 141 needy families in Ramallah and El-Bireh.

Nawwarat: The RFS Student Company

By Yousef Jadallah, CEO of Nawwarat, RFS 11th Grade IB Student

Ramallah Friends School has been highly regarded over the years for providing a dynamic learning environment and a chance for students to apply their academic knowledge practically. The school was approached at the end of 2015 by Injaz Organization, in order for our school to be involved in their business entrepreneurship competition “The Student Company.”

The Student Company is an annual competition held on a national level, where 11th grade students from cities around Palestine compete by making startup companies that last three to five months. The best student company among them goes on to compete during the finals, in which the best company from each country in the Arab world participates. Each company has a volunteer who comes from the private sector to guide the students in the process of making their company.

The 11th grade students of the school were more than excited when the idea was proposed and quickly started signing up. The group was narrowed down to 26 students and went on to form the company called “Nawwarat.”

Nawwarat has a board of directors, five managers, and a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and they operate as a real business. The company has five departments: Production and Operations; Finance; Marketing and Sales; Public Relations; and Human Resources. Nawwarat started out with capital of 4000 Shekels that was raised through selling 1000 shares to individuals inside and outside the school.

The company specializes in producing environmentally friendly and recycled products, with a vast portfolio of products to satisfy the Palestinian consumer. The products made by Nawwarat range from lights made out of strings, to baskets and trays made out of newspaper. We tried to make products as environmentally friendly as possible, while preserving their integrity and aesthetic aspect.

Our vision is to put an environmentally friendly product in every Palestinian home. The philosophy that guided Nawwarat was: “A successful business is one that makes profit and serves the community.” Driven by that philosophy, the company was capable of achieving significant financial success, as evidenced by reaching a 44% profit on its capital and a 1.77% earnings per share.

Fueled by the values of community service ingrained in us deeply by our Friends School upbringing, Nawwarat participated in various acts of Corporate Social Responsibility towards its Palestinian society. We visited multiple schools in order to educate the youth of Palestine about the importance of keeping the environment clean and also showed them methods of recycling waste. Furthermore, the company visited an orphan’s school and institute in Al Izariyyeh and helped bring joy to the children over there. Due to our group’s strong belief that a beautiful nature makes for a happier and healthier society, we also participated in planting trees on Land Day.

The experience of the student company also allowed students to apply the knowledge we gained in the IB program in a real life practical context. We applied academic knowledge from subjects taught in school such as Economics, Business, and Management. This experience demonstrated to us the practical use of the theories that we are being taught, which consequently increased our drive to learn.

Nawwarat will be competing at the national level by the beginning of May, 2016, as the student company of the Ramallah Friends School. Winning the competition or not will not take away the sense of leadership, critical thinking, and overall skills gained from this experience. We hope that this experience is the first of many to come of its kind, and we wish that the Ramallah Friends School will remain the beacon of budding Palestinian entrepreneurs as it always has been, and always will be.

Upper School News in Brief

By Riyam Kafri Abu Laban, Upper School Principal



- Princess Dina Mired (pictured above, second from the left), of the King Hussein Cancer Centre visited our school in early April. Her late father attended the boys school in 1948, and her mother graduated in the mid-50s from the girls school. It was a pleasant visit. We were able to locate a photo of her mother’s graduating class.

- It is busy, as usual, here at the Upper School. Our students just completed a business competition where they opened a recycling company selling all kinds of recycled crafts. The paper work for the competition is almost finished, and the finale is scheduled in early May. We are hoping for a win.
- The Fifth Annual Palestinian Model United Nations took place on January 15-17, 2016. This year the number of participants registered a record high of 502 students from 12 different schools.
- Our new middle school building is almost completed. Come next fall, grades six, seven and eight will move into it. Taking a walk through the finished floor is like taking a breath of new fresh air in education. The open collaborative learning space will allow our teachers and students to explore various learn-

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Creating Something Out of Nothing

By Anan Barghouti, Personal Project Coordinator

This year 87 students are creating a Personal Project, an integrative demonstration of their abilities in independent learning. With the support of a mentoring teacher, students produce, for instance, paintings, photography exhibits, movies, models, fashion designs, and booklets.

The Personal Project encourages students to practice and strengthen their Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills, to consolidate their learning and to explore an area of personal interest. This is an excellent opportunity for each one to produce something that is personal, creative, and able to be shared with others.

The process of development also establishes the criteria for evaluation. First, each student defines a clear and challenging goal related to a global context and pursues understanding using effective research skills. Each student plans and records learning in a process journal. Next the student takes action and creates a product that demonstrates thinking, communication, and social skills. Finally, each student evaluates the quality of the product, describes how the project has extended his or her understanding, and reflects on his or her personal development.

These students are able to do this integrative, personal work because of the preparation they have received in all their classes and due to the guidance and encouragement from teachers, mentors, and parents. This has prepared them to be contributors in a culture of learning and personal growth. We look forward to seeing what they create—this year, and through their higher education and careers.



Upper School News in Brief (continued from page 4)

ing techniques, settings, and approaches that all focus on student-centered and student-led learning.

- Friends and colleagues from George Fox University School of Education visited the Upper School for a week and worked with teachers individually and in groups. The focus was on MYP planning, assessment, and interdisciplinary unit planning. We hope to welcome our colleagues Scott, Lynette, and Keelan back to the Upper School very soon.
- It has been a busy year for all of us, and we are wrapping it up. The coming few weeks will bear witness to many student activities like the open day on April 22, 2016, the Palestinian Model United Nations fundraising dinner on April 23, 2016, and our first annual personal project exhibition on May 12, 2016. We are blessed to be finishing another year-end graduating yet another class. We hope to continue to grow and evolve as the times goes by.



Right, top: The new middle school building almost completed!
Right: RFS students during their break at school

From the Director's Office

By Joyce Ajlouny, RFS Director

Closely Knit from the Start

Our RFS newsletters naturally focus on the voice of our administrators, teachers, and students as they share exciting “news” and give readers a glimpse of their exciting work. The school’s governing body is privileged to see their work firsthand and join the school community in celebration of hope and a brighter future. Nevertheless, the school administrators and board members are also on the receiving end of their challenges, grievances, and aspirations.

This is the reality that comes with running a school—everybody strives for change as a sign of an unequivocal commitment for making personal and organizational big dreams come true. Inevitably with that come discussions, debates and difficult decisions. The outcome—often following hours of exchanges—is not only an improved program but more importantly, a more harmonious, trusting, and closely knit school community.

A major player in RFS leadership and advancement is its Board of Trustees (BoT). Behind the scenes, board members roll up their sleeves and invest an enormous amount of personal time to ensure dialogue, transparency, and community are preserved.

This year, two board members stepped down and four others joined the team. Issa Kassis and Samir Hulieleh served on the board for nine and seven years respectively. Their contribution and wisdom to the BoT impacted the school’s direction immensely, especially as they took a leading role with staff negotiations, finances, and business development. Issa and Samir remain connected to the school not only as former board members but as parents, and Samir as an alumnus. This picture was taken in September 2015, at a small farewell organized in their honor.

The BoT welcomed back Mazen Karam who had previously served on the board and is, himself, an alumnus and former RFS parent. Rana Khatib joined as a nominee of the PTA and is an RFS parent as well. Max Carter, based in the U.S., a long time school friend and former teacher, also joined the BoT, joining the meetings through Skype, and is engaged through email. All have already delved into the work of the building, academic, and strategic planning committees. The BoT also welcomed Mr. Farouk Shami as an honorary board member.

What is striking about the make-up of the school’s governing bodies is the deep-rooted friendship among various members that spans decades. I, for one, grew up with several BoT members, the lower school principal was my classmate, the deputy upper school principal was my teacher, and several PTA members were my childhood friends. Ramallah is a rather small community, so we are all starting with common childhoods, dispositions, and dreams—all making us even more devoted to RFS, its students, and their futures. RFS will remain in good hands, especially knowing that friendship is underlying its various associations.



Board member (from left to right): Issa Kassis, Samer Shehadeh (clerk), Samir Hulieleh, Joyce Ajlouny, Hashim Shawa and Dina Masri

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*Donate either to the General Award Fund (partial, any amount) or ESJ Award Fund (full). Tuition fees for 2015-16 range from U.S. \$2,700 to \$4,100.

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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Left to right: The greenhouse made from recycled bottles done by RFS 6th graders; RFS 11th grader, Yousef Jadallah; RFS students participating in the PalMUN



Donor Thanks

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

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