



Greek Orthodox Archdiocese ^{OF} America
Department of Greek Education

ACTIVITIES OF THE GREEK EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
2005 - 2006

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COMMUNICATION

The Greek Education Office collaborates with Head Priests, Principals of Schools and educators for the purpose of exchanging ideas that will help with the better operation of Parochial Schools.

To accomplish this, the Director of the Greek Education Department, Dr. Ioannis Efthymiopoulos, visited the Holy Metropolises of Atlanta, Denver, Chicago, San Francisco and Boston with the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, realizing thus a relevant decision of the Archdiocesan Council.

Within the context of these visits and with the blessing of our Metropolitan, he made recommendations for the more efficient operation of our Parochial Schools.

He met with Metropolitan Alexios in Atlanta.

He informed the Metropolitan about the program of the Greek Education Department of the Archdiocese and suggested that a Greek Education Department be formed within the Metropolis of Atlanta, so that a direct and two-way communication between the two Offices be attained.

His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios sent a letter to all schools of his Metropolis in which he urged all to be in continuous contact with the Greek Education Department of the Archdiocese, to participate and help out with its efforts for the better operation of schools.

Dr. Efthymiopoulos visited later on the Parochial Schools of Saint Sophia, Miami, Saint Andrew, Kendal, Saint George, Hollywood, Saint Catherine, West Palm Beach and Saint Mark, Boca Raton, where he met with teachers.

In Denver, Dr Efthymiopoulos visited with His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah.

He informed the Metropolitan about the schools of the Metropolis of Denver and urged the formation of a Greek Education Office for more efficient communication.

His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah had already informed the teachers and priests of his Metropolis and asked that they communicate and collaborate with the Greek Education Department of the Archdiocese.

The following day he visited the Parishes of Annunciation and Saint Basil in Houston, TX, where he met with teachers of said parishes as well as other parishes.

More particularly, in Saint Demetrios of Chicago all teachers gathered under the auspices of His Eminence Metropolitan Iacovos to discuss educational issues.

Metropolitan Iacovos enlarged the Greek Education Department of his Metropolis by adding a philologist; he also blessed the organization of a seminar for educators.

The Director of Greek Education visited the day schools of Holy Trinity, SS. Constantine and Helen, and the afternoon schools of Saint Nektarios, Saint Athanasios, Saint Demetrios and attended classes; he also met with Councils and Educators.

In San Francisco he met with His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos.

In the evening there was a gathering of teachers of Parochial Schools who discussed education matters; Metropolitan Gerasimos attended, also.

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos accepted the proposal for the formation of a Greek Education Department in his Metropolis and agreed with the organization of a seminar. Dr Efthymiopoulos visited afternoon schools in Belmont and Oakland.

In Boston, he visited with His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios.

His Eminence discussed with Dr. Efthymiopoulos issues regarding the instruction of Greek in the Parochial schools of the Holy Metropolis of Boston.

Afterwards, in the presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios there was a meeting with representatives of teachers where subjects such as issues of teachers, books and curriculum were discussed.

A Seminar of teachers was organized and realized on December 17, 2005, in the Holy Metropolis of Boston, under the auspices of Metropolitan Methodios.

Visits to the Holy Metropolises of New Jersey, Detroit and Pittsburgh are in the process of planning.

Following an invitation extended by His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios of Boston, the Director of Greek Education took part in the official dinner given in honor of Educators and sponsored by His Eminence. His Eminence presided over a discussion that was held after the dinner concerning educational issues.

An other invitation extended by His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos of New Jersey, to the Dr. Efthymiopoulos took part in official dinner, given in honor of Educators on February 2006 at St. Athanasios, Paramus and sponsored by His Eminence Evangelos.

PEDAGOGICAL GUIDANCE

a) Educational Seminars

The Department of Greek Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, with the blessing and under the guidance of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America continued its course of action that involved the instruction and communication with the educators of our Parochial Schools.

More particularly, the Department of Greek Education convened an Educational Training Seminar on November 8, 2005, in New York, for all Educators of Parochial Schools in the States of New York and Connecticut, under the auspices of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios.

The Seminar took place in the Community Center of the Church of Saint Demetrios, Astoria, and included two separate workshops:

- a. For teachers who teach Greek as a second language in our Parochial Schools.
- b. For teachers of Day Schools who teach in English programs.
- c. Dr. Efthymiopoulos and Mrs. Makedon were in charge of these two workshops, respectively.

In the Seminar for the instruction of the Greek language as a second language, proposals of thematic units were made for Kindergarten, Elementary School and High School grade levels. Modern pedagogical methods and practices were introduced, and a sample instruction of the Greek language was presented with the use of verbal communication based on subjects selected from the rich Greek Civilization.

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, the Consul General of the Republic of Cyprus, the Consul for Educational Affairs, representing the Consul General of Greece, as well as members of School Boards honored the event with their presence.

Teachers of our Parochial Schools and the Director of the Department of Greek Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America were the presenters of the Seminar.

An Educational Training Seminar for the Educators of Parochial Schools of the Holy Metropolis of Chicago was organized with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos of Chicago.

The Seminar was realized with the collaboration of the Education Department of the Holy Metropolis of Chicago and the Consul for Educational Affairs, and included thematic units for the instruction of Greek as a second language and other units of pedagogical nature.

Teachers of Parochial Schools of the Holy Metropolis of Chicago and the Director of the Office of Greek Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America were the presenters of the Seminar.

At the same Seminar, which His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos attended, a discussion took place where ideas were exchanged aiming at the more efficient operation of Schools.

Priests, the Consul for Educational Affairs, the School Board and parents of school children were in attendance, also.

- On the occasion of his visit to the Holy Metropolis of Chicago, the Director of the Department of Greek Education worked together with His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos.

Dr. Efthymiopoulos attended classroom works at the School of St. Spyridon, in Palos Heights, IL and collaborated with the Head Priest, Rev. Fr. Tilemahos Alikakos, along with the President and the teachers of that School. Dr. Efthymiopoulos did the same at the Schools of St. Demetrios, in Waukegan, IL and St. Demetrios in Winona, Chicago. At the end of the lessons, he held a meeting with the respective Head Priests, Presidents and School Boards.

In Milwaukee, WI, Dr. Efthymiopoulos had the opportunity to meet with the Head Priest, Rev. Fr. James Dokos of the Annunciation Church, with whom he discussed issues concerning the operation of the School, which operates in an alternate mode. Two Parishes share the same school which operates one year in the premises of the first and the following year in the premises of the second Parish. In the afternoon of the same day he visited the Parish of Ss. Constantine and Helen and had a meeting with the Head Priest.

After he observed classroom instruction in the afternoon School of said Parish, a meeting was held with the participation of Head Priests, Presidents of Parishes, School Boards, parents and guardians in order to achieve a more efficient operation of the Parochial School.

- Another Educational Training Seminar took place on November 29, 2005, in the Community of Holy Cross in Belmont, CA with the blessing and support of His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco.

The Seminar, sponsored by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, attended a Head Priest, representing His Eminence, (for he was in attendance of an already scheduled priest-meeting), the Consul General of Greece, and the Consul for Educational Affairs. Also attending were teachers of Parochial Schools of the Holy Metropolis of San Francisco.

Main presenters in the Seminar were two teachers of the Parochial Schools of Belmont and Oakland, the Consul for Educational Affairs of the Consulate General of Greece in San Francisco and the Director of Greek Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

After the Seminar, topics concerning education were discussed and proposals were offered regarding the more efficient instruction of Greek as a second language.

On December 17, 2005, an Educational Training Seminar took place in the Holy Metropolis of Boston for the teachers of Parochial Schools under the auspices of His Eminence, who also attended.

Teachers of Parochial Schools of the Holy Metropolis and the Director of the Department of Greek Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America were the main speakers who presented educational practices and instruction methods in the presence of students. An important discussion followed.

At the Seminar and following a proposal of His Eminence a committee of educators was composed, the members of which will undertake the task to evaluate the quality of books used and create a new thematic units and Curriculum.

B) Evaluation of Instruction Materials (Books)

- Following an in-depth research of current conditions of our Parochial Schools, it was determined that obsolete books and curriculums present obstacles against their efficient operation. Let it be noted that most of the books have been published 20 years ago and others are considered hard to use by our schools. According to the opinions expressed by our teachers, both these factors do not address the reality and demands for teaching Greek as a second language to Greek-American children growing up in the USA.

Also, within the thematic units of most of them, one does not find educational practices that would give emphasis to methods through verbal communication for the instruction of Greek as a second language; out of appropriate thematic units students could be taught Religion, History, Geography and Culture.

Thematic units, as they are, do not serve well the instruction of the Greek language; they do not stimulate students and thus do not cover basic principles of didactic instruction of Greek as a second language at a local level in today's reality.

Our goal is to create new thematic units and a curriculum for the instruction of Greek as a second language that will be adjusted to the needs of the children of our Parochial Schools.

In light of the fact that the process of evaluating a book is not an easy task, and to be able to achieve objectivity, a special questionnaire was drawn up which aims at the evaluation of:

- A) The content of texts or thematic units,
- B) The way they are presented, and
- C) Their instructive efficiency.

With the blessing and support of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, we proceeded and formulated a Questionnaire that will aid us with the evaluation of the

responses we will receive, so that we will be able to undertake further steps in regard to methodological and pedagogical issues.

A relevant proposal along with the questionnaire has already been sent to all Metropolitans of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America as well as to all respective Offices of Greek Education; with their help and support we will proceed.

At the same time, this Questionnaire was sent to all Parochial Schools of the Holy Metropolises so that teachers will have greater participation in the pedagogical research process of book evaluation.

When we receive the completed questionnaires, then all answers will be evaluated and codified leading us to certain conclusions that will prompt further decisions.

The Department of Greek Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese is in the process of codifying the data sent by Communities in order for the Records of educators to be updated. It also collects information on books used, as well as on curriculums followed by parish schools. It is believed, that the operation of Departments of Greek Education within each holy Metropolis will aid the exchange of ideas for the more efficient performance of our parish schools.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

It was observed that a large number of educators from Schools in America responded, completed and returned their questionnaires to our Office.

Their participation in this paedagogical process is deemed exceptionally satisfactory and the sample large and representative.

The evaluation of instructive material should be an ongoing process for the needs of today's reality are compelling.

The science of paedagogy is in constant progress.

We are, therefore, obligated to offer the best to our children, for history the history of the Archdiocese of America compels us.

As of today, more than 6000 pages that correspond to 19.800 questions have reached our Office.

Classification by book, School and Metropolis has already begun; the process of codification will follow for further actions.

From the data we already have gathered, it was found that 91,8% of the questions have been answered, while it has been ascertained that various series of books are used that originate either from the Greek State, or vehicles of the wider Public and private sector, or isolated authors from Greece or USA.

As it is known, books that are used in our Schools date back to 1985, 1991, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2002, etc.

A special committee will study the codified responses for the drawing of useful conclusions, so that the following, among else, can be deciphered:

- If existing texts can stand up to the challenge of teaching Greek as a second language with its known linguistic rules for the formation of oral speech and the ability to communicate.
- If existing thematic units, as mentioned, serve the linguistic instruction or cause stimulation by applying basic principles of modern instruction.
- To what extent existing books regardless their origin meet conditions for teaching Greek as a second language to children who are born and raised in USA.
- If said thematic units can systematize the **dexterities of children in the best way possible** by cultivating their linguistic abilities, so that they can participate actively and joyfully in the teaching processes in class, and further,
- If existing texts render lessons of History, Religion and Culture understood, contributing thus to the appreciation and knowledge of cultural events, holidays, traditions, manners and customs of the country in which they live and the country of origin of their parents.

Challenges of today, but also reality that shapes today's family, since immigration from Greece has decreased, justify our thoughts and belief that teaching practices in our Schools should be renewed.

Considering the results of the evaluation, based on the responses we received, we will continue in order to help our children with new instruction material if need be.

In this effort we have the blessing and support of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, who not only encourages us and is mostly supportive, but with his apt remarks guides us and facilitates the paedagogic process in its entirety.

The help and support of all of our Metropolitans is essential. They urged the teachers of Schools of their Metropolises to participate and help now and in the future so that this great paedagogic effort come to fruition for the benefit of our children who were born and are raised in USA, showing thus great concern.

Metropolitan Methodios of Boston has already formed a special committee, which will undertake the codification of responses in order to draw conclusions that will lead to further actions.

Let it be known that all of our Metropolitans lent their support and blessed the efforts of the Greek Education Office from the very first moment, so that this paedagogic process will meet success.

The efforts of the Greek Education Office will continue in the future, as well, so that will aid our teachers in their task for the more efficient operation of our Parochial Schools; these efforts will also take any direction that seems to facilitate the teaching work of our teachers.

- Keeping in mind the responses that we will receive and the conclusions that will be drawn from their codification, the committee will evaluate the facts and proceed further.
- The info we have gathered thus far, that is very indicative, points to the realization that existing instruction books do not address today's needs.
- An educational committee will be formed immediately which will author thematic units for children that attend Elementary School in Day and Evening Schools.
- These thematic units will be taught simultaneously and tried out in a pilot program.
- Weaknesses observed in the paedagogic realm will be recorded and forwarded to the committee for immediate handling.

- Adjusted texts will be applied anew and the degree of ease or difficulty of students during class will be recorded.
- In order to accomplish this, an effort for a better communication with the Principals, teachers of our Schools and Head Priests of our Parishes has to be made.
- There will be collaboration and communication between all Councils and School Boards so that we will all work together to accomplish just this one goal.
- There must be effective and constructive collaboration.
- The Greek Education Department asked all vehicles to collaborate. This was the reason for the numerous travels of its Director, Dr. Ioannis Efthymiopoulos, during the last two years. During this time visited schools not only of New York but of all Metropolitan jurisdictions. He will continue on the same path in the future and ask everyone to lend a helping hand.
- The Greek Education Department will contribute and help any effort with great diligence so that solutions will be found.
- We will continue to visit our Metropolitans in order to inform them of new prospects.
- In order to be successful in all these, all vehicles, Principals, School Boards and head Priests must be in continuous contact with the Education Office.
- We are considering and evaluating recommendations of scientific vehicles within a specific frame so that our teachers will receive important help with instruction practices.
- Another thought that is entertained is the joining or merging of certain schools as a result of careful deliberations, so that the new schools that will be formed will be more viable for they will have more students; more students will yield more income for Parishes that will help in turn with the better operation of schools.
- Training Seminars will continue and include recommendations of simple modern practices and methods that will stimulate the abilities of students for learning, so that they will joyfully and actively participate in class.
- Besides all mentioned, the concept for the formation of an Archdiocesan Theater Group is also considered.
- The Greek Education Office will ask again of teachers to submit their proposals for serious concerns they may have so that all will be discussed, as some issues require legal intervention.

At the end of each academic year, Principals and Head Priests must draw evaluation **reports** regarding the operation of schools and teaching performance of teachers. The observation of weaknesses in the paedagogical practice will help us attain more efficient operation of schools.

CONCLUSIVELY

For all of the above to be realized, reconstruction of the Office and substantial help are required.

Besides this necessary reorganization what is also needed for the Office is financial sponsorship and staff.

The Greek Education Department of the Archdiocese of America is always willing to listen and discuss serious recommendations; it will evaluate all recommendations aiming at any constructive practices and/or solutions under the condition that it be understood by all that the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is the indisputable vehicle of Greek education.

It does not reject collaboration and participates substantially not as an enthusiast or applauder for the institutions and history of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America must be respected.