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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PROGRESS REPORT

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Introduction

The Department of Greek Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America continues over the past two years its core programs strengthening and reinforcing the teaching of our Greek language and the preservation and promotion of Greek Orthodox Education in the United States.

Instructional Material

This year, we are completing the book series, "Ta Ellinika mou," with a new publication for grades First and Second, thanks to the generous underwriting of the Leadership 100. These books now comprise uniform teaching materials and define a common curriculum for all classes of Greek school, from preschool through the ninth grade. We are exceedingly gratified that within the short span of eight years, we have been able to meet the needs of our schools by developing instructional material foundational for teaching and learning across all classes of Greek school. Collectively, all improved new publications have reached an impressive total of 35! Among all such publications, some were funded by Faith, others by the Leadership 100, and a part by the Archdiocese. Books for preschool and Kindergarten were made possible by friends, individuals, and societies serving as sponsors of the original publications, while the Foundation "Panagis Kokolis" and its charitable sponsorship enabled their second publication. Particularly for Kindergarten-

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level books, the response by our schools was so strong that published supplies twice became exhausted. We now therefore proceed to the second improved publication of Kindergarten books with the determined goal for such new publication to be ready by the beginning of the new school year.

The Department of Greek Education and all its contributors perform at our highest and very best despite challenges to our work, often exceeding our human limitations in terms of mental and physical capacity, and proving worthy every time of the trust placed in us by fulfilling the mission and work we have undertaken—and which is at the core of our joint existence, to keep burning bright the flame of Hellenism in America. And we assure all who enable our mission and work, that as long as we have your support, we will continue to strive for the preservation of Greek education in the United States.

Audiovisual Material

The last two years also saw the creation and completion of supervisory teaching material in the form of posters for both lower- and upper-level grades. We additionally created audio material in the form of CDs, that include all songs incorporated in the book series, "Ta Ellinika mou."

Instructional Seminars

Every year the Department of Greek Education organizes, coordinates and executes the annual teacher training seminar held in New York, meeting the ongoing training needs of our teachers in the Greater New York Metropolitan Area and across other Metropolises. Lectures are presented on the most effective teaching methods utilizing the new books of the series "Ta Ellinika mou."

In October 2014, at the teacher training seminar in New York, the keynote presenter was an official of the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, who came to New York to train our teachers on cutting-edge teaching methods, utilizing our books for Preschool and Kindergarten. It served as highly useful and beneficial training for our teachers and primarily those of lower-grade classes. At the instructional seminar the following year in October 2015, several key presentations were made: The first by a linguistic expert and speech pathologist from the University of Crete on methods for overcoming student language barriers. The second presentation this past fall was by an active teacher of the Greek-American Institute in the Bronx, an Archdiocesan day school, on the use of technology in the teaching of the Greek language. An official of the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus presented the third major topic with a lesson blending language learning with the use of geographical data.

All hands on, teacher-as-learner seminars proved exceptionally valuable for teachers in attendance. Training sessions were filmed and will soon be uploaded onto our office web page for viewing and training by teachers who were unable to attend in person.

In the coming winter of 2016, and to meet the training needs of even more teachers across our Metropolises, we will arrange and conduct instructional seminars by noted experts and specialists in New York, Boston, Florida, Atlanta and Chicago.

We anticipate upcoming teacher training seminars will be crowned with the same success as past ones. Given the high cost of teacher training, the Department of Greek Edu-

cation undertakes a massive effort to secure funds for the continuation of instructional seminars, critically necessary in adequately training our teachers.

Cyprus Seminar

The same objective of teacher training, yet provided with greater depth and breadth of content and intensity of delivery, is met by the training seminar taking place every summer in Nicosia, Cyprus. A representative number of teachers from all our Metropolises are selected by our Department following standard selection criteria and procedures.

The Nicosia-based teacher training program lasts two and a half weeks, is sponsored by the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, and is organized in collaboration with our Department of Greek Education. It is an intensive program, which in addition to teacher training utilizing the books in the series, "Ta Ellinika mou," includes official visits to the Archbishop of Cyprus, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, and the Minister of Education of Cyprus, as well as cultural tours to historical places and monasteries of Cyprus.

Accommodation costs are covered by the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, while the Department on behalf of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Geron of America, contributes to the annual Cyprus Seminar by covering the cost of four formal dinners. Furthermore, Ms. Stella Kokoli, President of the Federation of Greek Teachers of America, and in memory of her husband, Panagis Kokolis, is generously underwriting this year's Cyprus Seminar by covering nearly 80% of our teachers' return airfare to Cyprus from the U.S.

Communication & In-Person Visits to Schools

Continuous and open communication with Greek schools across America is among our immediate priorities. We proactively seek to be informed of our schools' needs to better respond to and serve them. For this reason, we conduct ongoing visits to schools in both the New York area and in other areas such as Florida and Chicago.

In the context of such visits and not limited to them, we conduct classroom testing of thematic units of all our new books and adapt them to our students' instructional readiness and pace. This entire process of a) classroom trial and adaptation of new books to student readiness, followed by b) content fine tuning to the philosophy and practice of foreign language teaching at American schools, and c) content and curriculum adaptation to the particularities of the Greek language, is labor- and effort-intensive but nevertheless necessary for the optimal teaching of Greek as a second or foreign language.

Prospects & Planning

To see our parishes grow, and to see our churches grow, we must grow our schools. This is an undeniable truth that summons each of us to take action. We are seeing with mounting concern in recent years a trend of shrinkage even of our communities that are considered robust. It is a situation that must concern each of us and requires all involved to seek the means to address it. It is critically necessary to revise existing rules for the improved operation of our schools. It is essential to improve school functioning and working conditions for our teachers. All involved parties must support teachers' work and remove, not lay obstacles in efforts for teachers' pedagogical training and effective classroom learning.

Given our uncompromising goal of quality education at our Greek schools, we must secure necessary funding to ensure solid teaching materials and common curricula in use by all our schools and, most clearly, qualified and adequately compensated teachers.

Acknowledgment

We hereby express our deepest thanks and gratitude to:

- The Leadership 100 for their generous support of the writing and publication of new books for First and Second grades.
- The Foundation “Panagis Kokolis” for its generous contribution to the republication of the book series for Preschool and Kindergarten.
- Additional many thanks to the Foundation “Panagis Kokolis” for underwriting teachers’ air transportation costs in attending this year’s Cyprus Seminar.
- The Ministry of Education and the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus for generously hosting the Cyprus Seminar each summer. We thank both greatly for their excellent collaboration in implementing a well-organized seminar framed by state-of-the-art pedagogical science and adapted to the needs of our Greek-American teachers.
- Members of the writing team of the book series “Ta Ellinika mou”; our teachers who work with us to achieve our common goals; and all who facilitate and support our work and pedagogical efforts fulfilled by the Department of Greek Education of our Archdiocese.
- Above all, the Department of Greek Education expresses our most heartfelt thanks and deepest gratitude to His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Geron of America, for his spiritual guidance and academic support of Greek Education in America.