

# ACS Welcomes You



## AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL AT BEIRUT

Volume 3; Issue 2; May, 2016

Hello, This is the second issue of the welcoming committee newsletter. In these newsletters, we will try to answer most of your questions, at least those that might apply to all of you. For individual concerns please contact your social and/or academic buddy accordingly. You should have received an email from at least your academic or social buddy by this time.

### Snapshots around the school



### ACS e-mail account

Once you arrive you will notice that the school relies heavily on the use of the school email for its communications, it is important that you get yourself acquainted with how to use your school email from outside school. An e-mail account is created for you as soon as you sign a contract with ACS.

You can access it by going to : <https://webmail.acs.edu.lb>

*In case you face any problem, you can send an e-mail to [ithelpdesk@acs.edu.lb](mailto:ithelpdesk@acs.edu.lb) , using your ACS e-mail account only.*

**PLEASE CHECK YOUR ACS EMAIL ACCOUNTS AS YOUR BUDDIES WILL BE TRYING TO CONTACT YOU**

# ACS Welcomes You

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## Accommodation

**The following information is for the new hires who will be staying in the school's leased apartments and not the Faculty Building. Information will be sent to the tenants of the Faculty Building in another newsletter**

### **Faculty Apartments**

All ACS foreign-hire teachers are provided with apartments within easy walking distance of the school (one-half hour or less.) Apartments vary in size according to family size and the design of various apartment buildings. After your first year at ACS you will be given a choice of continuing to live in the same apartment, bidding on another vacant apartment or being paid a cash stipend to find your own accommodations.

### **Furniture**

All apartments are furnished with a basic set of furniture. The furniture provided includes sofas, armchairs, coffee and end tables, bookcases, desks and beds. All apartments have a refrigerator, a stove, and access to a washer and dryer. Kitchen appliances and electrical goods are readily available in Beirut. New residents will receive brand new kitchenware (utensils, dishes, cookware, etc...), bedding and bath sets (sheets, pillows, towels, etc...).



### **Water**

A small initial supply of bottled drinking water is provided upon your arrival. After that, there are several companies in Beirut who will deliver drinking water to your apartment. Information about these companies will be supplied in the welcoming packet which will be in your apartment when you arrive. Tap water in Beirut is considered safe for all purposes other than drinking.

### **Utilities**

Electricity on the ACS campus and in all campus buildings is 220V, 60Hz. All ACS apartments are supplied with 220-240V. Transformers and voltage stabilizers are readily available in Beirut. Power cuts of 3 hours or more are a daily feature of life in Beirut. During these power cuts, the ACS campus and all ACS apartment buildings are equipped with generators. Generator power in your apartment will NOT be as strong as government power. Restoring generator power to your apartment after an overload will probably require intervention by your building superintendent. Therefore, it is essential that you run a very minimal set of electrical appliances during a power cut. An i-Phone and Android app (Beirut Electricity Cut Off) is available to keep track of the scheduled power cuts and warn you when one is approaching. However, unscheduled power cuts can occur. Desktop computers must be connected to a UPS in order to avoid damage while switching to and from generator power.



Electricity is included as part of your housing benefits, up to \$1,000 per year for singles and \$1,500 for couples. Stoves operate from gas bottles. The first canister is free, and you will be responsible for replacing the gas bottle after that. The canisters last approximately 3 months, and refilled canisters cost \$15-\$18. Each apartment comes with its own private telephone line. Monthly



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## Maintenance

Prior to your arrival, apartments receives thorough cleaning and painting. All new residents will receive an inventory list to be filled out, signed, and returned to ACS Facilities & Operations Department. Please be aware that the apartments are leased and the landlord needs to approve any significant changes in the apartment.

Cleaning and maintaining the apartment and its contents are the occupant's responsibility. The Facilities & Operations department will respond to emergency calls pertaining to plumbing or electrical problems. However, residents are expected to attend to routine repairs and upkeep, such as replacing light bulbs and unclogging drains.

Some property owners prohibit keeping pets in their buildings. Please notify ACS as early as possible of your intention to bring a household pet. It may or may not be possible to find accommodation in a pet-friendly building. Aside from the regular wear and tear, residents are liable for damages caused by their pets to drapery, upholstery and other household furniture items.

## Keys

It is the occupant's responsibility to safeguard the keys or giving a copy to non ACS members. A fee will be applied for replacing lost keys and locks whenever deemed necessary.

## Security

Foremost in everyone's mind, even many years after the cessation of hostilities in Lebanon, is the question of security. Your family and friends most probably raised eyebrows in dismay when you announced your plan to teach in Beirut. But the outside image belies the reality. Many Beirutis claim, with justice, that Beirut is far safer than other major cities of the world such as Paris, London and New York. Of course, occasional crime does occur as it does in major cities everywhere in the world, but the crime rate in Beirut is significantly lower than elsewhere.

Many newcomers may be alarmed at first by the number of military personnel in evidence on neighborhood patrol, at traffic intersections, and along the highways. But you will soon realize that despite this military presence, life in Beirut is more peaceful and secure in almost all of Lebanon . During the war years, a young female student of journalism, apprenticed to a Philadelphia newspaper, declared she felt far safer in war-ravaged Beirut than on the streets of the city of brotherly love. And today, Beirut and all of Lebanon are far safer.

Nevertheless, it is always prudent to proceed with caution and to respect the laws and customs of the host country whenever travelling abroad. While moving around Beirut and the rest of the country, always be prepared to show your identification papers on request. A photocopy of your passport and/or residence permit is sufficient.

Occasionally, uniformed police or army officers stop traffic for security reasons. When approaching a security check by car, slow down, remove sunglasses, and open the window; in the evening turn on the interior

**ACS Gates** Entry to the ACS Campus is through one of several gates (depending on the time of day), each of which is guarded by ACS security guards. An ACS ID or a visitor badge is needed for entry. Before you receive your ACS ID make sure you carry a photo ID with you, which may be exchanged for a visitor badge at the gate.



# ACS Welcomes You

## Internet

Each ACS apartment is supplied with at least (2 MB) ADSL internet connection from a local internet service provider, including a wireless router. You can upgrade or downgrade to 2MB (minimum plan) your plan during your stay but this depends on the line feasibility. Wireless coverage in your apartment will vary, based on the configuration of concrete walls and the shape of the apartment. You will not be charged for your first month of internet service. After that, you may refill the account by purchasing refill prepaid cards widely available at local stores, or set up automatic withdrawals from your credit card or bank account. The ACS business office will help you with filling out the bank forms in Arabic. Generally speaking, you will find the quality of internet in Beirut is slower, less reliable, and more expensive than in other countries. Also, accounts are limited in terms of the amount of online traffic used per month. Information about rates and service levels will be sent separately.

### Unlimited night service:

**\$3** for 2Mbps & 4Mbps plans

**\$6** for 6Mbps & 8Mbps plans

### Extra Traffic:

**\$3** for 2GBytes

### Notes:

- Above indicated bandwidths are "Up To" based on your location and the quality of your copper phone line.

\* All prices are subject to 10% VAT



Plan	Download	CAP	Monthly Fees*
2M - 10GB	2 Mbps	10 GB	\$ 12
2M - 40GB	2 Mbps	40 GB	\$ 16
2M - 45GB	2 Mbps	45 GB	\$ 19
2M - 50GB	2 Mbps	50 GB	\$ 25
4M - 15GB	4 Mbps	15 GB	\$ 19
4M - 25GB	4 Mbps	25 GB	\$ 25
4M - 50GB	4 Mbps	50 GB	\$ 33
6M - 60GB	6 Mbps	60 GB	\$ 43
8M - 100GB	8 Mbps	100 GB	\$ 67
1M - Unlimited	1 Mbps	Unlimited	\$ 27
2M - Unlimited	2 Mbps	Unlimited	\$ 50
4M - Unlimited	4 Mbps	Unlimited	\$ 75

## Plans Available

# ACS Welcomes You

## A sample of prices in Beirut

Beirut is an expensive city to live in. You will notice that many items that are cheap back home are sometimes double or triple the price in Lebanon. However, there are items that are far less expensive here than the prices you are used to paying. Here is an overview of prices in USD to give you an idea.

### Grocery Shopping

Milk (1 liter) - \$2.50  
Loaf of fresh bread - \$1.50  
Sliced bread - \$3.00  
loaf wheat, 1 ft., 3 pieces \$0.70  
loaf cereal, 1 ft., 1 piece \$0.50  
Bag of large pita bread - \$1.00  
Rice (1 KG) - \$1.50  
Boneless chicken breasts (6) - \$10.00  
Bottled water (6 x 1.5 L) - \$ 3.00  
Dozen eggs - \$5.00  
Apples (1 KG) - \$2.50  
Oranges (1 KG) - \$1.50  
Yogurt (4-pack) - \$4.00  
Box of Cheerios - \$8.00  
Local Cheese (1 pack) - \$4.00  
Limes, imported (1 KG) - \$20.00  
Lemons (1 KG) - \$2.50  
Potatoes (1 KG) - \$1.00  
Tomatoes (1 KG) - \$2.00  
Box of Triscuits - \$17.00  
Shampoo (Herbal Essence for example) - \$4.00  
Conditioner (Herbal Essence for example) - \$4.00  
Olive oil (1 liter) - \$7.00  
Tide liquid- \$16.00  
6 pack local Beer - \$5.00  
Bottle of local wine - \$8.00

### Restaurants

Meal at an inexpensive restaurant - \$15.00  
Meal at mid-range restaurant (PF Changs for example) - \$35.00  
Combo meal at McDonalds - \$7.50  
Bottle of local beer in bottle - \$3.50  
Mixed cocktails - \$10.00  
Soft drinks - \$2.00  
Fruit juice - \$5.00  
Large bottle of water - \$1.50

### Fitness/Leisure

Gym membership (these vary depending on the gym) but on average - \$90 per month  
Daily swim at AUB pool - \$10.00  
Entrance to beach club for a day (depends on the club and beach) - \$30.00  
Car rental for a day - \$20 to 30.00  
Taxi ride (cabs here are not metered and you need to bargain with the driver before you get in. You will learn quickly what the prices are to go to different areas. You can call a cab company and they will give you a set rate on the phone before you get picked up).  
Within Beirut - \$7.00  
Beirut suburbs - \$12.00  
Outside Beirut - depends on destination  
Bus ride - \$.50  
Movies - \$8.00  
Bicycle rental - \$5.00, per hour  
Walk or run on the Corniche - free :)

\*When buying produce it is much cheaper to buy it at a local vegetable and fruit stand than from the super market. Many brand name items that you are used to from home are very expensive here but you can usually find a local brand that is similar for much less.

## Check with Your Bank

Many non-Lebanese banks require that you sign a document if you plan on using their US debit or credit card in Lebanon. A visit to your bank may be helpful to avoid any surprises when you get here. Also, if you are planning on making wire transfers, please get complete routing information from your bank before you leave, as well as fees.

# ACS Welcomes You

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## MEET YOUR ACS COLLEAGUES

Moving to a new country is an exciting time and it's always nice to see a familiar face when you arrive. We are pleased to introduce the new members of our ACS community. If you wish to contact each other just put the initial of their first name and their full last name@acs.edu.lb



### Greg and Melissa MacGilpin

Welcome to ACS! As the incoming head of school I am fortunate to experience a similar cycle of starting a new school and experience with you all.

For the past six years, my family and I have lived in Costa Rica where I currently am the director of Country Day School. Perhaps implied in the photo of my family, we enjoy each other as well as our community, the outdoor experiences here and, of course, the coffee. My wife, Melissa, is a certified yoga instructor, and is looking forward to living in a country where she can speak French actively again and exploring the rich offerings of food available to us. My three daughters (Abby, Mallory and Sydney) are excited, nervous and curious about our next steps and they have already found the connections made through email and visits useful in getting ready.

I had the opportunity to be on campus twice this past year, visiting with our soon-to-be colleagues, students and trustees. We are fortunate to arrive at a school that has so much to offer, has a deep interest in becoming even stronger, and is part of a city and country that has such a diversity of opportunity. One afternoon and evening during my last visit particularly exemplified this variety. After having lunch with a group of ACS seniors reflecting on their time at ACS and the pending university choices, I found myself on a drive through the Lebanese mountainside to the School's outdoor education center for sunset. After listening to frogs and petting rams, I was back in the heart of Beirut, dining at a small Armenian restaurant with new friends, meeting ACS graduates and discussing the future of ACS and Beirut. There is so much to access and, akin to our mission, so much opportunity to lead well-balanced lives!

Entering ACS together adds an extra connection that I will embrace. The welcoming committee has a vested interest in our 'landing well' and we have a wealth of resources at our disposal to begin becoming a part of the ACS community. I look forward to seeing you in August; we will add to their already engaging community both at School and in the city with you.

Best of luck to you as you continue to build your raft towards Lebanon!

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## Alexa Kumbier

Hello everyone! I'm Alexa Kumbier, and I'm thrilled to be joining the second grade team at ACS. My husband, Eric, and I have been teaching at an international school in Qingdao, China for the past two years. I have been teaching third grade. Before China, we taught in Seoul, South Korea, where we met. I am from the suburbs of sunny Los Angeles, California and hold my teaching credential from California. My undergraduate degree in communication studies is from UC Santa Barbara, and my master's degree in education is from Pepperdine University. Over the years, I have developed my teaching motto, which is "rise to the occasion." I believe that when students are given the tools to succeed, they can and will do their best.

Outside of the classroom, I enjoy cooking and experimenting in the kitchen, outdoor activities, and of course traveling. My most recent hobby has been brewing my own kombucha. Eric

## Cailin (pr. colleen) O'Connor

Cailin (pr. colleen) O'Connor – teaching artist. BFA, MA in art education. Areas of expertise in fibers and ceramics - in terms of sculpture, painting, and wearable art.

Coming from India, Cailin has been teaching art globally since 2010; first in Java, then in India. Her roots are in the United States and Ireland, with one foot in each country. Exploring several sides of education, her career has included K-12 schools, art museum curator of education, and university education program administration. She is happy to be teaching art again in international schools and enjoys working with art students in all course levels. She is excited to join ACS as the IB art teacher and to explore the art and culture of Beirut and the region.



## Cristian Iga

My name is Cristian Iga, I was born in Santiago, Chile. I am a physical education teacher and a rugby coach who has always been involved in both playing and organizing sports since a very young age, specifically rugby, without a doubt the passion of my life. Rugby has also given me the valuable opportunity to represent my country internationally for over 10 years.

I love working in physical education and the constant interaction with my students, establishing good rapport with them based on trust, care and respect. I'm also a very passionate teacher about my day-to-day work.

I have worked in 4 schools before The American Community School at Beirut: Saint George's College, Santiago College, International School Nido de Aguilas and Seoul International School.

I love to travel the world and ride motorcycles with my friends. I can't wait to join the ACS team in August.

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**Dyane Stillman** Greetings from Istanbul, where I've been teaching Drama and English for the last six years. Before moving here, I taught Drama and/or English in a variety of settings in the United States--stretching back to 1993. The activities I enjoy when I have spare time are traveling, bicycling, swimming, doing yoga, reading and writing. I like going to museums, to films and movies, and to theatre, music and dance performances. My taste is eclectic, however I will confess, for the record, that I am madly in love with Shakespeare's work. I am drawn to places where nature is more prominent than things made by humans. I am impressed by the recycling efforts at ACS and I look forward to finding my place in this lovely educational community.

## **Eric Kumbier**

My name is Eric Kumbier, and I am excited to be joining the ACS staff as the 7th grade social studies teacher. I graduated from the University of Michigan with my teaching credential in 2009. Following Michigan sports teams, especially football, is one of my greatest passions. In 2010, I went to Seoul, South Korea to teach English as second language. There, I met my then future wife, Alexa, who is now a new second grade teacher at ACS. After two years teaching in Seoul and three months travelling around Asia, we returned to the U.S. I pursued a master's degree in curriculum and instruction with a social studies emphasis at Concordia University while substitute teaching. Upon completion of the degree and my marriage to Alexa, we headed to Asia once again, this time to teach in Qingdao, China at a small international school. Over the past two years I have taught 7th grade social studies and language arts, 8th grade social studies, and AP World History while continuing to explore Asia on holidays.



Other than avidly following Michigan sports, my hobbies include travelling, hiking, swimming, and reading about history and politics. My wife and I love to explore new places, eat delicious local food, and discover beautiful off-the-beaten-path destinations. We are excited to join the ACS professional community and explore all that Lebanon and our new region have to offer!



## **Habiba Fathallah**

Marhaba! My name is Habiba Fathallah and I am a graduate of the American University of Beirut. I have earned my MA in Educational Psychology in 2007 but my career in education has started in 2001 when I first earned my BA in Elementary Education.

Even though my career has started as a job, it turned into a passion a few years back. I have been working in the education sector, in and out of schools' contexts, for the past 14 years which has given me a taste of what it feels like to be working in the different fields related to education. I have been a teacher, a school counselor, a teacher trainer, and an educational consultant.

In 2008, I became a mother. A life changing event that has inspired me to dig deeper into the different ways a child learns and here I am now joining ACS, in order to be part of a child's learning journey.

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**James Kessler**

James has been teaching secondary school history (with a particular focus on world and Middle Eastern history) for fourteen years, both in the US and abroad. For the past three years, he has been teaching in Tunisia. An avid traveler and writer, he has recently finished writing a book on his experiences in the post-Ottoman world, which will be published this spring. His BA is in Near Eastern Studies from Cornell University and his MA is in Middle Eastern History (with a specialty in Ottoman history) from the University of Chicago. He speaks Turkish and some Arabic, and has lived and studied in Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey, in addition to his recent postings in Tunisia and Sudan. He is excited to come to Lebanon and join the ACS community.

**Jeff Wenz**

Hello. My Name is Jeff Wenz. That's me with Mr. W.A. Mozart in Vienna (of course). I'm quite excited to join the 'family' at ACS. I come to you following 2 years as the Band instructor at Dhahran High School, in Saudi Arabia (ISG). Before that, just 'slightly' more than a handful of years as the music instructor at the Bayfield schools in far northern Wisconsin on the shores of chilly Lake Superior. Lonnie Cameron (third grade) and myself are looking forward to the Lebanese food, climate, the beautiful Mediterranean, and seeing flowers bloom from November to March.



**Jenny Gutierrez**

"My name is Jenny Gutierrez and I am Salvadoran-American. I have been living in Beirut for the past three years teaching. Prior to Lebanon, I lived in the U.A.E. where I also taught for two years. I love to travel, explore, and go on new adventures. I am passionate about life and all its beauties. I look forward to a new start at ACS and I hope to build new memories with my fellow colleagues."

**Laura Loran**

I'm pictured here on the far right. My two companions are Mom—Kathy, and Niece—Sarah; two of the folks I'm most likely to be spending my time with when visiting home—Louisville, Kentucky. While I have taught in Louisville, I've also lived and worked in Spokane, Washington, Queens, New York, Taif, Saudi Arabia and Beirut. After five years in Guangzhou, China where I've been teaching Middle School English and Drama at The American International School of Guangzhou, I am thrilled to return to the Middle East, especially Lebanon. Some of my favourite things to do besides teaching drama include eating mezze, drinking Arabic coffee, trekking, hiking, biking, painting, traveling and reading. This will be my fifteenth year as an international teacher, and my nineteenth year in teaching— so I am looking forward to working at ACS, close to the Corniche and Hamra, two places I hold dear---looking forward to learning with a new team of teachers and staff and from new students in this very vibrant, intriguing community of Beirut. Y'allah!



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## Lonnie Cameron

Hello, my name is Lonnie Cameron. I have taught in northern Wisconsin in a small community situated on the shores of Lake Superior for quite a few years. I love the outdoors...camping, skiing, and yes, walking on beaches are some of my favorite things to do. I am super excited to be joining the ACS community as a third grade teacher this coming fall! I look forward to this exciting time in my life and meeting my new colleagues.



## Maura Sackett

I am really excited to begin teaching abroad at ACS. I have been teaching for 16 years at the same elementary school in Maplewood, NJ. I also live in this lovely town, which is a short train ride to one of my most favorite places in the world, New York City.

Teaching is a second career for me; I was an actress before I switched over to being a teacher. I was married for 29 years to a wonderful man, my late husband Lee. Sadly, he died two years ago after a long struggle with multiple sclerosis. We have two sons, Sean who is 27 and Cam who is 24. They are both living their own lives here in the NYC metropolitan area.

I love to travel, read, listen to music, cook, and have an occasional binge watch of a good tv series. I look forward to becoming part of the community at ACS. See you soon!

## May Najjar Hamade

Hello, my name is May Najjar Hamade, and I'm from Lebanon. I have a BS degree in Mathematics and an MA degree in Education from the American University of Beirut. I started my teaching career at ACS, and stayed there for 6 years where I taught Elementary, Middle School, as well as High School students. Due to family relocation, we moved to Saudi-Arabia. I taught Mathematics at both the Multinational School, and the American International School in Riyadh.

I have a beautiful family, my husband Imad, and two boys, Walid and Ramzi. Working as a board member for a peace organization (CISV) is how I spend some of my time. We organize delegations from Lebanon, and send them to summer camps to meet other young people from all over the world, hoping for a more just and peaceful world. This is my hobby, in addition to hiking, and reading. Looking forward to joining ACS again!



## Michel El Bacha

Michel El Bacha is a ceramicist and studio artist. He obtained his Bachelors of Arts in Studio Arts from the American University of Beirut in 2007 and has been a resident artist at AUB's faculty of Arts and Sciences (Ceramics and Sculpture) since 2010.

Michel's research centers around explorations of different clay textures, sculpting liquid-like structures, studying the simplicity of shapes, and of motion/movement dynamics as seen in trees, waves, and leaves.

In addition to teaching 3D art to students with learning difficulties, Michel currently runs his own studio where he offers pottery classes and collaborates on individual artistic and commissioned projects.

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**Nour Arkadan**

I'm excited to be joining the ACS community! I am Lebanese-American who grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, moved to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia for a few years, and then completed high school at International College and my undergraduate degree at AUB. I majored in psychology at AUB and complete my M. Ed right after in Special Education at Boston University. Following graduation, I worked as a 6th grade special education teacher at a charter school in Boston, MA and recently returned to Lebanon to continue building my professional experiences as a teacher of students with diverse backgrounds and abilities. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with family and friends, reading novels and taking nature hikes. I'm looking forward to joining the Student Support Services teach at the elementary school this coming year!

**Ronda Hassan**

Hello ACS Community! I am extremely excited to return to ACS. I started my teaching career at ACS from 2002-2005. I grew up in Orange County, California. I am currently living in Venezuela with my husband and two daughters. Ayah is 7 and Leya is 5. I teach middle school at the Quality School International of El-Tigre, Venezuela. This is my 12th year teaching internationally. I will be teaching 2nd grade at ACS. I enjoy outdoor activities and meeting new people. See you all in August!



**Rob and Julie Allison**



I am Rob Allison and I am currently the High School Principal at Escuela Campo Alegre in Caracas, Venezuela. I hold a B.A. and Ph.D. in English literature as well as an M.Ed. and will be serving as the High School Principal at ACS. My wife Julie is currently the Elementary Counselor at ECA. She holds a B.A. in journalism as well as Masters degrees in both Education and International Counseling and will be part of Student Support Services in the elementary school at ACS. We will be joined in Beirut by our son John, who will be a sophomore in high school next year, while our daughter Hannah will begin her university career in California. Prior to Caracas, we have worked at international schools in Cairo, Bangkok (where both children were born), Sydney and Mumbai and are looking forward to this next adventure. We enjoy an annual family ski trip to Italy every winter but, between the four of us, also pursue fairly disparate interests from reading to computer programming to sports to planning elaborate social extravaganzas.

**Tala Al Amine**

Tala Al Amine graduate of Fine Arts, received my High Diploma in fine arts from the Lebanese university of Beirut, and my masters degree in painting and silk screen from the ALBA university, started my career in teaching arts in 1998 at Beirut Modern school for 8 years and the Lebanese American university for a year and last 9 years of teaching in elementary school at ACS left for one year to come back to ACS teaching in middle school.

