

ACS Matters

The American Community School at Beirut Magazine

2015 - 2016



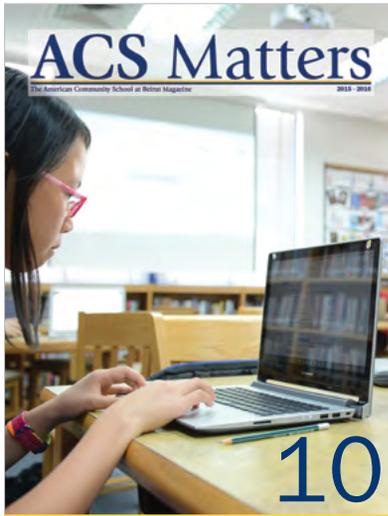
**MODERN LEARNING
ENVIRONMENTS**





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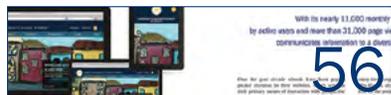
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Summer in the City 2016



Student Voices Matter

ACS Matters is prepared and produced by the Development and Alumni Relations Office

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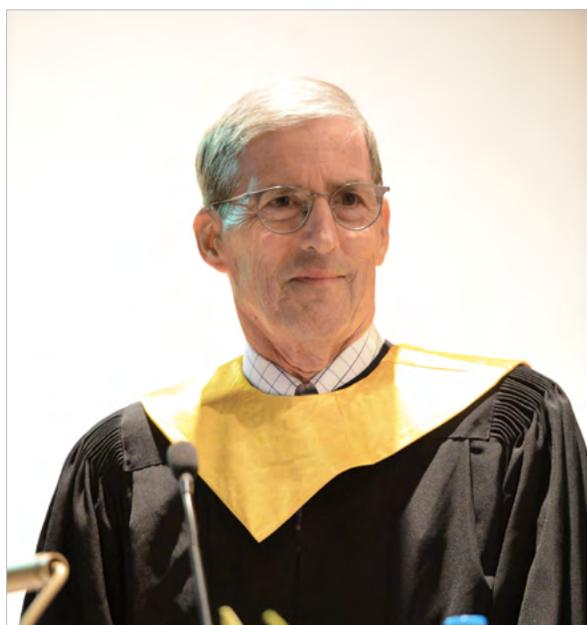
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This issue of ACS Matters focuses on technology at ACS and how pervasive it has become in our curriculum. We adopted a BYOD (bring your own device) program at ACS in stages between 2010 and 2012 for Middle and High School and since then, as you will read, the use of technology has proliferated in almost every class. Our students and faculty are using web-based tools, they are using QR codes to embed information into pieces of writing or displays they create, and students are routinely accessing information from the web. Learning goes on far beyond the walls of our classrooms now as students are connecting with teachers and other students online to ask questions, to collaborate, and to follow up on assignments at all hours of the day and into the evening. Technology and our BYOD program have helped to keep students organized, to gather all their notes in one place, and all their papers in a common folder. Technology helps teachers to get away from simply sharing information in class; students can now find most of

the information themselves and teachers can focus more on discussing, debating, analyzing, sharing ideas, and getting students to think critically and creatively.

I love the story of a college class where the professor lectures on a particular text and suggests that the author being studied was trying to make a particular point. A student in the class with her laptop open in front of her raises her hand and says, "I am sorry to contradict you but I was just online with this same author and the author says that he had something very different in mind with that passage." The instructive point here is that with technology everyone now has equal access to information. The teacher no longer "owns" class content, as was the past teaching model. Information is accessible to all who take the time to find it. The teacher's job is no longer simply to inform and share her knowledge. The job now is to coach, to facilitate, and to engender conversation and deep thinking. Technology has dramatically changed the dynamic in the classroom and empowers students to rely less heavily on others for their learning.

In addition to making information available to all, technology has completely changed the writing process and helped all students today with access to word processing to become better writers. I am far older than most of you, but back in my days in high school, before there were any personal computers, we were given a weekly writing assignment in English, sometimes on a topic of our own choice sometimes on a pre-assigned subject. No matter the topic, our job was to think about what we wanted to say, to create an outline, to write a first draft, to correct what we had written for spelling and grammatical errors, to make sure that the paper read correctly and that we had properly conveyed our thoughts, and then to write out a final draft. This was a time consuming and challenging process

Letter from the Head of School

particularly for those of us who did not write very fluidly, and for those of us with indecipherable handwriting, there was, of course, no assurance that the teacher could actually read and appreciate what we had finally produced.

Fortunately, the writing process is completely different today. Now a student does not have to spend any time at all on preparing a final draft, the final draft comes from programmed advice from the computer about spelling, grammar and usage, the final draft always looks good and is easily readable, and most importantly, the student now can use his or her time to really focus on what he wants to say and how best to say it. Best of all, the teacher can make corrections online, and on any paper or document there can be a colored history of all the edits making it easy to observe student progress. Students take more pride now in their final product and the writing process is much more efficient and enjoyable. The teacher too can use her time as an instructor far more effectively.

Technology has helped to make learning more interactive, more immediate, more collaborative, and less rote oriented. It certainly has not solved all our problems and has, in fact, created new ones from increased distractions to cyber bullying. But on balance, I am confident that our students are far better off from having technology fully integrated into our curriculum. They now have constant access to all the information they need, and tools to aid more sophisticated and fluid writing. Our teachers meet the challenge of a more open informational system with lessons that are now more interesting and targeted than the hackneyed lectures that so many of us were subjected to, whether in the arts and humanities or even the sciences.

We are gratified with the impact our strategic technology initiatives have had for ACS and see measurable learning outcomes for our classes, students, and teachers. I invite you to enjoy the following in-depth articles examining our continuing efforts to harness the benefits and strengths of technology for the advantage of our students.

Finally I want to say that it has been a pleasure and an honor to serve as your Head of School for the past three years. Ceci and I have very much enjoyed being part of your community, contributing our experience and hearts to the mission of ACS, and having the chance to learn about our fascinating school history from so many of you who love this school.

We wish you and your families well as we return to be closer to our family in the States. You will have an excellent new Head in Greg MacGilpin, and he and his family have much to look forward to as they discover what a special place this is. Thank you for your kindness to us and I know that there are great years ahead for ACS.

Hamilton Clark

FROM THE EDITOR

Our dear readers,

Technology has been increasingly affecting all aspects of our lives over the past decade. In this issue, we wanted to explore how technology has also impacted teaching and learning at ACS, and how to keep our children safe while using technology. We are also highlighting some of our alumni's contributions to tech advancement, as well as many of our teachers' and students' proud achievements.

At ACS, one of our pillars is to teach by doing. So what better way to explore the impact of tech on learning than by offering you the opportunity to use an app that ACS students had adopted for their school projects, in order to enhance your experience while reading articles in this issue.

The app is called Aurasma, and it allows you to scan images or icons for a number of articles in this issue, in order to access audiovisual content or web links on your smartphone. For the first time at ACS and probably in Lebanon, a school magazine will offer you an interactive experience while reading articles in print.

We hope you will enjoy the 2015-16 issue of ACS Matters, and as always, we welcome your feedback.

Maha Al-Azar
Editor, ACS Matters

ACS Matters

2015 - 2016

INSTRUCTIONS

*Aurasma is an easy-to-use app. Once you download it from the Apple Store or the Google Play Store, all you need to do is simply sign up for a free account, then follow the "acsmatters16" channel, and start scanning icons present next to articles that are linked to additional audiovisual content or web links, available via this app. **You should look for one of the icons listed in the box below.***

Detailed instructions for iOS and Android phones, below. There may be slight differences between one smartphone model and the other.

FOR IOS PHONES

- 1- Once you download Aurasma, open it to reach the landing page. (In some iPhones, you may be directed to a login page. In that case, please skip to reach the landing page.)
- 2- Look for the PERSON icon on the top left corner and tap it.
- 3- You will be asked to create an account (email address, user name, password).
- 4- Now you are on the profile page of your account. Press DONE. You will be sent back to the Aurasma landing page.
- 5- In the search bar, type "acsmatters16," to find the ACS Matters channel. Tap on the channel and then tap on FOLLOW.
- 6- Press on BACK and then CANCEL. You will be sent back to the landing page.
- 7- Look for the SCAN icon [📷] at the center lower bottom of the screen, and tap on it.
- 8- Have FUN scanning! Place the central scan dot on the icon that needs to be scanned; make sure that there is enough light (no shadows) on the icon before scanning; once you are done viewing the material, close it by pressing on [X] to go back to the scan page and scan new material.

FOR ANDROID PHONES

- 1- Once you download and open Aurasma, you will be sent to the Aurasma landing page. Swipe 5 times to the left till you reach the login page.
- 2- After signing up, you will be sent to the scanner page. Look for the Aurasma logo ▲ at the bottom center of the screen, tap on it to go to the Aurasma landing page.
- 3- Press on search icon, type in "acsmatters16," you will reach the ACSMatters16 channel, FOLLOW it.
- 4- Look for the SCAN icon [📷] in the horizontal menu at the bottom of your screen.
- 5- ENJOY scanning! Place the central scan dot on the icon that needs to be scanned; make sure that there is enough light (no shadows) on the icon before scanning; once you are done viewing the material, close it by pressing on [X] to go back to the scan page and scan new material.







TRANSFORMING EDUCATION WITH **TECHNOLOGY**

Maha Al-Azar

Technology has imposed itself on the various fields and the younger generation has embraced it wholeheartedly. Schools too have had to adopt tech into their curricula, prompting changes in teaching methods and enriching learning experiences...

When Tim Livingston was a student, he disliked social studies, mostly because of all the maps he had to draw by hand.

Now, Tim is a Middle School teacher of social studies, and his students are spared his own past ordeals.

“My students use the free National Geographic map-maker to produce color-coded digital maps, in probably a third of the time it took me to draw out my maps when I was their age,” said Livingston, who teaches 8th grade. “What’s more, if I find a mistake in their map, it is very easy for them to correct it without ruining their project or redoing it.”

Welcome to the world of technology and education.



Not only can Mr. Livingston’s students correct their maps more easily, but they also spend less time on creating their map and more time on using it analytically, such as identifying involuntary migration routes,

for instance. Whereas hand-drawn maps would have been a one-week project, a digitally-produced map is now merely a two-day assignment.

Since 2009, ACS started phasing in technology into all classes, and before the end of 2012 a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program had been adopted (see article page 18). By 2014, the Library and Technology Curriculum had been put in place for Grades 1 through 12, formally integrating into the curriculum clearly set learning objectives that help students develop skills in information literacy.

Learning about technology is no longer confined to tech lab classes and IT sessions. Tech has become integrated in every class, according to needs. The purpose: to help students navigate through the information age and learn to read information, inquire about it and evaluate it, collaborate together, create new knowledge or interpretations, and share information ethically, explained Andrea Norman, head librarian at ACS, in other words, Head of the Library and Technology Division.

“By hand, we could only solve flat problems, but computers allow us to tackle real-life situations”

With tech, learning goes to a deeper level. Instead of rote learning, students’ analytical and problem-solving skills are developed.

While some form of tech has long been a part of science and math classes, the technology that is currently available adds an extra dimension that makes classes more interesting, more challenging, and more valuable.

Tom Pederson, high school math teacher, finds that nowadays technology offers teachers and students alike the opportunity to go several levels deeper in their analysis. “By hand, we could only solve flat problems, but computers allow us to tackle real-life situations,” he said.

While in the past algebra only involved solving equations, now teachers, such as Pederson, can give students



complex financial challenges to solve. For example, students could decipher how to distribute the right kind of foods to refugees in order to meet nutritional needs, by relying on computers to do the computing, while they do the problem-solving and analysis.

“Even kids who struggle with math, end up learning more than they would have in the conventional math classes,” added Pederson. They become more engaged because it is more interesting for them to learn how to calculate mortgages, or the different ways they could tile a floor, or the cheapest and shortest connecting flight than just to do equations, he explained.

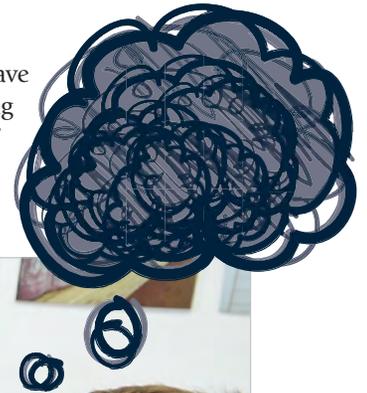
The only downside to using tech tools in class is that sometimes students become distracted with the websites and games they could access while on their

computers. “Sometimes, I ask them to turn their screens around so I can see what they are accessing, but this is not always practical,” said Else Saoud, IB History and Theory of Knowledge Teacher. “All of a sudden, they look way too happy, and I know they are not doing history!”

Tech also allows the school to go green.

Software programs such as the Hapara dashboard and Moodle allow teachers to assign students projects, readings, or share learning aids, without needing to print out anything.

“We save paper, and we save ourselves the trouble of carrying piles of paper to our classes,” said Rima Zein.



What's more, since Hapara offers teachers the option of creating folders for their students in which they submit all their work throughout the year, teachers find it easier to track their students' progress and also to correct their assignment in real-time, so to speak.

"As kids, we would turn in an essay and we might wait 2-3 weeks for a teacher to make comments," said Livingston. "Now I can give them feedback, as soon as they submit their work."

To keep teachers updated about the latest technologies, ACS offers regular training sessions every year. The school also has several tech facilitators who offer their ongoing support to teachers and students alike.

Although most ACS teachers did not grow up with technology, many are eager to embrace it and explore the added dimension it provides in their classrooms. "I was among the first generation of teachers who used the internet in college," said Livingston. "In my first teaching appointment in the US in 1996,

I recall asking my vice-principal to give me an email account, and he said they did not have one," he added, incredulously.

"When we were kids our tools were pen, paper, and book," said Rima Zein," so for many of us, the world of teaching and learning is significantly different now. Tech offers us so many exciting opportunities to be creative in our teaching."

Nevertheless, sometimes low-tech is better.

"When I want them to do group projects, I want them to talk to each other, so they could bounce ideas off each other; unfortunately they often just want to text," said Livingston.

Moreover, presentations now take a different feel and form. Instead of students just standing up and reading their paper, now they can demonstrate what they have learnt through the tech tools available to them. They can tap into their own creativity. Their project comes to life.



More fun, more learning.
Less stress, less nail-biting.

Assessing student learning can also take on the form of games. For instance, Kahoot, a web-based tool that allows teachers to create a game to test how much their students have learned, can turn a normally nail-biting experience into a fun, Jeopardy-like session. Through networked calendars, teachers can check test schedules and due dates of projects and papers for the entire grade, so they could slot their own test on a less busy day.

No more four tests in one day.

Tech also allows teachers to overcome unplanned days off, due to national security or inclement weather. "In those cases, instead of skipping a day, we move into the virtual school, through our various tech tools," said Rima Zein, who teaches 11th and 12th grade philosophy for the LB program and 11th grade history for the IB program. "We can communicate



Through tech tools, parents stay updated about their child's progress, by checking their grades and performance

with students and we can give them assignments and they do not need to miss school."

Parents too benefit from technology at school.

Through tech tools, parents stay updated about their child's progress, by checking their grades and performance through a software called Veracross. "This reduces the possibility of kids hiding bad results from their parents," noted Zein.

For art teachers, tech use triggers a number of rhetorical questions.

"When you start using apps that offer you so many creative opportunities, is it your creativity or the app creator's creativity?" asked Mary McKone, the IB art coordinator.

"Are art-enhancing apps a tool or a shortcut? Do they derail the student's creativity?" McKone continues. "I don't know. These are questions for which we do not have answers."

Whether it is graphic design, photography, animation, installation art, or even portraits, all can make use of tech-based tools, inspiring students to unleash their imagination. What's more, accessing world museums' digital databases brings the Louvre and Guggenheim right into the classroom or even into a student's hand-held device.

Technology has been integrated in many aspects of education and learning at ACS. From enhancing teaching, to facilitating scheduling, to teaching coding to unleashing imagination, there are a myriad ways in which tech has been enhancing students' school experience.

Tech has imposed itself on the various fields and the younger generation has embraced it wholeheartedly, often surpassing the tech knowledge of their teachers, and making teaching a two-way process.



FOR STUDENTS: TECH TODAY LIKE YESTERDAY'S PEN AND PAPER

By Daniel Saint James

Eighth grader Zeina Z.'s face lit up as she began explaining the cooking show she made for her French Class. "I had to record myself doing a cooking show all in French! Then I had to edit the scenes, add music, and put in different effects. It was pretty awesome."

Another eighth grader, Dana O., described how a web-based tool turns the normally tedious task of reviewing the year's course into a fun, interactive game. "We use Kahoot and it's fun," Dana said. "It is a game we play to review for Social Studies, and we can use any device to connect to the online game and buzz in our answers. I feel like I learn so much more because of it."

Other students find that tech tools such as Google Drive help them stay better connected with their teachers.

"Google Drive and Gmail are such a convenient and fast way to do work and communicate with my teachers," said ninth grader Alex L.

For Kacia H., an eighth grader, Google Drive keeps her organized. "You have clearly labeled folders where you put everything," she said. "You don't have to email, print or make copies to share. You can just connect everything through Drive for group projects and classwork. Plus the teachers can be connected too and evaluate our work via Google Drive."

Technology is a constant in the lives of ACS students. The internet has always existed for every single student at ACS. Their world has always been connected. Using technology is part of almost every aspect of their daily routine. From checking cell phones first thing in the morning, to working on shared projects throughout the day at school, checking emails and Moodle for assignments; to chatting with friends, playing video games and watching their favorite shows, students are almost always engaged with some form of technology.

For many, the idea of not being connected is unfathomable. "I actually get nervous if don't have my phone with me. I can't imagine life without it," Dana O. said.

Many, like Dana, consider technology to be such an integral part of life that even discussing it seemed outdated.

“Well obviously we need to use technology,” continued Dana. “That’s what almost all jobs require. By using technology we are preparing for the future. At times it seems like we understand it better than the teachers.”

Zeina Z., the eighth grader, agreed. “My parents wouldn’t let me go to a school that was without technology. I don’t think I would learn nearly as well without the technology. Imagine having to write all of our essays by hand! All those drafts and revising! My hand would hurt!”

This sentiment was mirrored by many students when asked about technology in the school – no surprise there, considering the amount of time children spend on their devices.

According to the BBC, the average amount of time children between the ages of five and 16 spend in front of a screen – which includes TV, videogames, computers, phones, and tablets – is six and a half hours. This is up from the three and a half hour average in 1995. For teenagers it is even higher; eight hours for teenage boys and seven and a half hours for teenage girls. Yet for many at ACS, even this number seems low.

“Seven and a half hours!?! That’s so low! I am always on my phone!” Zeina exclaimed, when she heard the BBC figure. “For me it is usually three to six hours of tech in school and then I am pretty much on technology at home nonstop with homework, watching shows while I eat, and then communicating with my friends. I would say I am using technology about 13 hours per day.”

Dana agreed. “To be fair, it is common that I am on multiple devices at once,” she said. “I watch TV on my

“My parents wouldn’t let me go to a school that was without technology. I don’t think I would learn nearly as well without the technology.”

laptop while texting my friends and playing games on my tablet.”

At first glance these numbers may seem extreme, but they are representative of the modern world relying more on technology in all aspects of life.

Instead of fighting this trend, more and more teachers are embracing it and working to prepare students. With the Bring Your Own Device or BYOD initiative (see article page 18), every student in the Middle School and High School are required to have a laptop that they bring to class every day, and students are supportive of this.

“We usually use our computers in class since it makes everything so much easier,” explained high school student Elsa T, adding that computers give them more possibilities to do exercise drills in class and research things they do not understand.

High school student Safi S. agreed, saying, “They are useful because they offer more learning strategies than just pen and paper.”

For the most part, students feel that technology in the classroom is essential for their futures, and they enjoy trying new technology tools and encourage all of their teachers to keep up with this world of technology.

However, technology does have its limits. Some students think it could potentially act as a distraction.

“I don’t like using my iPad in school because ... it distracts me. I know I will play games instead of focusing on my work,” confided ninth grader Jad G.

A student who wished to remain anonymous applauded the rule of banning the use of phones in the classroom because he acknowledged that otherwise he would use his in class and be distracted.

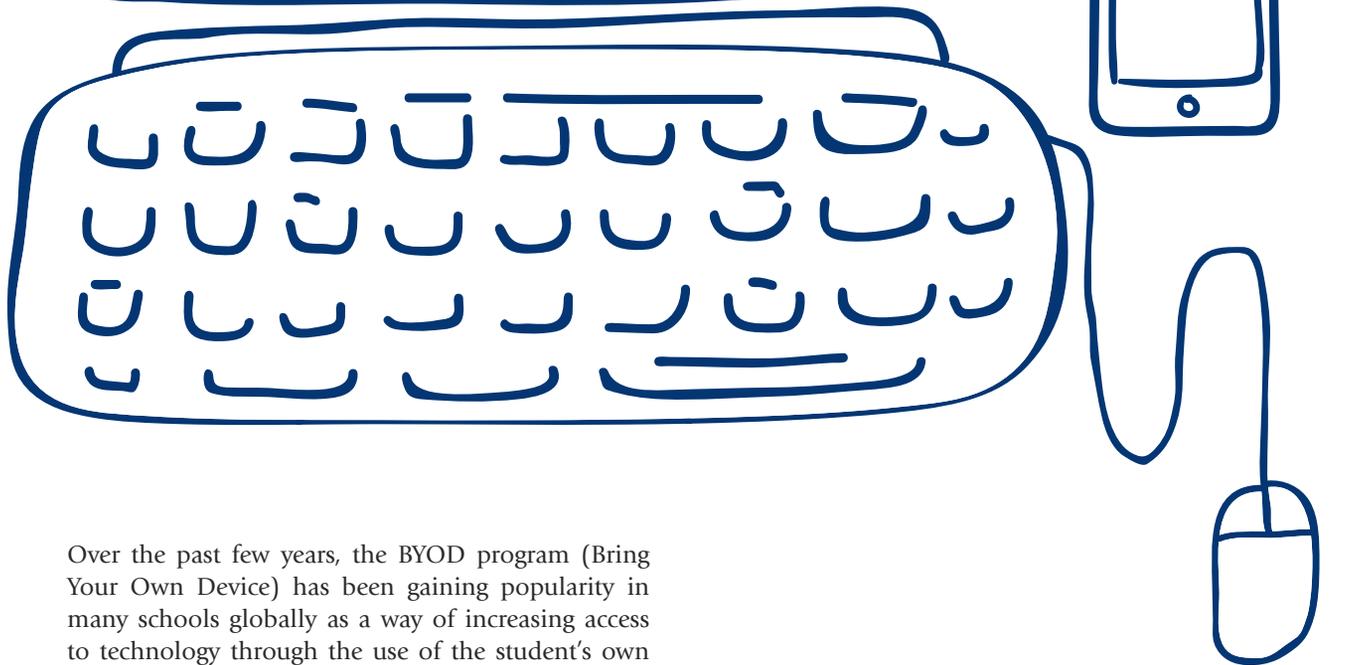
For Zeina, however, the technology she is using for her school projects is paving the way for a brighter future. “Personally, I want to be involved with movie-making when I grow up and all of the film and editing projects I get to do are helping me prepare for that.”

Dana summed up the importance of new technology by saying, “School would be boring without it; we wouldn’t find out about the more fun ways to review. When teachers find new websites for us, they help us learn and we can use them at home. Our school is better because of all of the technology we use.”

BYOD

AT ACS: BENEFITS TO ALL

By Alexei Perry Cox



Over the past few years, the BYOD program (Bring Your Own Device) has been gaining popularity in many schools globally as a way of increasing access to technology through the use of the student's own personal devices at school and integrating technology in dynamic and engaging ways within the classroom.

ACS has been interested in the immense advancements in the field of technology for many years now. According to Deputy Head Karim Abu Haydar and Librarian Andrea Norman, the 2009-2010 school year marked a turning point: Technology became integrated into teaching, instead of it being confined to IT lab classes.

This shift provided the opportunity for technology to be used within classroom instruction and not set apart as a standalone skill, removed from the general education practice. As an introductory step, shared laptop carts were provided and lessons were planned ahead by the teachers to ensure that the laptop services would be available as they were needed by the students. However, the demand for the laptop carts increased rapidly and it became more and more difficult to schedule usage.

The head of IT and the IT facilitators were motivated to find solutions to the strain on these resources and began investigating the BYOD program, and how it might best suit the needs of ACS. In 2012, the department leaders and the IT integrationists began phasing in the program for the Upper School, increasing bandwidth and providing wireless access throughout the campus.

Now the use of technology has become embedded within all grades and across all disciplines of the ACS curriculum (with the exception of Early Years students, of course). Upper School students can bring their own devices, while Lower School students are either assigned a device to use at school for the entire year, or they have access to shared devices.

In the high school art classrooms, the sophistication of final portfolio pages and access to the world museums' digitized collections have expanded imaginations as exponentially as the use of 3D timelines and Augmented Reality applications for the growing minds of the Middle Schoolers.

"The students may no longer be 'excited' about using personal technology at school," High School IT Integrationist and Librarian Tracie Landry says of the BYOD program, "but the enthusiasm is truly evident in their work."



Students no longer had to "fight for time in a computer lab" to complete their assignments.

Both Landry and Middle School IT Integrationist and Librarian Midge Livingston described laptops and tablets and smartphones as "the tools of everyday use" and noted that students are feel wholly fortunate that their schools offers them a BYOD program.

When considering the greatest benefits brought about since the introduction of the BYOD policy, Middle School IT Integrationist and Librarian Midge Livingston confirms that the general availability of access to their own computational research tools and search engines meant that students no longer had to "fight for time in a computer lab" to complete their assignments. Many other advantages are also linked with the BYOD policy. Students can continue their learning beyond the classroom, since all the documents, learning tools, and lessons would stay with them on their laptops, tablets or other devices. What's more students could easily review or learn concepts through gamification classes that rely on games, which they can take with them home. Assigning e-books for reading also becomes easier. And the BYOD program saves paper too. Instead of printing documents, students and teachers share them with each other.

Certainly, as with any technology initiative, it required teachers and students alike to rethink and restructure their educational approaches.

Abu Haydar and Norman elucidate that simultaneously with the implementation of BYOD, the "training of teachers to maximize their use of technology when it added value to student learning" was necessary and the integration of technology into the classrooms remains teacher-specific.

In the ACS Middle School and High School programs, a Tech BootCamp is given at the start of every school year to integrate students and their devices into ACS's wireless computing environment. Meanwhile, new and returning teachers are introduced to or re-acquainted with a variety of technology tools that enhance student learning.

As technology plays an increasing role in students' everyday lives it should, therefore, be an integral part of their learning. The BYOD policy is part of the constant evolution of schooling: one that provides students with the skills they will require for life in the technological age and one that ACS is proud to foster among its students.



Technology Lower School Students: A Balancing Act

Maha Al-Azar

It is the age of technology - the age when smartphones and mini-iPads often act as pacifiers for two- to five-year-olds.

Educators, however, believe that under the age of about six, children should only be exposed to technology sparingly.



With this in mind, technology is not part of the Early Years curriculum at ACS, even though the school adopted a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program for the Upper School several years ago, and has embedded technology learning goals into the school curriculum (Grade 1 through 12) about two years ago. Nevertheless EY teachers introduce students to technology whenever it can enhance their education and learning progress.

EY Principal Sawzan Yaseen explained the policy behind limiting tech exposure among children under six.

“Children have to acquire the social skills needed to help them develop into well-rounded adults,” Yaseen said. “They need to learn how to talk one-on-one with another person and how to contribute to group discussions. They need to learn how to listen and take turns as well as how to resolve conflicts. In brief, they need to learn how to interact with other people in order to develop and build relationships, and the perfect time for the children to acquire these skills is in their early years.”

Yaseen added, “Screens have become pervasive in our lives, and their overuse at a young age may result in social awkwardness.”

In the right doses, tech can enhance imagination. “This is why we encourage cooperative use of apps and sometimes individual uses, based on the learning project that stems from the children’s interests,” noted Yaseen. “To support learning in a project, children sometimes are encouraged to use apps or programs as well as other tech tools like cameras, video cameras, webcams, LCD projector. They also use computers to research a topic they’re curious to learn more about.”

EY Teacher Librarian and Technology Facilitator Ingrid Ghattas agreed.

“Kids can quickly become addicted to electronics if not carefully monitored, and this can easily take over their interest in books and reading,” she said. “It is important to cultivate a strong enough love for books and reading at an early age before any exposure to electronics, which is what I try to do in the library.”



“Children have to acquire the social skills needed to help them develop into well-rounded adults. They need to learn how to interact with other people in order to develop and build relationships.”

Technology is embedded in a number of EY projects, enhancing the learning experience.

KG2 students, for instance, have been using a Stop Motion Animation app to create their own stories. Using Lego, they build objects that allow them to tell the stories they created, taking shots of each frame, such that they can produce what looks like a movie animation in the end. "This is part of the literacy and inquiry approach," explained Yaseen.

During music time, EY students explore new sounds and musical instruments, recording them on small voice recorders. The students have the chance to play back the recordings and listen to them, cementing their recognition of the various sounds. The sounds recorded during music time are also shared with students from other sections, in a guessing game.

Recently, on a trip to Deir El Qamar, EY and ES Music Specialist Ingrid Thornton set up six stations, each with a musical instrument. "Students would stop at each station, and record themselves playing the instrument.

Pebble GO



The sounds in the environment were also captured, and sometimes the students added their voices into the mix. It was an exploratory and interactive learning experience," said Thornton, adding that the sounds the students would later listen to sounds they made and recorded. "The students are enthralled to hear their own voices, and their instruments playing."

Having collected dozens of sounds of musical instruments and other sounds from nature as well as "mystery" sounds, students, with guidance from their teacher, are now attempting to produce a creative composition – a symphony of sorts. "This is the first time we try something like this," said Thornton.

Even though there is no BYOD program for the Lower School, students may access laptops and iPads, under supervision. Lower Elementary School students use shared laptop carts while Upper Elementary Students are designated their own school-based device for the year.

Technology can turn a library's walls virtual and its geographical location irrelevant.

Ghatts explained that the Lower School Library makes available a web-based children's encyclopedia called **PebbleGO**, with its four sections: Animals, Science, Biographies and Social Studies. PebbleGO is a valuable resource for children through Grade 2. EY parents can access it via login credentials from Ghatts. (ighattas@acs.edu.lb)

The library also has about 100 audio books. "Audio books are especially helpful for parents who are not comfortable reading in English to their children," said Ghatts.

Once children reach elementary school, their interaction with technology increases, but ACS makes sure that their exposure remains safe.

"Each year, we give them a series of basic sessions on internet safety, netiquette, and how to access subscriptions," explained Lama Mo'dad, ES Tech Integrationist. "We also use Kiddle with students, which is a Google-created kid-safe search engine."

With a school-provided login, ES students could also remotely access several web-based databases on the Library and Technology website: Big Universe, Encyclopedia Britannica, and InfoBits, all provide access to interesting and age-appropriate information that develops literacy and general knowledge.

Meet five

ACS ALUMNI

who have contributed significantly to tech advancement regionally and internationally.



Moussa Beidas '02



Gus Halwani '02



Moussa Beidas '02 & Nadim Jarud '01



Handy Rayess '09



Omar Christidis '00



Moussa Beidas '02 and **Nadim Jarudi '01** co-founded Bridg, a startup, in order to develop a mobile-to-mobile payment platform that enables businesses to accept cashless payment regardless of device and connectivity.

Beidas, the CEO of Bridg and Jarudi, its COO, discovered a gap in the market since all existing solutions required that businesses be connected and that they invest heavily in infrastructure. "No one was really focusing on emerging markets with its status quo," said Beidas. "With Bridg, you download an app and that's it."

He added, "What we are doing is leveraging the technology that already exists in every person's pocket and eliminating the need for companies to go acquire expensive point of sale systems."



For **Omar Christidis '00** the financial crisis of 2009 proved to be the catalyst that inspired him to set up ArabNet, a platform where partnerships are made, international companies are introduced to the region, and innovative ideas are chosen.

"I saw the need back then for a platform that connects digital businesses operating in different parts of the Middle East, and helps bring together the fledgling startup community with investors who were just starting to experiment with venture capital," said Christidis, who is also a member of the ACS Board of Trustees. "Our annual conferences bring industry leaders from across the globe to discuss the latest in technology, ebusiness, digital media and entrepreneurship."

To date, ArabNet has introduced major international companies into the region, including Twitter, Zynga, TechCrunch, Facebook, inMobi, Destinia.com, AddVenture VC, TransferWise, GoldenGate VC.

It has received 938 high-caliber unique speakers over the years. The ArabNet Digital Summit was the first to be live-streamed online in the region, hashtagged globally on Twitter, and have a Twitter fall during the event.

The ArabNet Startup Database is the most comprehensive database of Arab digital startups. ArabNet's "Top App Trends" research report is the first research report to focus on the MENA app economy. ArabNet has graduated over 200 startups so far. Collectively, these "ArabNet Alumni" have created 265+ jobs across the region, raising over \$7M in total funds. ArabNet is looking to expand into new Arab countries in the region.



Gus Halwani '02 (non graduate) went on to study at the University of South Florida and then the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (where he earned a PhD), a few years after leaving ACS in 2000, having spent 13 years here.

By 2012 the idea for monitoring neurological brain function in order to optimize human performance had started taking shape. In 2014, Halwani and his colleague Shinya Fuji, both PhD health scientists, co-founded NeuRace, a Boston- and Tokyo- based consulting and analytics firm that leverages the latest in neuroscientific methods to develop novel safety monitoring systems, evaluation batteries, and peak performance training regimes. The company focuses on Education, Motorsports, Automotive, and Sports industries, and potentially helps improve the performance of race drivers and musicians alike.

"I grew up going to races with my father, who competed in regional autocross and rally events," said Halwani. "Somewhere between spending time with the engineers in the garage, feeling the G's in the car, and working at MIT, something clicked. Now I use my background in neuroscience to offer novel solutions to my passions: motorsports and education..."

To date, NeuRace has worked with pro racing teams, progressive schools in Massachusetts, and is also building a new school from scratch in Florida. "We are also negotiating a sub contract at the moment with a company that handles training and peak performance for several Formula 1 drivers," added Halwani.



Randy Rayess '09 co-founded VenturePact, a software development services company that helps businesses intelligently source and manage vetted software development teams for their digital product development.

Rayess and his college friend Pratham Mittal established VenturePact in 2012 after realizing that technology companies were finding it hard to hire great developers, and non-tech businesses were having a lot of problems incorporating technology into their business. "A key reason for this problem is that outsourcing software, managing remote and distributed engineering teams and hiring the best software developers full time or as freelancers is difficult," said Rayess.

VenturePact has built a large global network of vetted development teams around the world. Through its SaaS platform, outsourcing software development was made simpler and more efficient. Through an embedded escrow system, vetting sourcing tool and automated code quality reviews. VenturePact also has developed an ebook to help guide businesses on when to outsource and how to do it without losing resources. "We started VenturePact.com to help businesses better address their tech needs," said Rayess. "Our goal is to help companies easily find and manage great software development teams such that all companies can execute their digital strategy."

- M.A.

The area you would chill in most says a lot about you!
So what was your **favorite hangout spot** in school?

73%

COURTYARD



5%

CAFETERIA



11%

UPPER SCHOOL BLDG. STAIRS



11%

RABBIT FIELD



WHAT IS THE

FUNNIES

LAMA EL ZEIN

EY Arabic Teacher

"THIS IS THE SABAH EL KHEIR TEACHER" explained a kid to her mum when she saw me in the hallway...

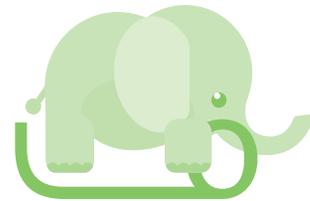


Today we say goodbye to "AYLOUL" (SEPTEMBER) AND THE NAME OF THE NEW MONTH STARTS WITH T....IT KIND OF MAKES THE SOUND OF THE RAIN...TESH...TESH...(waiting to hear *teshreen*)
"TESHLOUL"!! CHEERED A KG1 BOY! (Combining *teshreen* and *ayloul*)

What do we see on the front cover?

"AN ELEPHANT"

And how do we say elephant in Arabic?it starts with f
"FELEPHANT"! Said a nursery kid (*Feel* is Arabic for elephant)



As we turned the lights off on Friday, in observation of Earth Day between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., we asked KG1 children in Arabic: **WHY DO YOU THINK WE TURNED THE LIGHT OFF? (AND LIGHT IN ARABIC IS "NOUR")**.
"BECAUSE SHE'S ABSENT!!!" answered one of the kids. It so happened that in that class, a girl named Nour had not arrived yet!

ZAINAB BHATTI

Academic Support Team (AST)

A fifth grader's response when I was telling them that I live by myself and cook for myself:

"WHAT!! YOU DON'T HAVE A NANNY!?!?!?? THEN WHO COOKS FOR YOU AND TALKS TO YOU AT NIGHT?"



THE THING YOU'VE HEARD IN CLASS?

ZEINAB MROUEH

MS Arabic as a Foreign Language Teacher

I asked my students about their winter vacation, and one of them told me:

"IT WAS BAD SINCE I WAS A MAID AT HOME! MY TETA DID AN OPERATION AND I SPENT MY TIME PLAYING THE MAID ROLE: GETTING THIS, BRINGING THAT, FIXING THIS..."

I told him it's ok habb, I'm sure your teta did a lot for you before.

One of his classmates jumped and replied, **"YEA DUDE SHE MADE YOUR MOM!!"**



PREETI BHATIA

EY Homeroom Teacher

Teacher: "We do not have time to finish the book. We'll continue reading it tomorrow".

Lamees looks at the teacher and asks, **"WHAT IS TIME?"** That question meant a lot coming out of a three year old. The following day, during Morning Meeting, we threw the question back on the children. Here are their responses:

Celine: **"IT IS A CLOCK, AND WHEN THE SOUND COMES IT IS TIME TO SLEEP"**

Noor: **"IT IS A CLOCK THAT RINGS AND YOU CAN CHECK IT ON YOUR PHONE WHAT IS THE TIME."**

Nahla: **"IT IS SNACK TIME."**

Moufid: **"IT IS TIME TO HAVE RECESS."**

Samer: **"TIME IS A CLOCK."**

Bassel: **"WHEN MOMMY WAKES ME UP IT IS TIME."**

Shalyn: **"WHEN WE WAKE UP AND GO TO SCHOOL"**

Yara: **"WHEN WE GO HOME WE WAKE UP AND THEN IT IS TIME TO GO TO SCHOOL."**

Makram: **"IT IS ALMOST TIME FOR THE CLOCK TO RING."**

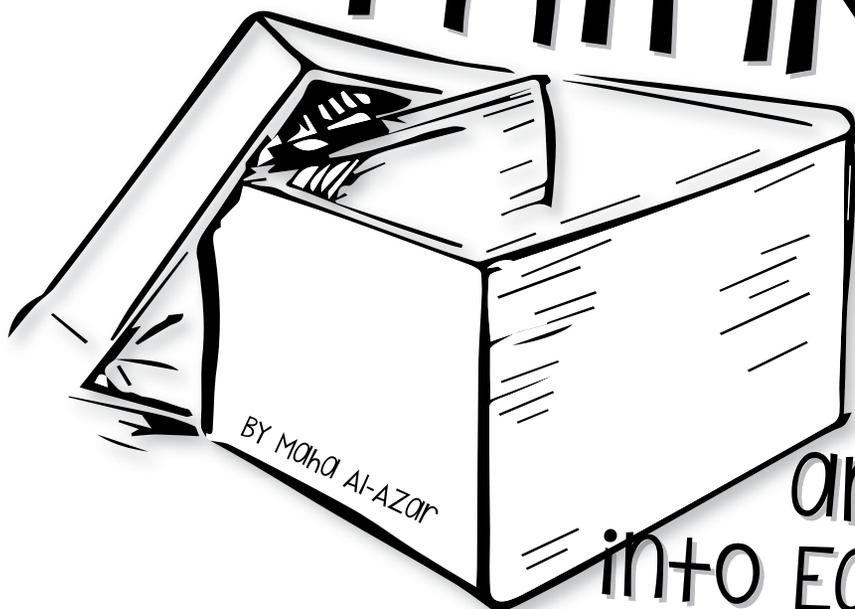
Luna: **"IT MEANS THAT IT IS MORNING."**

Yazan: **"IT IS EARLY IN THE MORNING."**





Thinking



Outside The

BOX

and Tapping
into EACH Child's

creativity



“EVERY child is born creative and artistic. We (adults) just suck it out of them,” says Jesse Schlabach, ACS artist-in-residence.

But adults at ACS work hard to preserve and grow every child’s creative and critical thinking skills, starting from Early Years all the way to High School. To begin with, ACS’s mission statement says: ACS empowers students to solve problems with creativity and integrity, to lead well-balanced lives, and to serve Lebanon and the world community with understanding and compassion.

Schlabach, who teaches KG1 and KG2, says that by the age of 5-7, children start developing cognitive block, and they start understanding that objects have specific functions. One example is a 3-year-old child who sees a laundry basket, is attracted by its fresh smell and size, and feels it makes a perfect space for him to

sit in. By the age of 5, his parents and older siblings would have taught him that a laundry basket is just for placing laundry and one cannot sit in it.

The key is to encourage children to find their own meaning for things.

Schlabach develops the capacities that nurture creativity in students’ thinking process, by giving them objects they are not familiar with, and inviting them to explore them.

Schlabach recounts, “One child once asked me, ‘Can I put rocks on my kite?’ Instead of merely answering NO of course not, I replied, ‘How do the rocks feel?’ The child said: ‘heavy.’ I replied, ‘What do you think might happen if you put heavy things on a kite?’ The child answered, “It would fall down.’ (And then she put rock down.)”

“We all know the value of open-ended questions, so by responding to a question with another question, this pushes a child to think on their own and run with their own imagination,” explains Schlabach.

A popular way to test creativity is to ask people how many uses can you come up with for a **paperclip**?

Most people might come up with 10 or 15 uses, but a really creative person can think of 200 ways to use a paperclip.



The ACS curriculum encourages students to think on their own and explore new ideas and connections.

Grounded in project-based learning, the performing arts, visual arts, and integrating technology into math, science, social studies, even Arabic and English, ACS classes often follow the workshop model for students.

"All this focuses on developing the independent thinking skills of the student," says Hanadi Dayyeh, Curriculum Coordinator at ACS. "The teacher facilitates the learning process for students, while they do a lot of independent work that requires research, thinking, collaboration etc..."

Quoting "Stefan Mumaw," Schlabach says, "Creative is different from artistic. It is problem-solving with relevance and novelty." In fact, she adds, "Creativity thrives when given problems and challenges."

"Creative people are better at recognizing relationships, making associations and connections and seeing things in an original way -- seeing things that others cannot see," says Schlabach.

"Creative is different from artistic. It is problem-solving with relevance and novelty."

Dayyeh agrees. "Creativity is not just about art and colors," she says. "It is about finding the best solution with the resources that you have, so this could be applied even to subjects like math, social studies."

With easy access to technology, people no longer need to retain a lot of information, reminds Dayyeh.



"Nowadays, information is available to us a click away, whether through Google or other tech tools, she says. "What is more important is that students learn where and how to find information and what to do with it."

The ACS five-year Strategic Plan clearly states that one of the school strategies is to achieve a "process by which problem solving, creativity and compassion are explicitly embedded into the N-12 curriculum across all subject areas is being implemented."

For classroom teachers, the more important question is one of practice, says Dayeh. "In other words, how do we create rich environments where all students learn at a high level?"

One useful tool, Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge Levels, can help teachers meet that challenge. Depth of Knowledge (DoK) categorizes tasks according to the complexity of thinking required to successfully complete them. DoK includes four levels: Recall and Reproduction; Skills and Concepts; Strategic Thinking; and Extended Thinking.

DoK

"We need teachers to target DoK levels 2 and 3 so that we can get students to reach higher-order thinking skills and deeper levels of knowledge," explains Dayeh.

In High School, Rebecca Noughton is one of those teachers.

Noughton, who teaches 11th grade IB history, does not restrict her students when it comes to the channels they wish to use. They can pick any medium to show that they have understood and learned the concepts in her class.

"They can do art, totem poles, movies, create a game, comics strips, write a story – anything they are comfortable doing," says Noughton. "One student is even writing a speech."

Noughton is a strong believer of making education a fun learning experience, as long as they can demonstrate that they have learned the material.

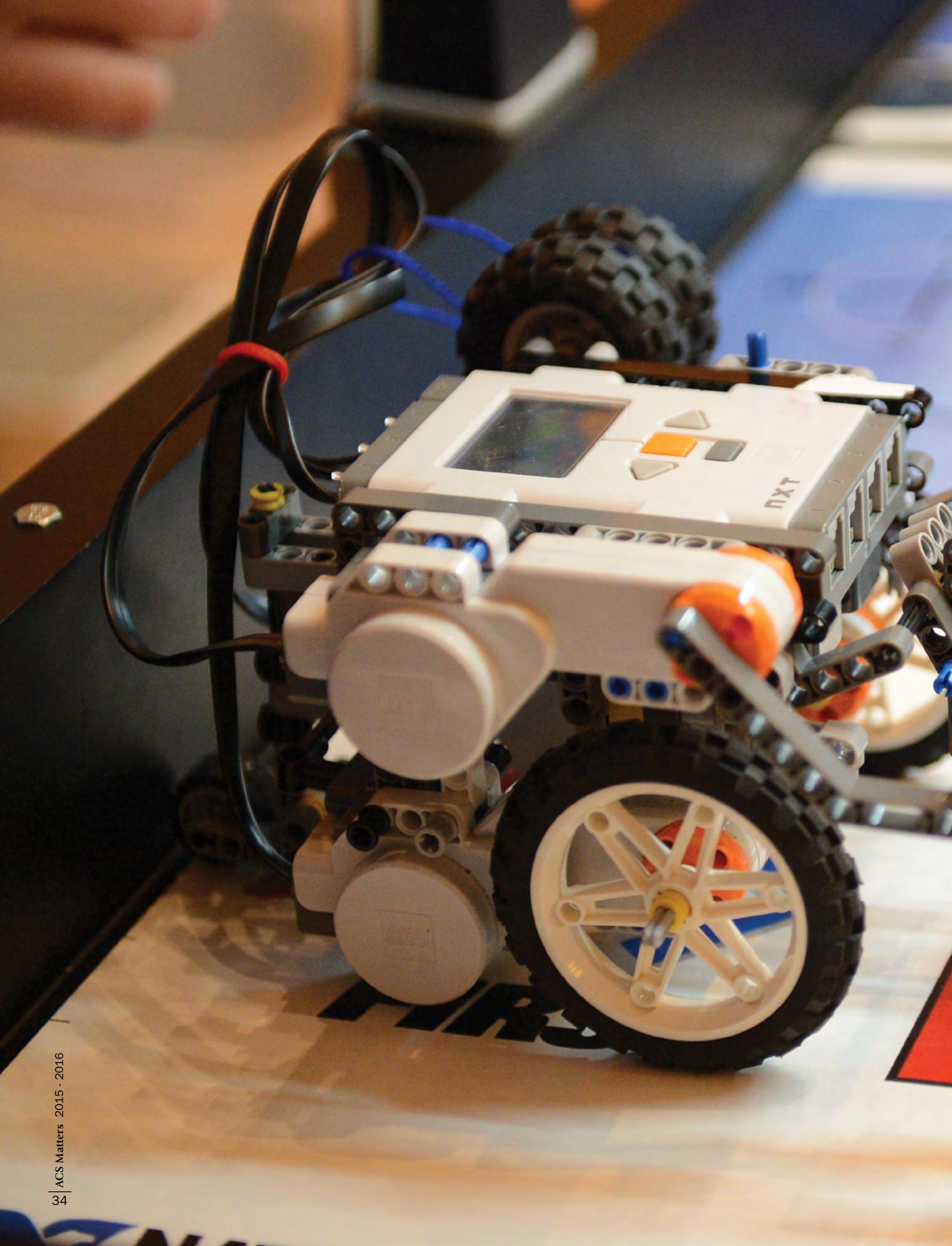


"When students think they are not good at something, they will not learn it," she says. "So giving them the freedom to choose the tools and channels they like plays to their abilities and brings out their creativity."

Of course, when students are given such freedom in the tools and channels they use, a lot of the work ends up falling on the teacher.

The teacher has to prepare clearly defined knowledge standards at the beginning of each assignment so that the student knows how he/she will be assessed. The teacher also has to give a lot of feedback to each student and ask them a lot of questions, so they will learn to think on their own.

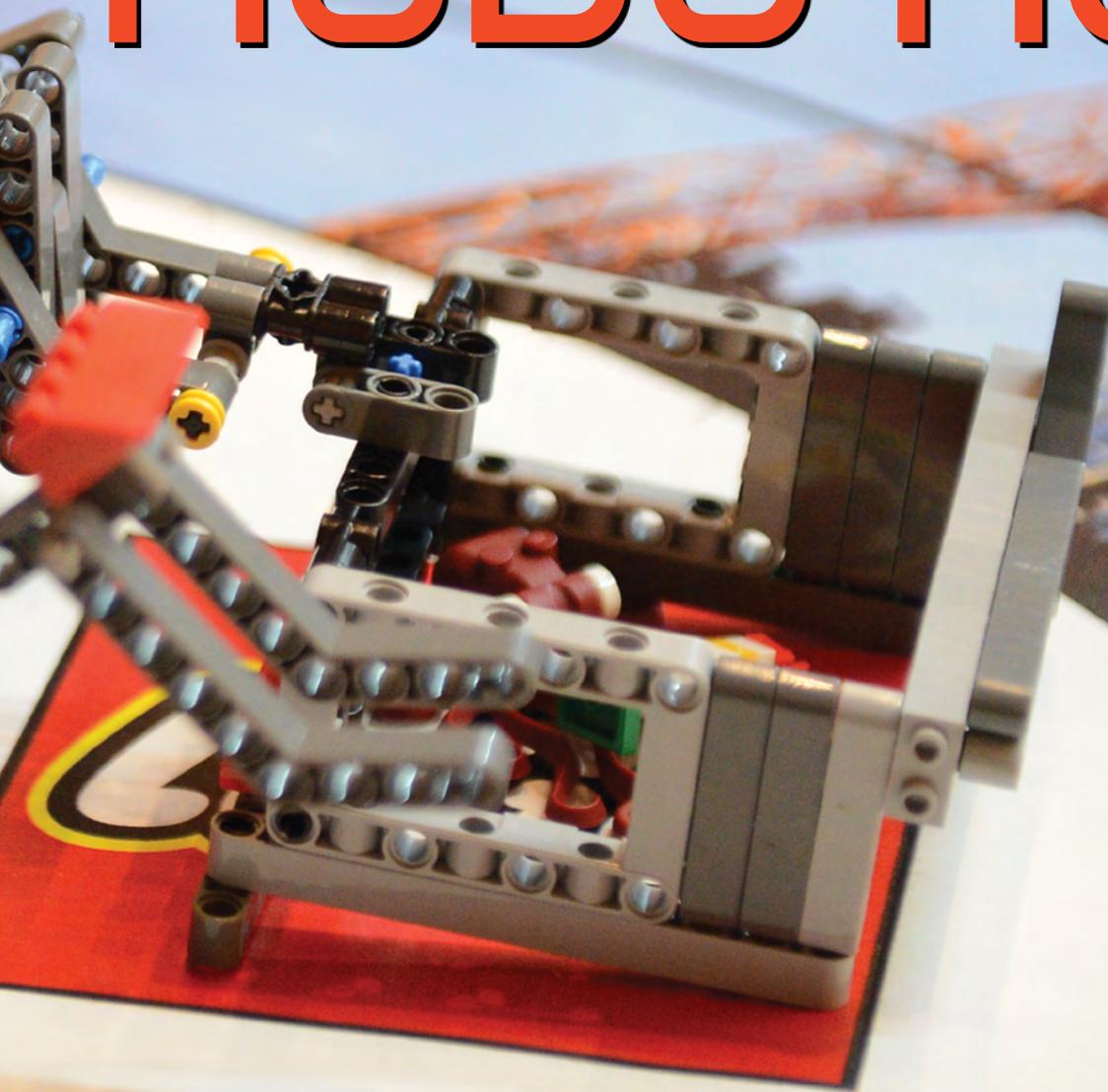
"We still do essays at the end of the year," Noughton adds. "You can see how they perform on the assessments and they do as well if not better than they would have done if the class were conducted in a more conventional way."



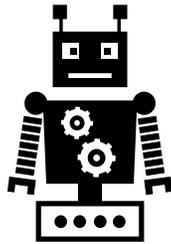
THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION:
NO TO ROTE LEARNING.
YES TO

ROBOTICS

Maha Al-Azar







ACS is known for being a pioneer in many things.

It was the first school to introduce a BYOD program; a pioneer in starting a recycling program; and the first school that developed a comprehensive program for reducing fuel consumption by installing solar panels.

It is also the first school to adopt robotics into its curriculum, or after-school activities across all divisions.

"We decided to venture into this [LEGO Robotics] program because by the time kids graduate from school, no one knows what the world's workforce will look like," said Talar Partiyani, high school biology teacher and LEGO Robotics coordinator. "But I do know that the world will be a world of tech."

Partiyani added, "Kids who have the knowledge of an additional language, especially a tech language, are better prepared to join the job market. And like any language, the younger you start learning, the better you will master it."

It was thanks to a donation from the Parents Committee about five years ago that the LEGO

Robotics program at ACS could be set up. Parents had donated three robotics kits, which were added to one that was already available at the school.

ACS students led by Robotics coordinators Partiyani and Lama Mo'dad, the Elementary School Technology Integrationist, started participating in First LEGO League national competitions since 2013.

In the first year (2013-14), only the Middle School participated. Then the Elementary School (2014-15) followed suit and finally the High School joined in this current school year (2015-16).



Every year the students brought back prizes.

In the first year they won the courteous professionalism prize. In the second year, they were recognized as the youngest team, and during the third year, they grabbed two trophies, one for best research and one for “creativity and running the youngest team.” They also placed among the top 10 in the coding category. And every year, ACS teams were the most gender-balanced, split nearly 50-50 among boys and girls.

The First LEGO League competition is a hands-on, multidisciplinary, collaborative learning experience where students design, build, and program small-scale robots. Students work in teams to design, build

Kids who have the knowledge of an additional language, especially a tech language, are better prepared to join the job market.

and program a robot that is able to autonomously perform missions and score points around a specific theme. While preparing for this competition, students learned that collaboration among various team members and the holistic learning process is more valuable than the final results.

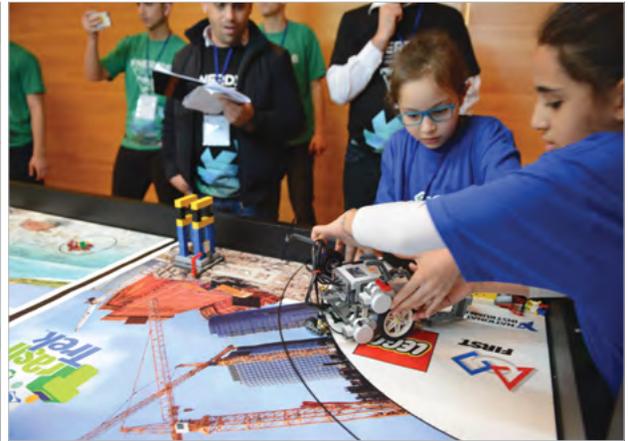
The teachers talk proudly of their students, emphasizing that they only coach them to develop problem-solving skills, and then leave them to work on their own.

“We do not give them the solutions to the problems,” says Mo’dad. “They need to work in groups and collaborate and figure out the solutions on their own.”

Partiyan agreed.

“This program is more like coaching than teaching, for this reason it requires a commitment from students to come and practice, just as they would for basketball or volleyball,” she said.

And Partiyan would know since she is a basketball coach. More important than producing impressive competition results, the Robotics program equips students with valuable skills that will help them better succeed as adults.



10 TOP THINGS THAT A ROBOTICS PROGRAM provides to students:

- Problem-solving and researching real-world issues
- Adopting a new language (coding) and acquiring physics and engineering concepts
- Developing decision-making skills and building confidence
- Fostering critical thinking skills
- Working under pressure and meeting deadlines
- Enhancing presentation skills
- Building social skills through collaboration
- Learning from mistakes through patience and perseverance
- Cultivating design and creative skills
- Discovering different career alternatives

Advice from the Tech Experts: **ONLINE & DATA SAFETY**



GET PROTECTION

Virus protection is essential for ALL computers even Macs.

Make sure that your child's devices have some sort of cover to protect it.

Encourage your child to always walk with their computer closed. This allows for less opportunity of damage when they are moving from place to place.

If you feel that your child may break a device easily you may want to consider having a warranty on that device. This will give you some sort of insurance so later on possible repair costs will be minimal.

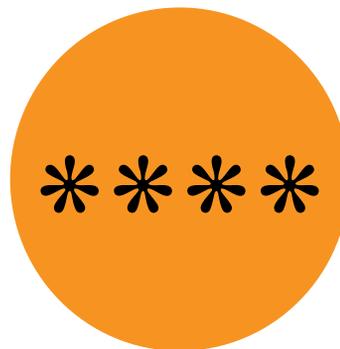


PRIVACY

It is great to use social sites to keep in touch and to share memories with friends and family, but adjust privacy settings to keep strangers out or have two accounts - one for personal things and one for things you really do want to share with the world.

Make sure that the websites your child is accessing provide some key privacy protection for users' personal information. The websites accessed need to comply with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).

Social networking describes a variety of services like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Moshi Monsters, Twitter, Skype, Minecraft and many others. Check the age restrictions (terms of use) for the social networking service or game.



PASSWORDS

Lock your devices with passwords Use a different password for each device.

Use different passwords for different accounts. If one account is hacked the others will still be safe. Make strong passwords (at least 8 characters including lower and upper case letters, numbers, and symbols).

You, as the parent, be the keeper of the passwords. Do not allow your child to have accounts on anything unless you know the password to that account/phone/computer.



CYBERBULLYING

Talk to your child about cyberbullying before it happens. Work out strategies to address any potential issues and reassure your child that you will be there to support him/her.

Advise your child not to reply to any messages from a bully. Often if bullies don't receive a response they will give up.

Teach your child how to block a bully or contact the website administrator to report bullying.



SETTING LIMITS

Everyone needs to unplug every day. Limit the amount of time your child spends on their device(s). There is no magic number. Every child is different so the requirements are different. Monitor the impact their use is having on their real-life relationships with family members and friends, their daily activities and their personal health.

Don't let kids sleep with computers, phones, other devices that connect to WIFI or 3G. Not only is this the most likely time for kids to get in trouble, an increasing body of research is revealing how disruptive it is to our sleep patterns.

Use a router that can designate active time / non active times.

Think before you post. Once something goes online, it is almost impossible to control it anymore. Protect yourself and be kind to others.

Install applications like Self Control (Mac) or Procrastination killer (PC Users) to limit websites. Chrome plugin such as WasteNoTime are also available.



STAYING SAFE

Apps, games, and programs: Not sure if they are appropriate for your child? Ask them to show the app to you or you can Google it or check it out on Commonsense.org.

Beware of scams and the deep web.

Google Searches can be changed to make them a SafeSearch. While this does not screen out all inappropriate material on the web it will filter and take out a great deal for those younger kids. Follow the directions at this link:

SAFE SEARCH

Stay involved with your child's use of their mobile phone. Let your child know that it's important to tell you if they come across something that worries them.

- Tracie Landry
Midge Livingston
Lama Mo'dad

FACULTY MATTER

ACS faculty members have been as busy outside the classroom as they are on campus. Over the past year, many teachers joined workshops or exhibitions, produced apps, wrote a book or a poem, raised money for a cause, produced a film or were active in other ways.



Simon Barakat, MS Science Educator, became a certified Raspberry Pi Educator on April 26 after attending the Picademy@Google in Manchester, UK.

Created in 2008, the Raspberry Pi is a low cost, credit-card sized computer that plugs into a computer monitor or TV, and uses a standard keyboard and mouse. It allows people of all ages to explore computing while using various programming languages as well as building robotics.



Corinne Skaff, our Middle School movement instructor, collaborated on a short 8-minute film that was selected for CineDans, an Amsterdam-based international festival for dance films, which was held March 16-20, 2016.

Called "While We Weave," her film was one of only 60 included in the official selection of the festival out of 300 submissions. The film was inspired by how silkworms weave their cocoons to create a network of webs.

Skaff, who did the choreography for the dance film, "collaborated with filmmaker/director Wafa'a Halawi, working with about five different contemporary

dancers to produce the movements of the film: a circus artist, a contemporary dancer, a capoeirista, a parkour artist, and a folklore dancer.

"Next to my house there are a lot of abandoned silk factories," said Skaff, "and this piqued my interest, and I felt it was important to shed light on this part of our economic history."

Skaff notes that there are 170 abandoned silk factories in Lebanon, which used to be part of the Silk Road. In the late 1800s, Lebanon heavily depended on silk production between the mid-1800s until right after WWI, when industrialization and synthetic fabrics, such as rayon and viscose, and later nylon, drove out natural silk. By the late 1800s, about half of Lebanese families were dependent on silk production, which comprised more than 70 percent of Lebanese agriculture.

"This was a way for us to revive awareness in silk making," she said. "I was also particularly intrigued with this craft, because it was the first to hire women, giving them an active role in the national economy." The film was produced by yaraqa, and filmed in the Bsous Silk Museum.

IB Biology Teacher **Suheir Sleiman** led an IB Biology Category 1 workshop in Dubai, in February, during the IB Africa Europe Middle East conference. Category 1 IB Biology workshops train new teachers to a program. Sleiman was invited by the IB organization to train teachers who would be teaching the IB Biology course for the first time. The participants were from all around the world.



High School Chemistry Teacher **Samer Madbak** published on poemhunter.com a new poem, entitled "Paradise Conquered (A Discontinued Humorous Epic Poem)." Poemhunter.com publishes poetry from all over the world and includes more than 300,000 poems.



In December, Physical Education Teacher **Martin Mugharbil** dedicated his passion for sports to raise awareness about Alzheimer's. Motivated by his love of his father, who is afflicted with the disease, Mugharbil competed in a Bahrain Half Ironman race, which included swimming for two kilometers, biking for 90 kilometers, and then running for 21 kilometers, all in an effort to raise money for families who could not afford homecare for Alzheimer's patients in Lebanon. Mugharbil's family believes that a full-time home-based nurse markedly improves the quality of life of an Alzheimer's patient and his family.

Raising \$40,000 for this cause, through a social media campaign and pledges of \$25 to \$300 for every kilometer he completed, Mugharbil said of his experience: "It was a tough challenge, but a very rewarding experience." Mugharbil hopes to turn his initiative into an annual event.

Viviane Khoury Saab, Physics High School teacher, was invited to lead category 1 and 2 workshops for the Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA) in Amman, Jordan, from August 10 to 12, 2015. Category 1 is for the new teachers to the program, Category 2 is for experienced teachers and Category 3 focuses more on one aspect of the curriculum. The annual regional conference offers workshops from different IB subjects and curricula to teachers from various schools in the region.



Jesse Schlabach, Artist-in-Residence, participated in the Based in Beirut Exhibition: Collective Exhibition of Independent Designers, which was held in the Jewelry Souks, a part of Beirut Design Week, held June 1-7, 2015. Her exhibition was on Furoshiki, which is a traditional Japanese method for wrapping cloth in order to transport books, gifts or shopping items.

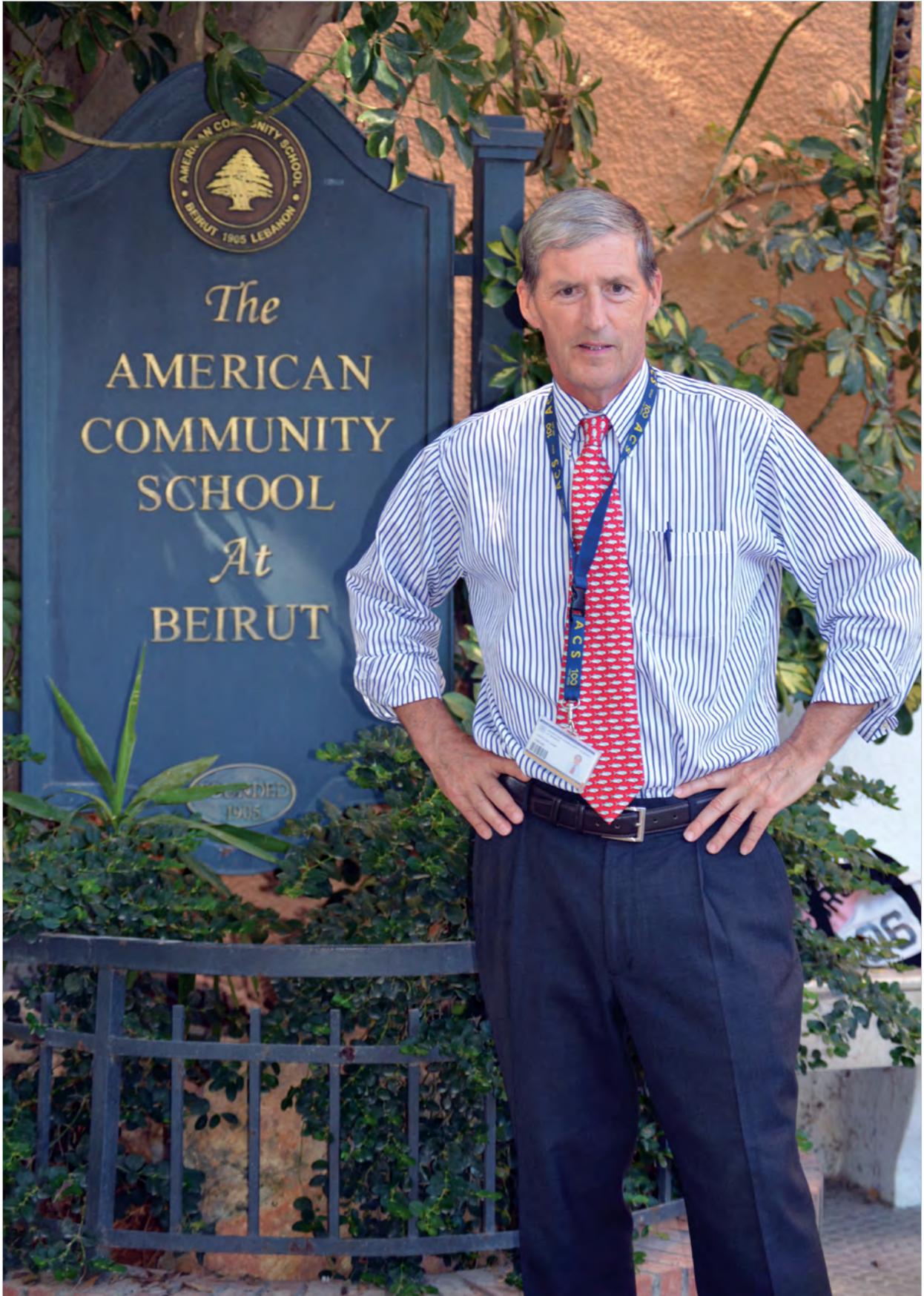
Schlabach also held on June 2 a textile workshop at renowned Lebanese designer Cyrille Najjar's studio, White sur White.

ACS was represented by two of our Physical Education teachers, **Rima Rahawi** and **Andrew Trozzi**, at one of ECIS's PE conferences last year in Munich, Germany. Founded in 1965, ECIS is a non-profit global membership organization that provides continuous professional development, research, advocacy, and grants to its members, comprising startup and mature international and internationally-minded schools, and organizations that support education through their products and services.

At the conference, Rahawi and Trozzi listened to -- and worked up a sweat while participating in -- a variety of physical education workshops by leaders in PE from all over Europe, the Middle East and Asian countries. The workshops were designed to help equip PE teachers with the most recent health and sports research being conducted worldwide and what the new trends in PE are.

Andrew Trozzi, our Health & Physical Education Coordinator at ACS, was also invited to present at this European conference on the topic of «Youth Fitness and Resistance Training - Benefits and Consequences». The main aim of Trozzi's workshop was to share fitness research, activity ideas, and information on how to utilize technology in PE classes to help students understand their health and performance better. The bottom line, of course, is how to convince students to be active, while having fun, and developing healthy habits that will stay with them many, many years after they graduate.

- M.A.



Hamilton Clark: A True ACS Leader who Unified the School

Colin Campbell

“Hamilton is a man of action, a powerful decision maker, and a compassionate and brave leader. I have never seen a leader who puts himself out there to hear the concerns and issues of the community like he does. It takes a lot of courage and confidence; Ham has both.”

"Often, while standing at the BD gate to greet students and parents in the morning, Ham does not hesitate to pick up trash off the ground and put it in the waste basket. I have never seen another head of school do that before," says Hanadi Dayyeh, Arabic Program and Curriculum Coordinator.

Hamilton Clark came to Beirut with his wife Ceci at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year as the new ACS Head of School and he brought with him a vision for the school's future.

Even before taking the helm, excitement over his appointment was evident in the inaugural speech of President of the Board of Trustees Nina Joukowsky Köprülü.

"We have confidence that Mr. Clark can foster what is needed most: ACS students, who will contribute their learned skills and leadership, to create and encourage a peaceful, respectful, and responsible world," Köprülü had said in September 2013. "As you will soon learn firsthand, Mr. Clark has extraordinary zest, energy, irresistible openness and a healthy sense of humor, often at his own expense. He is a man of principle who clearly conveys his values, believes in

honest and open discourse, who expects as much or more from himself as he does from others, ... as well as having the courage to take a risk."

Hamilton Clark came to ACS from Episcopal Academy, one of the most prestigious private schools in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (USA) with 227 years of history. He had spent 11 years there and helped the school greatly expand their campus in size and stature, while respecting the integrity of the school's feel and cherished history. This balance of past and future would also be a major theme for him during his time at ACS Beirut.

"Mr. Clark has extraordinary zest, energy, irresistible openness and a healthy sense of humor, often at his own expense."





Prior to ACS, Clark had only worked internationally for one year (26 years earlier in Switzerland), but the experience had left an indelible mark on him and he had always hoped to work abroad again.

“I was Assistant Head of the American International School in Zurich,” said Clark in an ACS Matters Spring 2013 interview. «We had a wonderful year, just my wife and I. That year I taught a tenth grade English class, and I remember having an Italian girl, a French boy, a Swedish boy, and kids from all around the world in class. It was so great to have that kind of diversity.”

The following year a great opportunity at a school was presented to him in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (USA) and his wife and he returned to the States. He then led that school, Sewickly Academy, for 15 years.

“The whole time when Ceci and I were in America and running those two schools we kept thinking about getting back overseas and having our kids grow up abroad, so we interviewed in Paris, Brussels and a couple of other places. But the timing was never right.” ACS Beirut finally came knocking, and this time the timing was right.

Soon after Clark arrived at ACS he used his USA private schools experience to implement an improved and more focused mission statement and philosophy, in line with the latest trends in education. He immediately set a strategic plan for the school focused on improving literacy school wide and raising the bar academically. Additionally, he led the charge to complete the new joint classroom and faculty apartments building, the new high school science wing, the new middle school science floor, and the new fifth floor in the high school building. These milestones were accomplished in only a few short years, catapulting ACS into a new era of scholastic and competitive performance.

“Every morning Hamilton welcomes students and parents to school with a smile and with enthusiasm. He is energetic, purposeful, and companionate. He inspires us to do what needs to be done now, without delay. Working with Ham requires everyone to be ready to give the best they have to offer. Plus, he is focused on getting the best from our students,” says Karim Abu Haydar, Deputy Head of School.

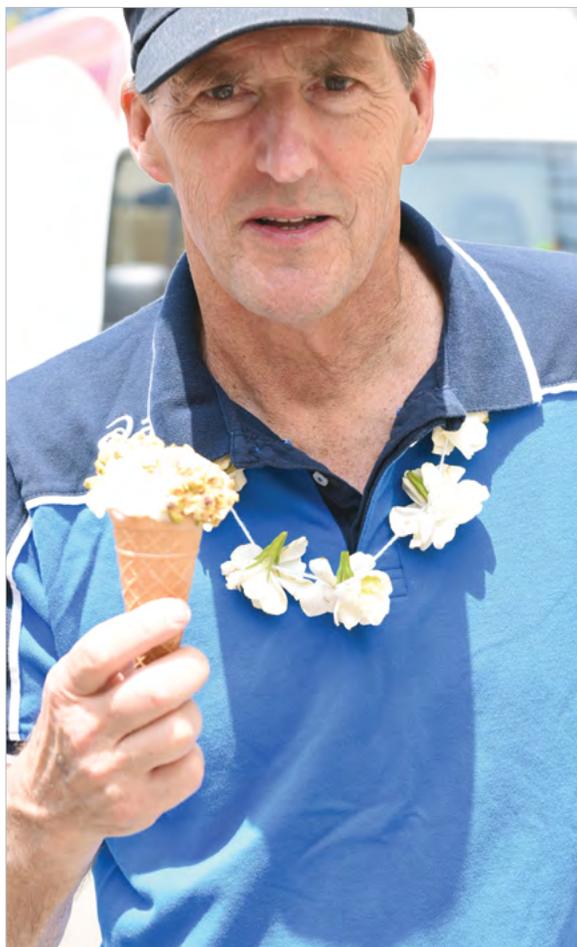
Clark has also overseen remarkable achievements in terms of increased revenues for ACS during his time at

the school. Working closely with Fadwa Ghannoum, the-then director of development, he presided over the launch of the school's first capital campaign and worked with ACS's generous alumni, parents, and supporters to raise over \$4 million USD in 2015. This campaign largely paid for the new faculty building, which in turn is saving the school a considerable amount of rent money on faculty housing every year. Additionally, Clark contributed to helping continually grow the ACS Annual Fund, which exceeded \$1 million USD every year he was at ACS. As a testament to his leadership, faculty participation in fundraising also increased largely.

"We met on a rainy night hike, my first hike ever. It was a bumpy, steep narrow path. I heard his words of encouragement along the way - during and after the hike, and long after. Ham is a true, genuine humane, energetic, appreciative and understanding person. He joins in our classes, dances with us, listens to us tell stories, reads books with us, and celebrates with the children. He even leads the dance floor on Teachers Days. He listens to our problems and always offers a shoulder to cry on. He simply, genuinely shares our lives with us," says Lama El Zein, Early Years Arabic Teacher.

Another one of Clark's successes included his initiation of a new vision for professional development at ACS. He tailored plans to the needs of each school division. He also instituted widely popular Town Hall meetings for faculty and parents to discuss issues with and questions about the school. Clark loves the winter holidays and he established a few new traditions around Christmas time, including the terrific Jingle Bell Run and an event where he reads Christmas stories to Early Years and Elementary School students under the Christmas tree.

"He is a man of principle who clearly conveys his values, believes in honest and open discourse, who expects as much or more from himself as he does from others."



"Mr. Clark was always there to discuss the biggest problems or just to spread his contagious smile in the morning. He is humble, caring and above all that, he is a great leader. Of course I will miss him dearly; the whole school will miss him dearly," says Jood A.S., a middle school student.

When Clark decided to accept the ACS job offer in 2012 and moved to Beirut in 2013, he saw the Head of School position as more than a job, but a mission. "We are here in Beirut, and yet we're at a school that brings Christians, Druze, Shias, and Sunnis together at a place in the Arab world that is not focused on rote learning, but is instead focused on critical thinking," said Clark in an ACS Matters interview. "ACS is not a place where the teacher just lectures for 40 minutes. ACS is a place where students can develop their voices to be strong, thoughtful people so that they can understand their world and understand how to work with each other. This is something that truly resonates with me and helped my wife and I decide to come to Beirut."



This is likely part of the inspiration that motivated Clark to implement and vehemently defend his proposal for a dress code policy for the entire school - a dress code that could unite the school. Also in line with his passion to spread unity, he started the tradition of having the ACS Senior leadership stand at the BD Gate every day to greet students and their parents.

In his installation speech on September 20, 2013, Clark spoke about his inspiration to come work at ACS Beirut.

"I started to think that if ACS could bring this diverse group of young people together and provide them with a great education, then perhaps we could, in at least a small way, begin to create positive change in Lebanon and throughout this part of the world. Why not think big?" Clark followed through on those words - in his time at ACS: He did think big and he has impacted Lebanon and beyond.

It is this sense of community that inspired Clark to come to Beirut, and it is also what he says he will take away from his experience here." I will miss the

outstanding people who come together to work here and support each other as one community," Clark said at the end of his tenure here. "Of course I will miss the kids who are so polite and would always greet me, and the general friendliness of people here." Clark added: "I will also take with me ACS's commitment to diversity and inclusion and a very favorable impression of the Arab world, especially Lebanese. I now realize that we should not believe everything we read in newspapers and hear on the news."

Clark also acknowledged that he had grown attached to the daily view of the beautiful Mediterranean, the sunshine, and even the noise of the dynamic city of Beirut.

When all is said and done, ACS is about much more than just accomplishments. ACS is a community, and Hamilton Clark nourished it well.

Casey Doumitt, Dean of Students, seems to say it best, "Ham and Ceci brought a sense of family to ACS. They are like our Dad and Mom. They are a great team!"



Ranya Hussein, Grade 10, 2016

Greg MacGilpin Announced as Next Head of School



Greg MacGilpin has succeeded Head of School Hamilton Clark, after emerging as the unanimous choice of the ACS Search Committee, consisting of trustees, with input from all of ACS's constituents. His appointment took effect on July 1, 2016.

Greg MacGilpin has been Director General of The Country Day School in Costa Rica since 2010. Prior to his position in Costa Rica, Greg MacGilpin served as a Middle and Upper School Head in schools in New England and is well-versed in the curricular and developmental needs of students, as well as the pedagogy of all levels from pre-elementary through high school.

"Greg MacGilpin's integrity and intelligence, his passion for helping young people find their best selves, and the respect and affection he inspires in students, faculty, and parents came through in his interviews here, as well as in all of his references," said Nina Joukowsky Köprülü, president of the ACS Board of Trustees. "His enthusiasm and genuine enjoyment of being with students were still evident when he met with trustees, late in the evening after a marathon day of interviews! That bodes well for keeping up with the high energy of ACS's students and faculty."

MacGilpin said that he was drawn to the school culture, right from the start.

"The school's dedication to children and young people, its excellence and professionalism and its sense of caring and long-standing purpose are evident from each interaction and interview. I have always sought out school communities, and from the beginning of my search, it was clear ACS is such a place," he said.

Greg MacGilpin holds a BA in religious studies from Hobart and William Smith Colleges and a master's degree in educational administration from Teachers College of Columbia University where he was a Fellow with the Klingenstein Private School Leadership program. MacGilpin and his wife, Melissa Macomber, have three daughters who will attend ACS: Abigail, 11, Mallory, 9, and Sydney, 6.

The new ACS headmaster noticed students' passion and loyalty to their school even during the recruitment process. "While visiting ACS ... I asked the large group of high school students who among them were graduating this year and over half the room raised their hands. To me, this is an indication that their interest in who serves the school goes well beyond just their time at ACS; they are thinking about legacy," he said. He added, "[We] continue to believe strongly in the mission of the school which is what attracted us here in the first place. ACS has a very important role to play in Lebanon and the school makes an important difference in the lives of the young people it serves."

- M.A.



So Much More Than Fundraising: Fadwa Brought Heart

Colin Campbell

After 12 years at ACS, Fadwa Ghannoum left the school in December, newly married and ready to start a new life of sailing in the Canary Islands.

When she first walked through the American Community School doors in 2003 with her resume in hand, Fadwa Ghannoum didn't know what was awaiting her. She knew she wanted to make a difference, and she was inspired by ACS's highly regarded education and reputation. But she didn't expect that the most common question Lebanese would soon be asking her was, "Why does an expensive school like ACS need money?" It is a misunderstanding that plagues many private schools throughout the Middle East and can even trigger their slow demise.

So Ghannoum began educating the masses about a concept that had taken hold in America and Europe many decades before. She passionately explained to ACS alumni, parents and the rest of the ACS community that tuition alone does not cover the school's yearly budget. For ACS to continue to expand into new cutting edge facilities (while refreshing the older ones), hire incredible teachers locally and from around the world, and offer scholarships and financial aid to hardworking students in need, a strong annual fund and a robust endowment were absolute necessities. The message resonated: when Ghannoum arrived, the Annual Fund was raising less than \$220K and by the time she left 13 years later it had exceeded \$1 million. Ghannoum's yearly fundraising activities were a huge hit, but much more went into the school's newfound fundraising success.

"ACS was that spark of hope for me, paving the way for enlightened future leaders, by educating a new generation in Lebanon. The way ACS educates students is unique - it inspires them to think critically and creatively, to be open-minded and tolerant; it gives them leadership and communication skills. Donors believe in our mission and believe that this is the best school in Lebanon and one of the best in the Middle East," says Ghannoum.

Ghannoum came to ACS with a vision and an arduous task ahead of her. She found herself as the Director of

Development in an office with four empty desks in July 2003. She quickly learned that the key to fundraising is the network, so she built a strong database of local and international donors. She decided the school's image needed fresh invigoration and in September 2003 she published the first color issue of ACS Matters, a magazine that would be redesigned in 2006, and become an increasingly well-regarded school publication over the following years as well as a useful fundraising tool, in the way it marketed the successes of the school and its community. In 2004, she launched her first fundraising campaign, resulting in ACS installing the first astro-turf athletic field at a school in Lebanon.

Early on, Ghannoum seized on a very important milestone- the ACS Centennial. She consistently reminded donors that the school had been thriving and preparing students for university for 100 years, surviving periods of turmoil throughout the years and even a civil war, only because of support from people like them. She launched a "Reconnect and Celebrate" campaign with extensive trips in 2004 through 2006 to meet alumni based in the USA. Mini-reunions were planned and alumni were encouraged to return to ACS for the Centennial celebrations; and many finally did for the first time in over 35 years.

Ghannoum says that fundraising was about relationships, gratitude, and follow-ups. She also knew that success would only come if the community was involved, so she set new goals to include more parents, alumni (younger and older), trustees, and Lebanese leaders to create an enthusiastic volunteer base. These dedicated volunteers were instrumental in the success of ACS's centennial celebrations which began with a large kickoff event in June 2005, continued with a heartfelt ACS Centennial video, and ended with a culmination celebration in June 2006. The centennial year saw the largest group of global ACS alumni return to visit in the school's history.



“ACS was that spark of hope for me, paving the way for enlightened future leaders, by educating a new generation in Lebanon.”

The school’s utmost supporters, trustees and parents, and reinvigorated alumni have also been critical to more recent campaigns, including the silent phase of ACS’s first capital campaign, We Are ACS, in which the school has up till now raised over \$5 million dollars in 2015.

Ghannoum unabashedly loved her job. “I like the fact that development is so diversified,” she says. “It has the people element, plus the organizational development, marketing and creative element, event planning; I never got bored. I met so many generous people who are truly inspiring; they gave because they wanted to support ACS and its mission, or to provide an opportunity for a less privileged student to have a better education. These people give wholeheartedly. As for alumni, most are so appreciative of what ACS taught them, it was delightful to witness their passion and nostalgia for a school that is still special to them so many generations later.”

Under Ghannoum’s tenure, over the past decade, ACS established and fundraised for 13 different

seven-year scholarships, two endowed scholarships, and expanded the 100% plus scholarship program by setting up “named scholarships”. The office now employs a team of six passionate development officers dedicated to helping ACS reach even greater heights; it’s a long road travelled from when Ghannoum began and it is set up exceptionally well for years of future success, under ACS’s new Development Director, Reine Youssef. (See article next page)

“I have always been inspired by the talented and passionate faculty at ACS– that was one of the biggest incentives for me in my work,” says Ghannoum. “I learned a lot about teamwork, communication, organization, and perseverance. I will always value the culture at the school, the friendships I have made because of ACS, and all that I have learned, but I am especially in awe of the selfless generosity that people in our community have shown. I look back at my 12 years at ACS with fond memories; and am grateful for this fulfilling and energizing experience.”

New Director of Development and Alumni Relations for ACS



The American Community School at Beirut has appointed **Reine Youssef**, an academic and a former UN consultant, as its new Director of Development and Alumni Relations.

Youssef, who assumed her new position on January 11, 2016, comes to ACS with experience in teaching at the university level, as well as expertise in education, grant writing, communications, negotiations and public relations.

Youssef previously headed the Public Health and Development Science program at the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Balamand and has represented the government in Lebanon at numerous negotiations meetings such as the Regional Ministerial Meeting, and Global Environment Facility (GEF) related events, such as the 3rd GEF Assembly in Cape Town, South Africa, as well as others in the MENA region.

As a development consultant, Youssef worked on several community projects, identifying funds and grants and writing proposals to various donors, funding organs, and development assistance agencies in order to build effective programs that impact societies.

She had also established and chaired the environmental committee of the National Commission for Lebanese

Women and served as jury member on several committees of the Civil Service Board (recruiting government employees), the Ministry of Education, and the Higher Childhood Council, and given numerous workshops and trainings to school teachers and trainers in both the public and private sector. Youssef has a gift for languages and switches easily between English, French, German, and Arabic. She can also converse easily in Spanish and Armenian.

Youssef, who describes herself as “a people person,” hopes to apply her interpersonal skills to help ACS grow through the gifts she will attract. “This is a school that fosters tolerance, open-mindedness, creativity, and graduates students that serve their country and the region, and for this reason; we should all support it and support the quality education it offers.”

“ACS cultivates a spirit of self-advancement, professionalism, and positivity, and this is what attracted me to this culture,” she said. Having spent her early childhood in and around AUB, and currently a Beirut resident, Youssef considers Ras Beirut, including ACS, to be a part of her fabric.

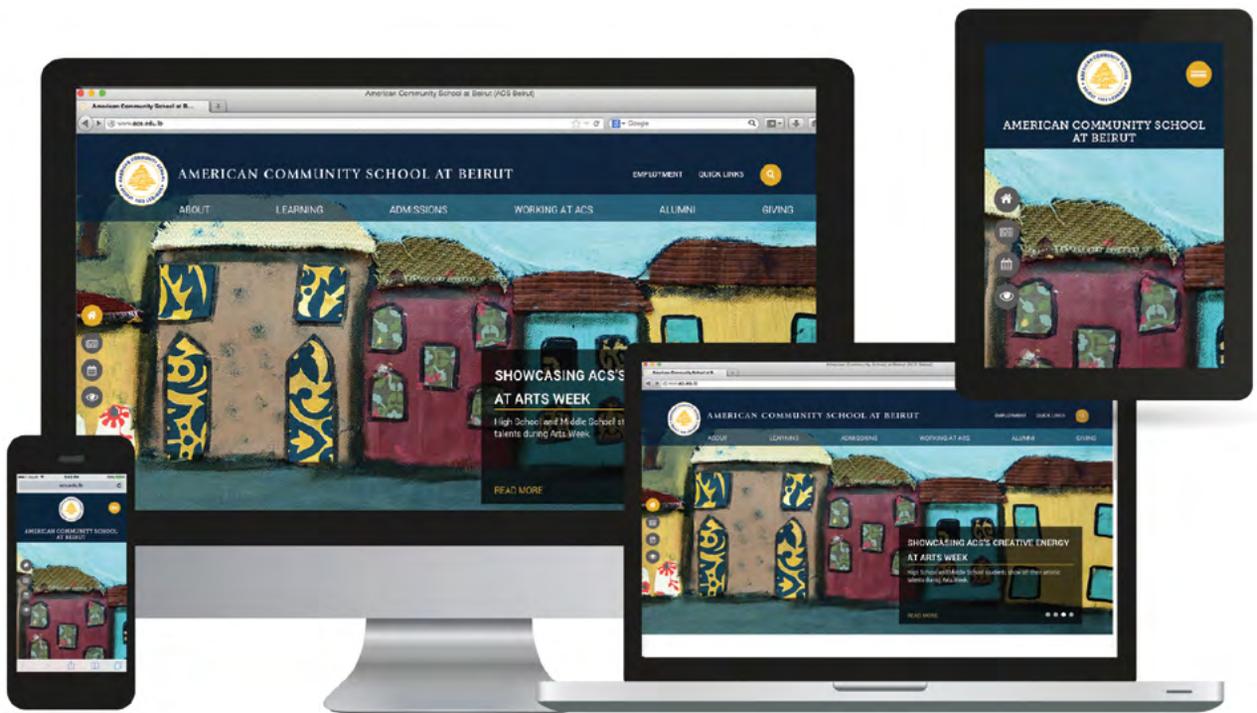
Youssef believes that education is the single most important driver of advancement for societies. “If you want to advance, if you want to promote peace, then you need to invest in schools,” she said.

Youssef holds a PhD in Environmental Education from Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, and a bachelor’s degree, a teaching diploma, and a master’s degree from the American University of Beirut. She has taught at Lebanon’s top universities a variety of courses addressing environmental topics, education, and public health.

“We are excited to have Reine with us at ACS and know that her previous experience and life skills will serve us well,” said Head of School Hamilton Clark.

- M.A.

www.acs.edu.lb



SCHOOL WEBSITE: NEW AND IMPROVED

Maha Al-Azar

A school website has more visitors
than its front lobby, school play or Spring fest.

With its nearly 11,000 monthly visits
by active users and more than 31,000 page views, the ACS website
communicates information to a diverse audience.

Over the past decade schools have been paying greater attention to their websites, which serve as their primary means of interaction with prospective students, parents, staff and benefactors. Websites also cater to alumni, current parents, students and staff and other people interested in the school.

To communicate clearly, easy navigation is crucial. Since the ACS website's last revamp in 2007-08, a number of new web design tools and technologies have sprung up, prompting the School's senior administrators about two years ago to start the ball rolling on a new website.

Consensus for a new and improved website with a modern look and easier navigation was garnered and the process was launched under the leadership of the Development and Alumni Relations (D&A) Office back then. The aim was to come out with a new website, within Head of School Hamilton Clark's term.

Now the goal has been achieved: ACS started rolling out its new website in June 2016.

"We are excited to have unveiled the new site over the summer, since we are certain that visitors will greatly

enjoy the changes we have put in place," said Karim Abu-Haydar, deputy head of school, who took the lead on the project after a change in leadership in the D&A office at the end of 2015.

What can visitors expect on the new site?

A modern look, easier navigation, and some additional sections...

Most importantly, the new site features Responsive web design (RWD), which allows for easy reading and navigation with a minimum of resizing, reformatting, and scrolling, across a wide range of devices -- from desktop computer monitors to mobile phones. RWD only entered the vernacular of web design less than four years ago.

Web specialists no longer consider Responsive Web Design as a luxury for schools that want to reach the growing number of parents and staff who access the internet using their phones. According to Pew Research, the number of adults in the United States using phones to access the internet is as high as 55 percent. Among young adults and students, this number increases significantly.

“Great web design can engender trust in any organization,” says Steve Williams, co-founder of Campus Suites, a web-communication platform for schools. “According to web credibility research from Stanford, 75 percent of users admit to making judgments about an organization’s credibility based on their website’s design.”

More important than a professional-looking website is a website that is designed well.

“Design, to paraphrase Apple founder Steve Jobs, is not just what it looks and feels like. Design is how it works. In order to fully communicate and engage, a school website needs to work well and look good,” adds Williams.

For easier navigation the new website homepage is divided into five categories: Learning, Admissions, Working, Alumni, and Giving which cater to the main constituents of the ACS community, students and teachers, parents and prospective parents, staff and prospective staff, alumni, and donors and prospective donors. Additionally, an “About” section gives an overview of the school and its history as well as a letter from the Head of School, quick facts and figures and other interesting information.

Website users will now be greeted by a completely re-designed homepage with beautiful, high-quality photos, a news page, a six-day cycle-based calendar, and five icons that lead visitors to ACS’s flagship programs and services including athletics, community service, performing and visual arts, health services, the summer camp program and the Bright Beginnings program as well as an icon for the school publications. Bright Beginnings, the ACS daycare program, offers parents a nursery for

To communicate clearly, easy navigation is crucial.

babies and a preschool for toddlers as well as after-school programs for children whose school day ends earlier than their siblings.

“Now it is easier to find information and contact each division through user-friendly online forms,” explained Hasan Al-Masri, the webmaster who was recently entrusted with managing the website. “And prospective parents and students may easily request a tour of the school from the website.”

Moreover, in addition to links to the school’s official Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn pages, the ACS homepage will have links to Snapchat and YouTube. All ACS-related videos will be posted on ACS’s official YouTube channel.

On the new site, alumni will have their own tab on the homepage to help them stay connected with their alma mater. They can also find out about opportunities to get involved by coaching younger alumni or students or hosting an alumni event.

ACS
BEIRUT



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN & ENDOWMENT VS. ANNUAL FUND

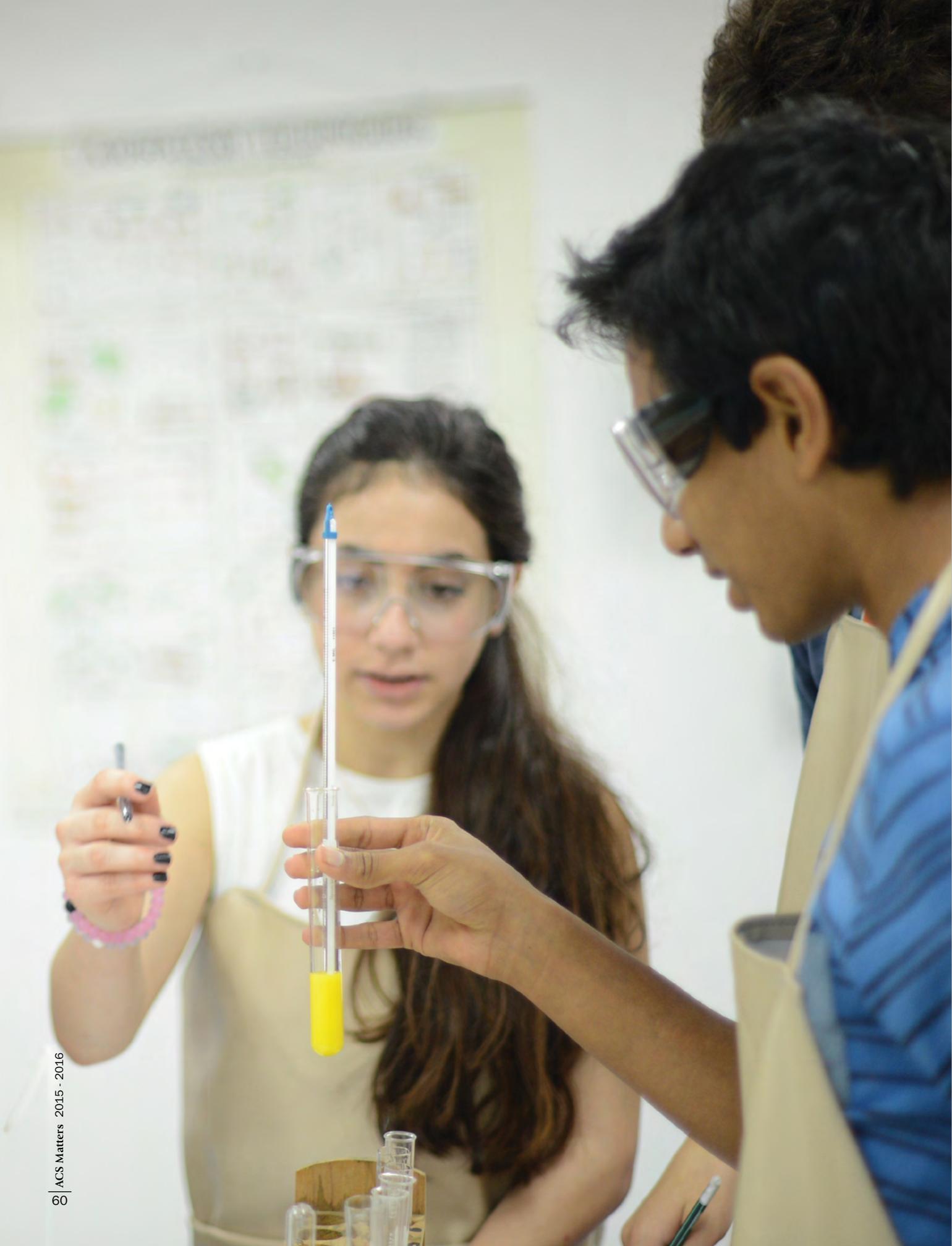
What's the difference?

Think of **ACS** as a large investment, like buying a house. You have to make payments on your mortgage, but you also need to pay to keep the lights on.

In the world of **ACS fundraising**, the **capital campaign and endowment** are like the long-term investment of mortgage payments, while the **annual fund** is like the immediate need to pay the utility bills.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN & ENDOWMENT		ANNUAL FUND	
Savings Account	Needs to Increase with the Growth of the School 	Checking Account	Expenses not covered by Student Tuition
Investment		Every Year	
FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE		IMMEDIATE NEEDS	
Long-term	Stability during times of recession	Short term	ACCESSIBLE
BUFFER		Small gifts making a large impact	Available to use
Lasting Security			REOCCURING 

MAKE A DIFFERENCE
GIVE NOW



ASHA Grants for a Greener School and Tech-Enriched Science Labs

Maha Al Azar

It is said that the best way to learn is by doing. It is also said that setting the right example will help others follow in the right path.

So what better way to learn science than by doing experiments in a well-equipped lab. And what better way to learn about clean energy than seeing it in action at your own school.

With this in mind, ACS set out to upgrade its 1950s science labs in the Middle and High Schools, and to install solar panels in order to reduce fuel consumption for solar heating and electric generation.

Thanks to two sizeable grants from the American Schools and Hospital Abroad program, under the United States Agency for International Development, ACS was able to achieve its goals.

The school has equipped its MS and HS science labs with \$400,000 worth of top-quality commodities to create technology-enriched science labs that offer students hands-on learning opportunities in environmentally safe spaces. Additionally, the ASHA grant provided another \$100,000 which was spent on IT and Library commodities. ACS is also in the process of installing photovoltaic solar panels and solar water heating panels in the school to the tune of \$855,000. "The new science labs are instrumental in helping our kids become science-minded," said Head of School Hamilton Clark.

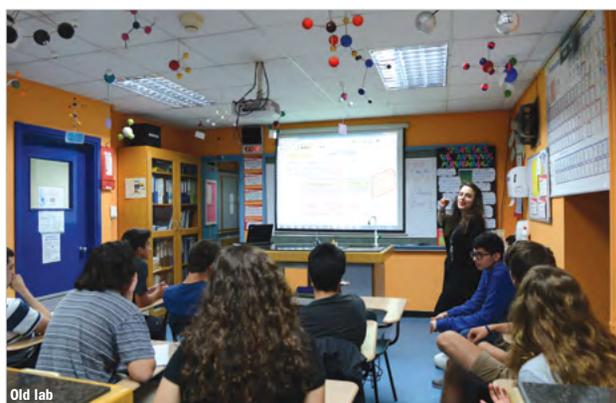
High School Principal Robert Evans emphasized that in such science labs, students would not only learn to conduct scientific experiments, but learn the tools and tricks that will help them face life.

"This is where you learn about life," he said. "Mistakes will happen and you get to start over, and learn from them. That's part of life, part of science: how you bounce back and move forward."

The new labs include a filming room, a robotics space, a maker space with 3D printers, and many more equipment that will help students adopt the science, technology, engineering, art design, and math skills that ACS teaches in a stimulating, engaging space.

Completed in August 2015, the High School science wing was dedicated in the name of Ramzi M. Safadi '02, on November 11, 2015, former Minister Mohammad Safadi's late son. Ramzi Safadi was an ACS middle and high school student between 1995 and 2000, and passed away in 2008 at the tender age of 25, following a car accident in London. The family wanted to commemorate his memory by dedicating the high school science center in his name, particularly since he was a highly inquisitive person who loved to ask questions and go on nature "expeditions," looking for creepy-crawlies under rocks or leaves.

The HS science wing was named the Safadi Science Center in memory of Ramzi M. Safadi '02, and in honor of a generous gift given by Safadi.



The new center offers students spacious, well-lit classrooms, which student speaker Rawad Yared '16 highlighted, expressing his gratitude. "In the past, we would regularly bump into each other while conducting our experiments in class," he said. "Now we have ample space and a lot of light."

The MS science wing is expected to be completed by mid-summer 2016.

A few years ago, ACS launched its 2020 Green School Roadmap, which aims to reduce its carbon footprint by 20% by the year 2020. The roadmap also promotes sustainable, cost-saving measures, while teaching students to be stewards of their communities.

The Roadmap is based on several components, including implementing solar electrical power production,

"The new science labs are instrumental in helping our kids become science-minded."

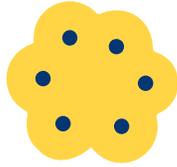
installing solar water heating facilities, and introducing curricular and extra-curricular activities, including community service, that enhance environmental learning among students. The comprehensive green roadmap includes strategies and measures related to water and water consumption, waste management, lighting, transportation and others toward building a green a sustainable school community.

"We are indebted to the American Schools and Hospitals Abroad program (ASHA) and the United States for recognizing the importance of this institution in Lebanon," said Head of School Hamilton Clark. "As a school that brings together students from different backgrounds and religions and exposes them to American ideals and helps them to think critically, ACS is a school that is making a difference in this country."

With the ASHA grant, ACS will upgrade its electric grid, install solar panels, turn the school greener and offer a myriad educational opportunities for students. "Hopefully the new solar panels will make us a model for other institutions to show we can reduce fuel usage by harnessing the sun," said Clark. "There will also be a student monitoring station where kids will be able to study how solar panels will help us save money."



CAMPUS NEWS



MS students save lives with Raspberry Pi

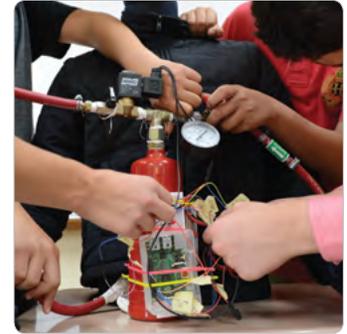
A Middle School student team received the Innovation Award in the first Lebanon Raspberry Pi Competition for Schools 2015-2016, under the mentorship of their Arabic teacher, Ruwaida Kaed Beyh.

The ACS team included Daniel F., Danny S., Khaled H., and Sammy M. from Grade 8 and Aneel F., Mahdi AH., and Ali S. from Grade 7. Other award categories included Outstanding Team; High School First Prize; Middle School First Prize; Team Spirit Award; Code Award; and Design Award.

Raspberry Pi, which is rather new in Lebanon, is a low cost, credit-card sized computer that plugs into a monitor and uses a standard keyboard and mouse. It allows people of all ages to explore computing while using various programming languages, as well as building robotics.

Before December 2015, Kaed Beyh's exposure to programming had been limited to an elective computer science course in college, which did not manage to engage her interest.

"I discovered my love of technology because of ACS," said Kaed Beyh. "When I first came here in 2011, I did not use computers much, not even for typing. I was more of a pen and paper person. But the professional development we receive here at ACS and my own love to continue to advance prompted me to explore technology."



Students showcase their creative talents at Arts Week

The creative energies of MS and HS students were evident in the first ACS Arts Week festival, held in the week of May 16, 2016.

Arts Week included 3-4 days of a visual arts exhibition, in addition to an evening of performing arts.

Paintings, mixed media collages, drawings, computer graphics, digital photography, sculptures, bookmaking, ceramics, 2-D and 3-D art and more were on display at the courtyard and BD building from May 16 to 19.

On the evening of May 19, all student music groups, drama and movement groups performed numbers.

At least 150 students contributed art pieces and performances to Arts Week, where more than 300 pieces were showcased.





Learning about the war from 'human books'

Instead of reading history books, Grade 10 students had the opportunity to learn about the Lebanese war by delving into conversations with real people who had experienced its horrors through their day-to-day lives. Grade 10 History Teacher Kathryn Jones and HS Library and Technology Integrationist Tracie Landry organized on April 27, 2016, a special event called "The Human Library," during which about a dozen "Human Books" were present. The "human books" included residents of former East Beirut and West Beirut, university students from AUB and LAU, a fighter, a victim of kidnapping, a child, a mother, and an owner of the business who worked in an area affected by the war.



Students win paper plane competition

About 20 ACS students, led by teachers Talar Partiyian and Debora Carreras competed against 70 other students from five different schools at the Paper Plane Competition and the Spaghetti Bridge Competition, held April 22, 2016, at Notre Dame University. ACS students landed in first place for both longest flight time and longest flight distance, and in second place for both categories.



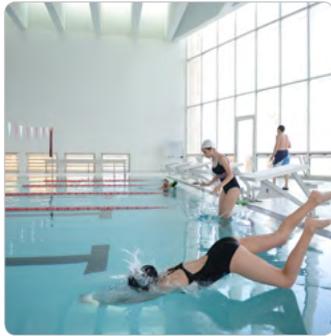
Talent revealed during staging of in-house musical production

About 30 High School students staged the in-house production, *Jukebox Time Machine* on April 22-23, 2016. The two performances revealed students' eclectic mix of musical and acting talent to the delight of their parents and their high school drama teacher, Kevin Shea, who wrote and directed the play and was also the stage manager. The play followed a group of four ACS students who find the key to the underground storage area and decide to check it out. While down there, they find an old jukebox, which precipitates an argument about different music genres. The student actors' singing was so contagious that the entire audience was seen swaying and singing along.

ACS alumni go MAD for ACS

ACS alumni went heart and soul into a one-week fundraising challenge initiated by the Office of Development and Alumni Relations between April 11 and 17, 2016. Called the MAD (Make a Donation) challenge, the week spurred alums to participate in big numbers, no matter their donation. 108 alumni participated, raising more than \$15,000 in one week, in support of financial aid at ACS.





Middle schoolers compete in first House Olympics

Students from Middle School swam, ran, jumped, and played basketball and soccer, competing on behalf of their house, during the first ACS House Olympics for the Middle School, held at AUB on April 8, 2016.

More than 200 middle schoolers vied against each other on behalf of their houses: the Wizards, Griffins, Phoenix, Titans, Dragons and Indriks.

Students competed in eight categories: swimming, mile run, basketball, soccer, 100m, 400m, long jump, and the 4x100m relay.

Top ranked were the Wizards, followed by the Griffins and the Phoenix. The Titans, Dragons, and Indriks placed in the last three slots, respectively.



IB students wow the crowds with thoughtful artwork

An isolation room, stop animation, sculptures, paintings, video installations and much more were on display at an art gallery in the Jewelry Souk of Beirut Souks for three days March 19-21, 2016.

Looking into the gallery, one would not guess that the 80 art pieces it was showcasing were the works of high school students, but those of established artists.

Each year the International Baccalaureate program requires the visual arts diploma students to present their artworks in a public exhibition.

Not only were many of the works of high artistic value, but they were also thought-provoking and motivated by depth, prompting an excellent review article in The Daily Star.



Tapping into talent to help others

Singing, dancing, rapping, and magic were all mobilized on March 18, 2016, for the benefit of the Sister School co-curricular program, which raises money for less fortunate schools, both here and abroad.

High School students organized the annual Unplugged, an evening of entertainment and refreshments that showcased ACS talent, delighting the sizable audience of students, parents, and teachers.

The money raised from ticket and raffle sales went this year to help a public school in Wata Msaytbeh, an Early Years and Elementary School in Beirut, whose music room needed revamping. Previously, student volunteers had retiled the floor and painted the walls of the music room. They also laid out wall-to-wall carpeting, and they are currently raising money for music equipment.

Some 14 high school students from Grades 9, 10, and 11 work on the Sister School project.



First Book Bowl spreads excitement among middle schoolers

ACS held its first annual Book Bowl this year, and students competed in the finals on March 14, 2016, at the upper school auditorium.

Inspired by how sports competitions motivate youngsters to train and compete towards a goal, the Book Bowl was set up like a sports tournament, and was opened up to Middle School students, in its first edition. Twelve books were picked out for students to read between mid-December and early March. The books represented various genres.

To see students' excitement and competitive spirit come out on Quiz Day as they answered some 180 questions prepared by teachers, one would think they were rooting for their favorite football team.

The 34 teams represented the School's six Houses: Wizards, Indriks, Griffins, Phoenix, Dragons, and Titans. Each house had five to six teams, made up of advisory groups, consisting of 6-8 students each.

Competing over 70 questions, Kuzel's Kuzinz won first prize. First and second runners-up were Seahawks and Mr. T's Tigers.

'Knights of Poetry' reveals budding poets among middle schoolers

About 75 Grade 6, 7, and 8 students spent the evening of February 25, 2016, performing poetry that included their own works and well-known classics by Dr. Seuss, Robert Frost or other famous poets.

Students, parents, teachers and staff gathered in the ACS upper school auditorium to listen to middle schoolers expressing their creativity and appreciation of poetry. It was a full house.

Some 32 sixth graders performed 28 poems; 28 seventh graders performed 23 poems, and 15 eighth graders performed eight poems. Some students participated in group performances.

Students wowed parents and students alike.



Kindness Wall promotes positivity among middle schoolers

Names were written on pieces of paper and dropped in a bowl. Then each middle schooler drew a name from the bowl and wrote a message of kindness to the recipient – even if they did not know the student. The message was then posted on the first floor bulletin board of the Middle School building.

"I like your smile," "You are very kind and helpful," "Thank you for helping me with --," "You are a great listener," "I don't know you, but I would like to get to know you because you seem like a nice person."

These were only a handful of the 240 messages that were posted on the Kindness Wall.

The effect was contagious, snowballing into other aspects of school life.



Annual TOK conference: ACS students question sources of knowledge

More than 200 ACS International Baccalaureate (IB) students and their counterparts from IC, Sagesse and WellSpring Community converged on the American University of Beirut campus, February 18-20, 2016, for the 7th annual Theory of Knowledge Conference, which was organized by ACS's IB Diploma Program Coordinator Nada Chatila. Some 107 IB students from the four participating schools gave nearly 50 presentations over a two-day period, in which they were evaluated for their persuasive skills.

They raised more questions than they delivered answers. When it comes to a conference on knowledge, this could be considered success.

Ahead of the conference, students prepared rigorously with their teachers on how to argue a point, how to use logic, and how to study knowledge, as part of the Theory of Knowledge course, which is a core requirement in the IB program.

ACS students pass UN resolutions to curb global crises

High School students participated in the annual LebMUN conference, the annual conference which simulates the work of the United Nations.

From the passage of resolutions, to debates, to court trials, students acted as UN delegates, during this year's LebMUN, organized by American Community School teachers and students, and held at the American University of Beirut, on January 29-31, 2016.

In its thirteenth edition, LebMUN brought together about 160 local participants, mostly from ACS, in addition to students from Sagesse High School, the Rafic Hariri High School, and the Houssam Eddine Hariri School.

The UN Delegates of Syria and Israel were kidnapped. The UN Delegate of Iran ripped a resolution and stormed out of a debate. And Vladimir Putin was convicted of war crimes.

It was a weekend full of drama, tension, and emergency resolutions – and plenty of learning experiences and personal growth.



Inspired by science, Grade 8 students find solutions

Basing their proposals on the knowledge they acquired while studying about electricity and electric circuits, about 29 student teams from Grade 8 produced models of their conceptions that were showcased in the annual Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) fair on January 14, 2016, at the lower school auditorium.

It was a case of imagination and necessity shaking hands with science: Roads that produce energy. A solution to the traffic problem. A safer trampoline. And many other projects.

Students spent three weeks working collaboratively and meticulously as engineers to integrate science, technology, engineering, arts, and math in their design and construction process and come out with solutions to real life challenges. For the first time, "Art" or the look of the project was included in the evaluations, which also included assessing technical skills and scientific knowledge, collaboration and teamwork, design and creativity, and presentation skills. Each member of the group had to present separately and was evaluated individually.



Students grab two Lego Robotics trophies and the label of ‘geniuses’

Mix in creativity with coding and you get a comprehensive solution for discarded electronics.

When the solution comes from an ACS team of eight-year-olds to 15-year-olds, you get adult reactions of “This is genius!”

The 11-member team of elementary school students, middle schoolers and high schoolers presented their solution on March 5, 2016, during the sixth edition of the First Lego League, a robotics competition that takes place every year on the American University of Beirut campus, attracting students from more than 70 schools all over Lebanon.

This year, about 700 students participated, competing in four categories: research, coding (robot mission), robot design, and core values, which include teamwork, courteous professionalism and cooperation among others. The theme for this year’s competition was “trash trek.” In other words students were asked to build robots that could help solve the trash crisis.

The ACS team grabbed first prize for research, also placing among the top 10 in the coding category.

Their plan proposed first to reduce discarded electronics by asking citizens to give away unused electronics. As for spent electronics, they would crush them, remove all metallic parts, and melt them together to extract the copper in order to sell it to make electric wires.

Students show off their musical talents at two concerts

Students put on the annual Harmony for Humanity concert at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year and held another concert at the end of winter in February.

Both concerts were a big hit with parents, teachers, and students, and showed off students’ musical talent and sophisticated music interpretation.

Harmony for Humanity concerts became an annual tradition at ACS about five years ago. They are inspired by the Daniel Pearl World Music Days, an international network of concerts that “use the power of music to reaffirm our commitment to tolerance and humanity.”



Why ‘We Are ACS’

To rev up school spirit and spread awareness about ACS’s proud history, members of the D&A (Development and Alumni Relations) club organized “We Are ACS” week, over the last week before Spring Break 2016.

High School students and teachers competed against each other, collecting points via different activities: Pride Day for wearing the ACS colors: “Who Knows ACS Best” trivia competition; and “Why I Love ACS,” which left behind a mural with positive messages about ACS. “Because it feels like home,” “Because it is the best education,” “Because it is a very friendly place...”

In the final tally, seniors had collected the most points.

- M.A.

FOR Mother's Day

PARENTS HONOR ACS GUARDS AND GROUNDS PERSONNEL



The ACS Parents Committee held its annual fundraising brunch at Em Sharif in March, right around Mother's Day.

Proceeds from the brunch went to support the security guards and grounds personnel of the School.

About \$150 was distributed to each of the guards and janitors, as a show of appreciation for all the work they do for the school.

"We wanted to show our deep appreciation and gratitude for the staff who take care of our children. The positive, caring spirit that our guards and grounds personnel show our kids is so unique to the ACS community, and we, as parents, are extremely moved by it."

- M.A.

What is the Parents Committee (PC)?

ACS is one of the schools in Lebanon that has an active parents committee which meets and coordinates with school administration on a regular basis to address different aspects of the school.

- As sanctioned by the Ministry of Education, it is a formal advisory board representing parents with the school administration. It carries no executive authority and has no decision making capacity
- It has no role in the day to day running of the school
- It does not deal with personal or individual complaints except as related to a fundamental bigger issue affecting the school
- It deals with strategic planning and long term projects
- The members of the PC address school wide issues of general concern; as such, they may not bring personal matters into their meetings.
- It is comprised of a volunteer group of parents who are elected every three years. Candidates must have been ACS parents for at least two years prior to the election year. The number should be preferably odd and may range anywhere between 9 and 17. There has to be representation of all grades classes on the Committee or at least the Four Divisions.

The PC's primary task is to act as an effective interface between parents and the Head of School in a supportive and positive manner. The PC meets once

per month with the Head of School or designee to bring to the attention of the school general concerns or specific queries or questions that would improve the understanding of parents of the educational experience of their children. The PC establishes task forces to work on specific programs in support of and in collaboration with the school administration.

The Head of School informs the PC periodically and whenever it is necessary about the progression of educational work at the school.

Together, they discuss the raised subjects and examine the issues with the intent to improve communication and understanding of the student experience at the school.

Besides its 'interface' role, the PC initiates and develops parents' ideas and coordinates these with the relevant administrative office after receiving approval of the PC.

Research shows that students whose parents are involved in their schools perform better academically and socially with

- Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates
- Better school attendance
- Increased motivation, better self esteem
- Lower rates of suspension
- Decreased use of drugs and alcohol
- Fewer instances of violent behavior

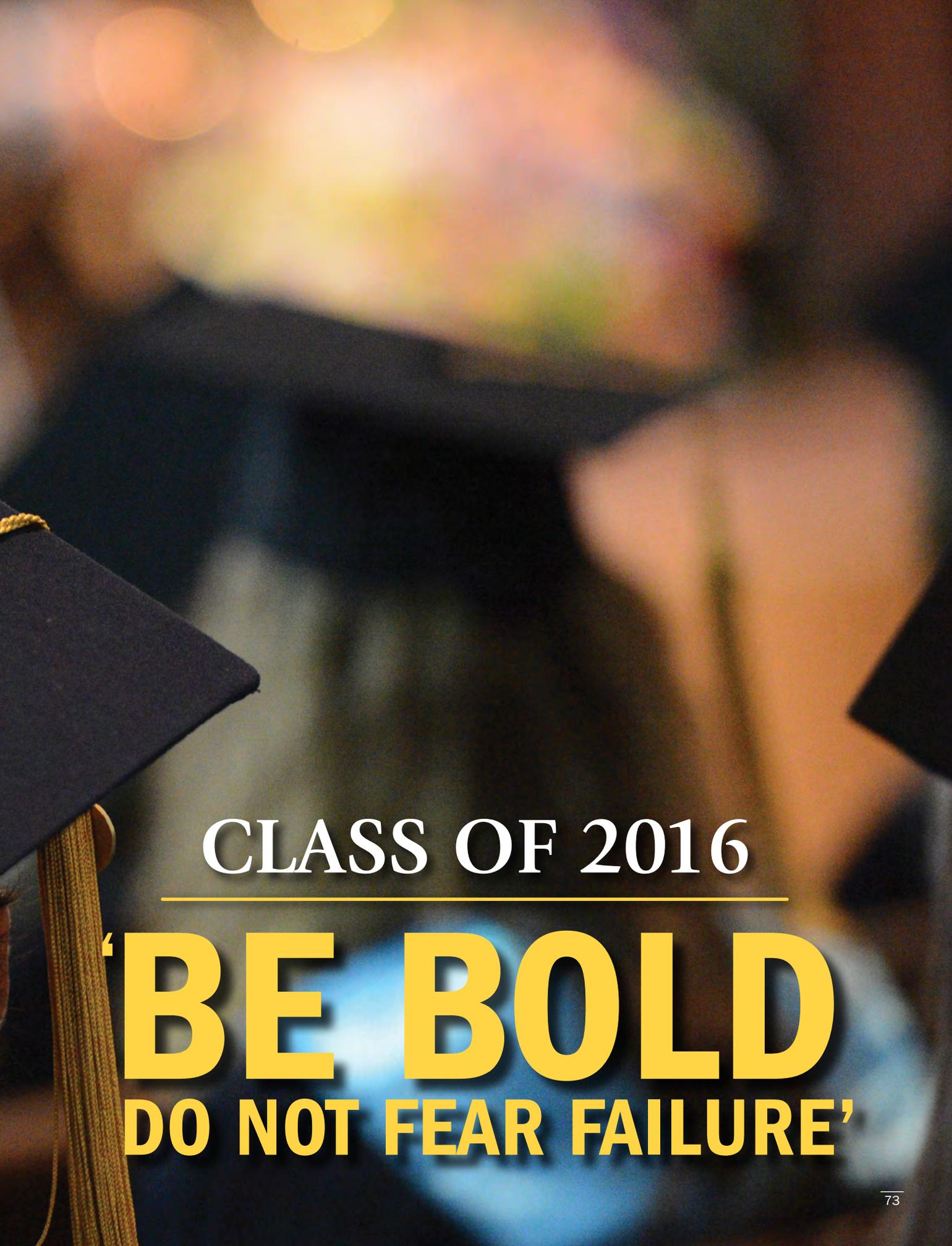
What you need to do to be a part of the PC?

- You will need to be active, positive, and constructive. You need to show a strong commitment and willingness to work hard for the benefit of students and the greater good of the school.
- You must ask not what the PC is going to do for me or for my child but what I can do for the School through the PC.
- You will need to address your personal and specific concerns about your own child via the appropriate channels of communication existing in the school. You may first contact your child's teacher; then if that does not yield results, you may approach the counselor/principal; and as a last resort, you may contact the relevant administrator / headmaster.

PC Members

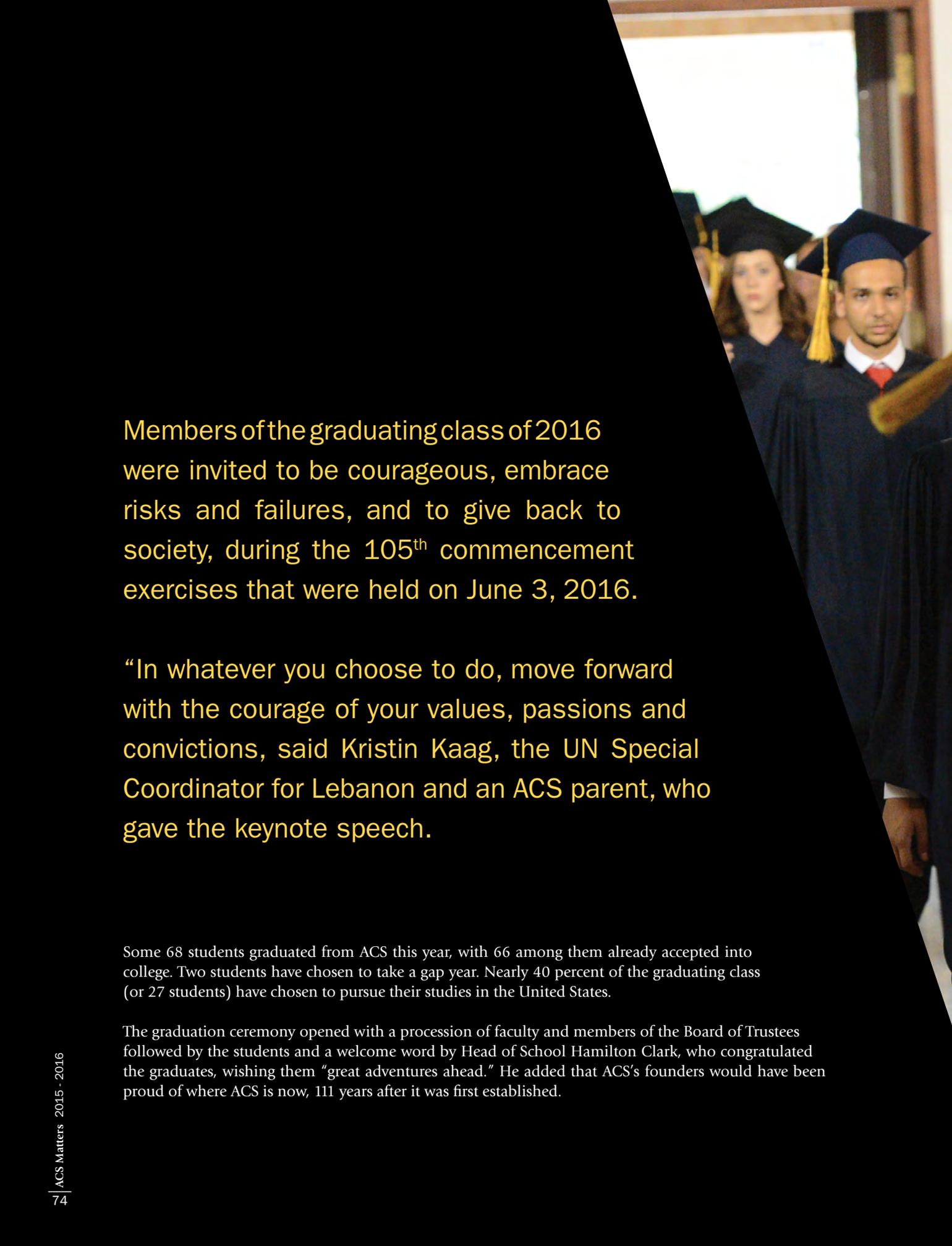
Mona Agha Maktabi – President
Ali Hamadeh – Vice President
Azmi Mattar – Secretary
Abdul-Karim Chamseddine – Finance Committee
Serene Farouk Mawlawi – Finance Committee
Rana Shamieh Abdul Malak
Ghada Alame
Tarek Al Kazzaz
Carma Naim Barakat
May Aborshaid Bdeir
Zeinat Moussawi Charif
Nada El Halabi Marrouche
Mirna Ziyadeh





CLASS OF 2016

**'BE BOLD
DO NOT FEAR FAILURE'**



Members of the graduating class of 2016 were invited to be courageous, embrace risks and failures, and to give back to society, during the 105th commencement exercises that were held on June 3, 2016.

“In whatever you choose to do, move forward with the courage of your values, passions and convictions, said Kristin Kaag, the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon and an ACS parent, who gave the keynote speech.

Some 68 students graduated from ACS this year, with 66 among them already accepted into college. Two students have chosen to take a gap year. Nearly 40 percent of the graduating class (or 27 students) have chosen to pursue their studies in the United States.

The graduation ceremony opened with a procession of faculty and members of the Board of Trustees followed by the students and a welcome word by Head of School Hamilton Clark, who congratulated the graduates, wishing them “great adventures ahead.” He added that ACS’s founders would have been proud of where ACS is now, 111 years after it was first established.



"Diverse and dynamic our students will enroll in eight different countries," Clark said. "They have competed in regional sports competitions, exhibited art... They are a terrific group who are ready to go out to make a change."

Quoting T.S. Eliot, Clark encouraged students to be bold and take risks: "Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go."

Following Clark, Nina Joukowsky Köprülü, President of the Board of Trustees, also congratulated the Class of 2016 for their achievement, encouraging them to embrace the challenges ahead.

Joukowsky Köprülü invited the audience to give a big round of applause to Ham and Ceci Clark, who are leaving ACS to establish a new school in Brazil.

Through her six main messages to students, Kaag encouraged the graduates to seize every opportunity; explore new places and people; have the courage to stand out and be different; create their own stories; give back to society; embrace risk and learn from failure; and to walk the talk and play to their strengths. "Today you are graduating from one of the best schools in the country, in the region," she said. "You have been equipped intellectually to begin thinking critically and constructively about some of the great challenges facing the world, the region, and the very communities to which you belong."

"Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go."

During the ceremony, Ambassador Richard Jones, the ad interim chargé d'affaires of the US Embassy, presented 25 students who have demonstrated academic excellence, leadership, integrity and intellectual depth, with the President's Education Award.

Reading a letter by President Barack Obama, Jones addressed the students: "Please accept my congratulations on receiving the President's Education Award... America looks to students like you, whose dreams and determination know no bounds Your



commitment to your education demonstrates the creativity and energy that will chart the course of our unwritten history, allowing us to reimagine reality and seek new frontiers. I'm inspired by your motivation and work ethic, and it gives me great hope to know our future will be written by ambitious young people like you."

Jones himself also congratulated the graduating class, saying, "Life will challenge you, force you to adapt, to consider new perspectives about the world, and that is

indeed its beauty... How you approach adversity, learn from your mistakes, and muster courage to tackle the difficult is what will define your success."

Jones also commended "the many contributions of Mr. and Mrs. Clark, the ACS faculty and staff, and, of course, the parents and friends of this extraordinary class of scholars."

This was Clark's last graduation ceremony at ACS before leaving for his next project.





Following the distribution of the President’s Awards, High School Principal Robert Evans called out the names of the recipients of the Farah Family Athletic and Leadership Award, the Blair Harcourt Award, the Fine Arts Award, the Citizenship Award and the Walter Prosser Outstanding Student Award (see next page). In her speech Kaag had reminded students that life is “no straight arrow, but a rather zigzagged road with many bumps.”

“You are fortunate to belong to a generation whereby many pursue different pathways to happiness, far removed from the metric of money, possessions and general material wealth,” she added.

The ACS Orchestra, led by music director Robert Fedorak, entertained the audience with several numbers from “Mamma Mia on Broadway.”

- M.A.



RECIPIENTS OF THE ACS SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

The Farah Family Athletic and Leadership Award:
Awarded by Zalfa Farah '09 to **Fayez Barakat**



This award goes to a student athlete who excelled in the athletic program, demonstrated sportsmanship, leadership, commitment and athletic accomplishment both at school and in the local community.
Barakat was a vital part of Hoopful Hands, which was a basketball school created and organized for Syrian and Palestinian refugees. These are kids who come from war zones, broken homes and live in the refugee camps.

The Blair Harcourt Award: Wesley Armstrong



This award goes to one senior with academic and athletic distinction who is a talented athlete, exhibits leadership skills and sportsmanship in addition to a courteous and genteel attitude.

Even after breaking his wrist at the start of the season, Armstrong pushed forward and led by example. He developed into being a strong, positive vocal leader - always encouraging teammates in a positive, productive manner.

The Fine Arts Award: Rakan Saab



This award's recipient has a G.P.A. of 3.5 or higher in the Fine Arts courses taken at ACS, shows outstanding effort and achievement in one or more of the Fine Arts (e.g., Music, Drama, Visual Art, etc.). The recipient would have participated in extracurricular events based in the Arts and/or used his/her own talents to benefit the school.

Saab designed and implemented an Art Education project with several refugee children. The project tried to create a program from which the students could gradually gain technical skills and knowledge of the arts.

The Citizenship Award: **Lea Raad**



This award goes to a senior with exceptional contribution to school and the community.

Criteria for selection include:

- *participation in school and/or community service*
- *showing a positive attitude toward classmates, school and community*
- *displaying an understanding and appreciation of civic responsibilities*
- *possessing strength of character and the courage to do what is right*
- *promoting citizenship within the school or community through other activities*

Raad started the ACS Cheer Squad. She has brought joy and happiness to pretty much every student and staff member. She has spent her own money making cookies, buying candy and other treats. She pays attention to all students to see when they are in need.

The Walter Prosser Award: **Rawad Yared**



Walter Prosser selflessly served for years on the ACS's Board of Trustees. He was a problem -solver, a well-read and cultured person, a life-long learner and responsible. This award goes to a student who exhibits this spirit. The award recipient must have very high academic standing as well as demonstrate exceptional application of their learning in contribution to school and community.

Yared is a role model in nearly every way, whether it is his manners, involvement in school, perseverance, setting goals, independent/life-long learning, making a difference in his community, believing in big causes and striving for them, and taking risks. Yared is an avid reader and looks forward to sharing and discussing what has been learned with students and teachers. He also likes to take challenges, such as running the marathon.





...AND THEN THEY BECAME
ALUMNI



Members of the Class of 2016 were inducted into the alumni community on June 1, 2016, when they had the opportunity to create their own time capsule, which they will dig out in 10 years. They also received their dog tags, which officially “branded” them as alumni.

In the time capsule, the new alumni dropped off items that might remind them of special memories, such as letters to self, favorite music, journals, pieces of clothing, and so on.

High School Principal Robert Evans opened the official ceremony, saying, “You have been an interesting group. You have tested the patience of your teachers, you have stretched every deadline.... But somehow you managed... I see the strength of character in you as individuals and I know that there will be a lot of great things that you will offer.”

Evans then invited the new alums to give back to the school and the community as speakers, as donors, as engaged individuals.

Head of School Hamilton Clark then introduced the alumnus speaker, Mikey Muhanna '03 as an alum with a passion for education who helped found several ventures, including Positive Space, a non-profit

co-working space in New Orleans dedicated to increasing the rate of college persistence and graduation among low-income high school graduates, who often lack the personal and social skills to succeed in college. Muhanna is also a member of the ACS Board of Trustees.

“You have represented ACS on field trips, sports tournaments ... and will continue to represent it sometimes unknowingly and sometimes annoyingly,” said Muhanna. “Going forward, you can help shape what ACS is, beyond your years here, by talking to students, donating, being active. And all this would not be charity, because you also benefit from it. ACS is a great school now, and if in 20 years something makes ACS less great, it affects you too at the same time.”

Muhanna urged students to set their sights high and not to be scared to be bad at something and then to learn from it.

- M.A.



A large, colorful graphic for the ACS Spring Fest 2016. It features a central white scalloped-edged frame with a white outline, set against a vibrant, multi-colored watercolor background that transitions from yellow at the top to red on the right, purple at the bottom, and blue on the left. Small white floral motifs are scattered around the frame. Inside the frame, the text reads: "A SPLASH OF COLOR AND FUN AT" in a small purple font, followed by "Spring" in a large, multi-colored, stylized font, and "Fest. 2016" in a purple font below it.

A SPLASH OF COLOR AND FUN AT
Spring
Fest. 2016

A fortune teller, a tattoo booth, face-painting, bracelet making, a slackline, juggling, and the super awesome Dunk Tank (which claimed about 20 victims) and many more fun games ...

Such a rich line-up could only mean one thing:
the ACS Spring Fest!



Held on May 21, 2016, this year's fest was even more over the top than usual because it was fashioned after the Coachella theme and decked with awesome decoration all created by dedicated and creative ACS moms, who spent over a month designing and cutting before hanging everything on the Green Field.

For the first time ever the Spring Fest also featured a Color Festival and MCing by Anthony and Frankie (ACS alumna, Class of 2005) of Virgin Radio fame, as well as a wide array of food vendors, including a popular food truck serving hot burgers to long lines of hungry kids and their parents.

Entertainment was provided almost non-stop from noon to 6 pm by our very own students from Early Years straight through High School.

The fest could not have taken place without the collaborative effort of faculty, staff, students, parents and of course ACS's impressive facilities and operations personnel. The teams were led by Deputy Head of School Karim Abu-Haydar and Director of Alumni & Community Relations Danai El-Hajj Ibrahim.

Of course as is commonly known, the ACS Spring Fest is not merely fun and games under the sun. Proceeds from the day go toward the ACS Scholarship Fund, which means the positive effect is more than doubled. "Coming together as a whole community and enjoying the day provides children with a different sense of all the relationships within a school community," commented EY Principal Sawsan Yaseen, following the event.

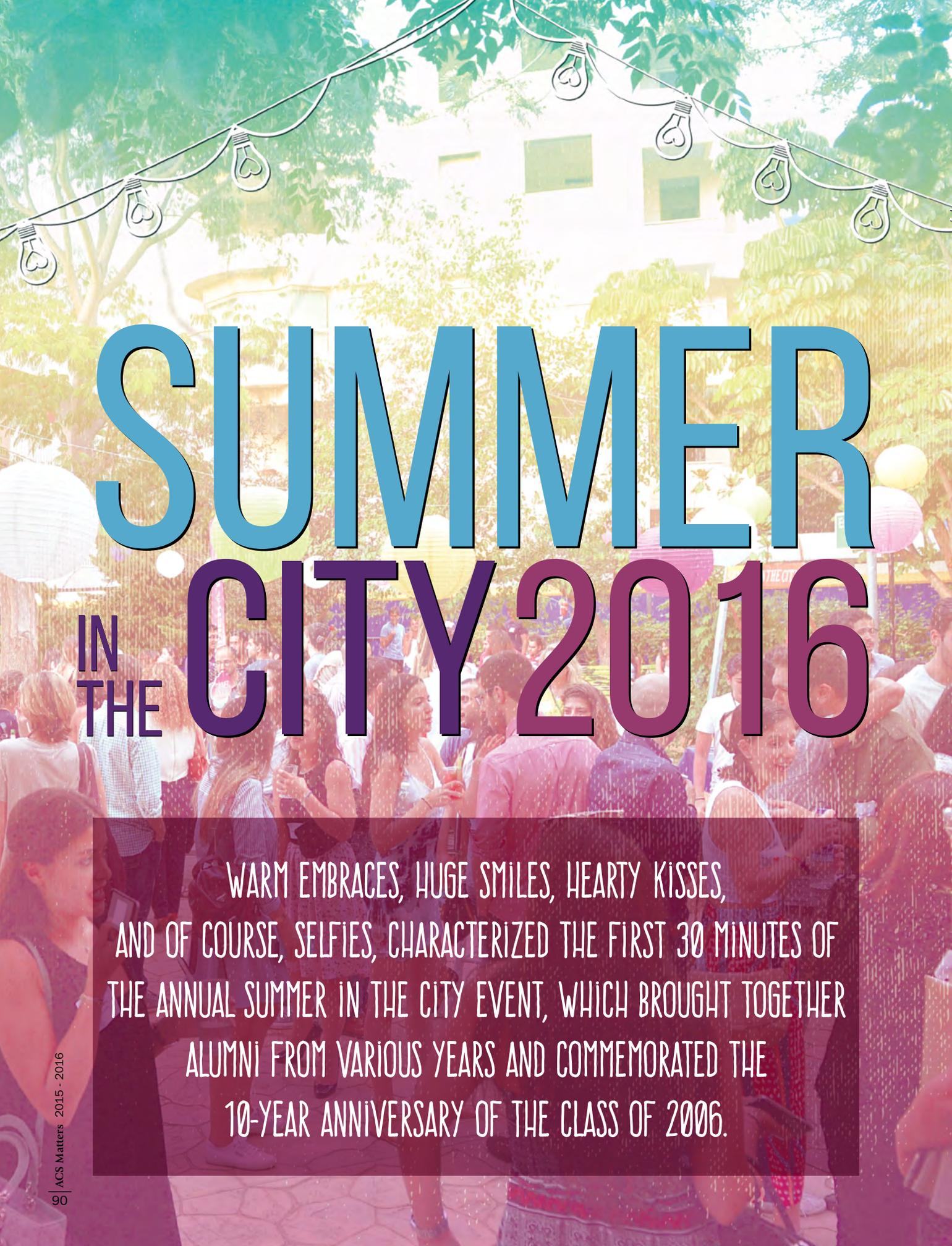
- M.A.



sponsored by





A vibrant outdoor event scene, likely a summer festival or reunion. The background is filled with people, trees, and colorful lanterns. A string of heart-shaped light bulbs hangs across the top. The text 'SUMMER IN THE CITY 2016' is overlaid in large, bold, blue and purple letters.

SUMMER IN THE CITY 2016

WARM EMBRACES, HUGE SMILES, HEARTY KISSES, AND OF COURSE, SELFIES, CHARACTERIZED THE FIRST 30 MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL SUMMER IN THE CITY EVENT, WHICH BROUGHT TOGETHER ALUMNI FROM VARIOUS YEARS AND COMMEMORATED THE 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLASS OF 2006.



More than 100 alumni from the Classes of 1971, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 attended the special reunion.

The Rabbit Field buzzed with positive energy and catch-up conversations on a warm Beirut evening on June 4, 2016. Students Riwa S., Samia AH., Jana H., and Alma S. entertained the crowd with some soulful numbers.

Outgoing Alumni Association President Bill Crays '56 welcomed the newest group of alumni to join the

association, and alumna Dyala Badran '06 invited everyone to enjoy the evening, while reminiscing about members of her class.

After enjoying delicious refreshments, hotdogs, and on-the-spot-made ice cream, alumni gathered to watch members of the class of 2006 dig out their time capsule. Rediscovering old sports caps, journals, letters to self, kuffieh, a soccer shoe, Tshirts and many more, alumni relived special moments with their classmates, sharing and creating new ones once again.

- M.A.

Aleph Be

The full-length versions of the following pieces were published in this year's issues of Aleph Be, the ACS student publication. The slightly abridged articles have been reprinted by permission of the authors and the editors of the student newspaper.

Glamorized

By Aya Cheaito ('16), Aleph Be Volume 29 Issue I

Fears: we all have one. Some are small, so irrelevant, that you only get a small rush of adrenaline; others paralyzing, loaded with panic.

If I chose to, this article would have just been an infinite list of fears and phobias shared in the Lebanese community. But, as I sit on my bed, home alone, paranoid, I brainstorm ideas of how I can make an article about fears interesting. So, as usual, I went around and asked a bunch of people what they fear.

At first, most answered with general, common fears. "I fear heights," "insects," "dogs," "the dark." But when I thought about it I realized, I do not want to write an article about these kinds of fears. So, I went ahead and asked "What about your deep, emotional fears?" and their faces went blank.

"I fear being invisible." "I fear things that are far into the future." "I fear losing my freedom," "big empty spaces," "pain," "disappointment," "loneliness," "misery," "failure," "rejection," "death," and the "unknown." Why is it that fears are capable of getting the best of us; capable of changing everything?

I fear the present. I fear the way the present is paving our road the future. I fear mental illnesses glamorization.

Mental illnesses have now become a humorous subject or a trend. **Depression should not be a hashtag.**

I have seen merchandise glamorizing and promoting mental illnesses. OCD becomes "Obsessive Candy/Cat Disorder," "Emo Goth" necklaces that read "Social Anxiety Intensifies." Moreover, shirts with "Eat Less" printed on them, promoting eating disorders, shirts with "iconic" suicide letters on them, with "depression" written all over it. One shirt read "I thought I was bipolar turns out I'm just an asshole"

Excuse me? I still do not see the relationship between the two and that is exactly what fuels my fear: how lightly mental and psychological disorders are understood and treated.

I suffer from anxiety disorder and depression -- that simple. One of my biggest fears is sudden anxiety and panic attacks. Losing control of my dark thoughts in front of everyone, the sudden take-over is shocking--when people witness my attacks; they are inclined to ask what has happened. And you see my mouth open, then close. I start to speak and then stop, I do not have the words to explain and I do not want to think about it.

I can't help but think about how foolish I feel and look right now as people, teachers included, tell me to "just get over it," or "it is just in my head," or that I am "making myself upset for no reason." Why would anybody want to purposefully upset themselves?

The truth is people do not understand how hard it is to explain what is going on in your mind when you, yourself, do not know. Preparing yourself for something takes hours when anyone can do it in minute, and that's besides the constant worrying and the social anxiety.

Today's teens tend to experience serious anxiety, bipolar disorder, and insomnia. Instead of actually turning to someone who can help, like anybody who is concerned about their mental well-being, they are inclined to share it on social media such as Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram.

Teens, who are typically naïve and melodramatic, have begun to label their temporary feelings with illnesses that are serious and should not be taken lightly. I frequently hear girls say they are anxious because they are antsy before a test, or because they are disappointed in a low grade, or that they are depressed because they are upset. These illnesses they claim to have actually feel nothing like the symptoms they think they have, and this is because we do not teach about or respect illnesses enough.

Disorders have become a trend because people do not understand the constant heart-pounding panic that accompanies anxiety, or the suicidal thoughts that come with depression or eating disorder, or any disorder really. The feeling you get when you have a disorder is not a temporary scare; it is permanent.

In the world we live in, if you break your arm everyone wants to sign your cast and help you carry your stuff. But if you dare share with someone that you're bipolar or that you have depression or anxiety they run the other way. People are capable of accepting our bodies breaking but not our brains, and this ignorance creates a world that does not understand mental illnesses, because depression is "just a phase" and anxiety is "a choice" and OCD is just a "neat-freak."

There is this stigma to mental illnesses, people would rather say that they have a migraine than have to say I was feeling extra suicidal that day, or that they have a stomach flu than just admitting that their anxiety is playing games on them. Some people never want to talk about mental illness; they don't want to accept them because "we all have things going on in our head."

Our generation needs to realize that being labeled "damaged" is not cool or hip, it is a situation nobody enjoys.

The Ideal Feminist

By Lara Sabra ('16), Aleph Be Volume 29 Issue II

Every day, I discover more about what it means to be a feminist in our world, and even more, what it means to be a girl. Every day I realize that part of being a feminist, or an activist of any sort, is the multitudes of people who will insist that you are not doing 'it' right (although they themselves may not be doing anything at all). This exists in an extreme manner for feminism because of how the word has been demonized in the media and in our society. People already think it is bad enough to declare yourself as a feminist, let alone if you actually do feminism.

Some people also feel extremely threatened or confused by modern feminism, which is because feminism and women's liberation is not just about solving the "big" problems—the violent and bloody sexism that occurs in parts of Asia/Africa—but it is also about dismantling "smaller" gender inequality issues (which are the steps that lead to the big problems), such as the catcalling women experience in the streets, and gender stereotypes. People have a habit of calling issues that do not involve the rape or murder of women "small" and "insignificant" The fact is: nothing that is sexist is small.

Gender roles affect most households, and every single woman's idealization and perception of who she is and what she is capable of, and gender roles are caused by a multitude of things—including the gender specification of a toy.

Sometimes it seems that people have this image of a "good" feminist (is there even such a thing?) that they want every feminist to be. A "good" feminist is one who, first of all does not call herself a feminist but a "humanist." She is also one who refuses to talk about the 1 in 3 girls who will be sexually assaulted without mentioning the 1 in 19 men, and the one who takes into consideration, in everything she does, the feelings of emotional men who feel threatened and displaced because of 'radical' feminism in everything that she does.

A so-called "good" feminist is the girl who disregards sensitive topics such as the false portrayal of masculinity or femininity, the dreaded "friend-zone," victim-blaming, gender stereotypes, and focuses on problems that other people approve of because only physical violence is true and sufficient proof of female inequality. A "good" feminist is the girl who never expresses anger; instead she expresses sheer benevolence and light-heartedness towards all boys—sexist and misogynist alike.

This is how people want me to be a feminist.

People want me to be a feminist without acting as though sexism or misogyny affects me or distresses me in any way. People want me to be a feminist without laying the blame at the hands of anyone.

People would like it more if I ignored those sexist issues that they deem tiny because they are merely occurrences in our every day day-to-day life, and it upsets them to hear that these occurrences they have become used to are being questioned and condemned.

They want me to be a feminist but ignore when my classmate makes the awful, "go back to the kitchen" jokes because people do not like listening to arguments over something as "small" and "meaningless" as "a joke." "It does not harm anyone, whatever, it is just a joke, it is petty and stupid, there are more important things, Lara."

That is how people want me to be a feminist.

But that is not what being a feminist is supposed to be. To me, being a feminist is being fiery. It is being vocal about every single sexist situation no matter how familiar we are with it in our lives, it is being loud and outspoken because a lot of people still do not understand the technicalities of feminism or what sexism really is in our lives, and being a feminist is being angry. It is being angry because of thousands of years of oppression

that no one wrote or talked about, it is being angry because of the continuation of that oppression in our world today and the little—yes, the little—that is being done about it. It is being angry that women have been treated as though they are not humans, but objects, and no one did anything about it until fifty years ago.

It is being angry that our safety, security, value, happiness, and worth as a gender are regarded as not important enough to be talked about.

Being angry is not wrong when there is so much to be angry about.

We will not forget the oppression that we underwent and the silence that answered it, because it is still occurring in a lot of nations around the world. We will not forget the amount of female lives lost—literally and metaphorically—because of the mere fact that they were female. I have seen and heard of females losing their lives as a consequence of negligence, and for that, I will publicize my anger until we accept and advocate for change.

So yes, I am angry. I refuse to soften and sugarcoat my speech and the reality of the world simply because people get upset when I refuse to pretend that I am not aware when other people are in denial, because that is what it means to be a feminist.

To be a feminist is to fight for the equality and safety of women, and part of doing that is to shamelessly, fearlessly, loudly, angrily, and completely stand up for what you believe in, even when everyone is telling you to sit down.

My Name is Not Refugee

By Tracy Jawad ('16), Aleph Be Volume 29 Issue I

When your child blows out the multicolored candles on their fourth birthday, you expect them to know their ABCs, their double-digit numbers, and how to identify which headache-inducing noise belongs to the animals at the zoo. By the time I celebrated my fourth birthday, complete with a PowerPuff Girls piñata, I knew that my parents came from rival religious sects and that the burly, guarded man living across from our apartment was the leader of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.

I do not know what the children at the Burj al-Barajneh camp knew by the time they blew out the candles on their fourth birthday – that is if they even celebrated it – but I do know there is nothing I can do to retract those memories or patch up the holes where the wounds of war will forever settle within them.

I am Miss Privileged. Nothing I say can subdue the degree of privilege I enjoy, but I know I want to be the voice of the children at the Burj al-Barajneh camps until they are given their own platform, or until they have been given their platform back. Their escalating death toll and the high-definition photos were not enough to alarm us that we are losing a generation.

Up until junior year, I dodged all invitations to visit the camp every Saturday. It was not fear that paralyzed me, but my mother's disagreement. She saw no reason as to why I should bother visiting a camp that had its electrical wires hanging so low I would have to crouch to get past them or why I was determined to teach young women and children their ABCs and their double-digit numbers.

It is unusual, and grammatically improper, to announce that we know our ABCs – in a literal sense, the ABCs are not ours. But they are. When I teach the children all twenty-six letters of the English Alphabet, it becomes their intangible possession: from then on, they will use these letters to read their first Roald Dahl book, to write a sonnet about their dreams, and to articulate the words they will use to shake the world. These children now have something they will not lose overseas on an inflatable boat.

It has been almost a year since I first visited the camp. I always knew what to expect, because I was addicted to ogling at the chaos of my country behind the barrier of my computer screen and my four pink walls. Lebanon's poverty is very familiar to me; after twelve years, my mornings are still greeted by barefoot children with copper-brown hair asking me for change or breakfast.

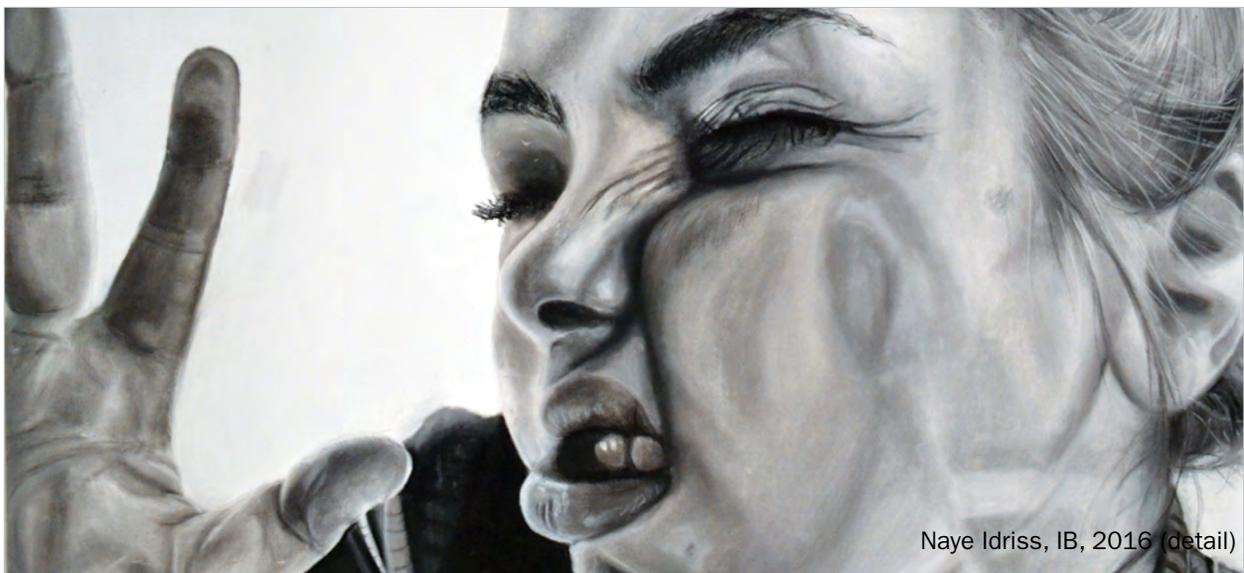
I could tell you about the children. I could tell you about how they could not even pronounce my name before they jumped at me with hugs and kisses and drawings of blue flowers and sunny skies. I will tell you about how they showed up every week, boasting about their homework or their abilities to articulate L M N O, and told me I reminded them of their teacher in Syria or Palestine.

I will tell you about Jihad, a nine-year-old boy who took the word "rain" and made it into a wrestling match between a grey cloud and a vibrant sun that was refereed by a child whose tears became rain-drops. I will tell you about Hour, an eight-year-old girl who wrote my name on any platform she could, and locked her arms around my neck once class was over. I will tell you about Hdeyeh, a nineteen-year-old woman who adores Justin Bieber and shows up to the tests I administer even though she didn't have time to memorize the required vocabulary. I could tell you about the children, about every woman, but I am not going to narrate their lives. They will.

I sat dumbfounded on my bed because I was baffled by how anybody could call Burj al-Barajneh a "Hezbollah stronghold." In this camp, a miracle has sprung from the hope within its children, and each of November Twelfth's explosions robbed their right to peace with every fire that it ignited and with every life that it stole.

There may not be one culprit behind my use of "them," but who-ever they are, they are depriving these children of their voices, their right to an education, and have banned them from seeing what lies beyond the mounting garbage swarming their grounds.

But with every word Alaa and Hour learn, and with every Bieber song Hdeyeh analyzes, I become the student. I watch as hope becomes tangible and Hour's young, toothless smile assures me that she will be okay as long as she always remembers how to curve up the Y in my name.



Naye Idriss, IB, 2016 (detail)

One Nation: Defining the Present

By Reem Al-Akkawi ('21), Aleph Be Volume 29 Issue II

Editor's note: In our February 2016 issue, Tracy Jawad submitted the story "My Name is Not Refugee." Tracy's story inspired Reem, a seventh-grader attending ACS and a member of Empowered Youth, to open up about her experience in Lebanon.

I am a twelve-year-old, Palestinian girl attending middle school at the American Community School at Beirut, and I like reading newspapers—a lot. I spend my days improving my English, exploring the past in social studies, and understanding how our natural world works in science.

One ordinary day in math class, a girl passed by and handed me the high school newspaper, Aleph Be. I could not stop thinking about this newspaper, or any newspaper, because they reflect the life that I live. Newspapers, unlike most of the people in my life, were honest.

I went home and read the titles of every story in Aleph Be, but the first story I actually read was written by Tracy Jawad, a high school student that I have grown to like a lot: Her article, "My Name is Not Refugee," was incredibly special to me, and it affected me more than it may have others.

I began to cry as I read about a "nine-year-old boy named Jihad, who took the word 'rain' and made it into a wrestling match between a grey cloud and a vibrant sun as they were refereed by a child whose tears became raindrops." This article had me thinking about the conditions displaced Syrians were living under.

It was sad to read about how these people were forced to leave their country, just as I had to leave mine, and reading about it made me question why I was meant to hate them for no reason?

I remember once being told that Syrians were hated because they unlawfully moved to Lebanon and "stole every job." My immediate answer was to remind such critics that we are all one nation, and I asked what they would do if they were one of the displaced refugees? Their faces were blank and they were left speechless.

If we saw ourselves as one nation, just one, then maybe we could solve all our problems; if we stand together, we would all win. Do you know why? Well, because Palestine and Syria are weak and struggling nations, but once we hold each other's hands and stop comparing ourselves to strong nations, then maybe we can do everything we want and we can be whomever we want to be.

After school, I went back home and sat on my bed, and I was scared for absolutely no reason. I was scared of the present that we are living in—yes, the awful present that is leading us to the future. The present is my biggest fear.

Google defines the present as "a moment or period in time that is an intermediate between past and future; it is now." This definition got me to start thinking more about the past and how some things will inevitably happen over and over again.

I was not satisfied with Google's answer because I was too focused on the bigger question, so I asked my mom, "What is life?"

To my mother, life is an adventure that should be daringly approached; it is a tragedy that we have to face; it is a mystery we must solve; it is a promise we have to keep; it is a choice that we must make; it is an opportunity that we should take; life is a beautiful thing that we must embrace.

That definition was too long for me, but my mother was right, but if somebody asked me about the meaning of life, I would just say that it is an equation we are still figuring out and one that we will have to make mistakes with, or else we would just never learn.







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THAT WILL HELP US INSTALL SOLAR PANELS AS PART OF OUR GO GREEN ROADMAP

ASHA's previous donation of \$500K helped equip the High School labs with new commodities, as seen in photo above

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