

THE HELLENIC LINK, Inc.

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Member Update - BULLETIN



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Hellenic Link News in Brief

Distance-teaching of the Greek language On April 27 and 29 2010, the efforts of the Hellenic Link, Inc. and of the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey bore the desired result. Two virtual lessons of Greek Language were delivered by interactive video link to a class on Modern Hellenism in the College Campus at Pomona, NJ, directly from the Department of Informatics of the Academy of Athens. Twenty one seniors participated in an innovative educational experiment, in which for over 50 minutes in each session, they promptly responded, encouraged by their virtual teacher- Dr. Sophia Salapata, repeating after her and correctly pronouncing mouthfuls of every-day- usage Greek words, such as *αεροδρόμιο* (*airport*), *ταχυδρομείο* (*post-office*) or *λογαριασμός* (*bill*), while busily poring over printed lessons, distributed to them earlier, and kept taking explanatory notes that were projected from the virtual classroom board in Athens.

Dr. Constantine Efthymiou, President of the Hellenic Link, who was invited to the second session, had the unique opportunity to exchange greetings over video with the teaching team in Athens and to witness the entire session live. The language lesson was followed by commentary and discussion between Dr. Tom Papademetriou and his students, who also handed in written evaluation comments to him.

It is not exaggeration to state that this educational event marked a bold step for real progress of Hellenic Paideia in America. It signified that the distance-teaching of Greek under certain--but not so uncommon-circumstances, can prove a possible alternative to teaching by a teacher physically present in a classroom. The scarcity of competent Greek teachers and the realization of great costs in securing them should make the distance-teaching approach a high priority study by those who care about the preservation of Hellenic culture in America. A most recent warning by the Greek Minister of Education that the number of teachers assigned by Greece to teach in American schools is unavoidably finite and even up for drastic reduction soon-- instead of a generally anticipated increase, makes consideration of the distance-teaching modality even more urgent. We do hope that this event will stimulate the motivation of officials and educators both in Greece and the USA to utilize the promise of high technology as servant for the dissemination of Greek language and culture in the Americas.

Standards for teaching Greek By combined action of the HL Board of Directors and the Advisory Council, the Project on US National Standards for Greek Teaching/Learning and for Greek Teacher Training and Certification was approved and set on a course for implementation. In its most recent meeting, the Council endorsed the immediate formation of a **task-force (TF)** of experts with the express mission to pursue and achieve the inclusion of Modern Greek language standards in the **“US National Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century,”** in accordance with procedures designated by the **American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)**. For the formation of the TF, The Council

stipulated that distinguished linguists should be invited in balanced ratio between academia and primary/secondary education to work collaboratively on a voluntary basis. The Council further determined that the TF would operate in an autonomous frame, with professional criteria and demeanor, with scientific objectivity, applying democratic principles and procedures to produce decisions based on consensus, in harmony with the Objectives and Bylaws of the Hellenic Link, Inc. Considering the extensive preliminary work and the experience gained on the subject by Dr. **Vasiliki Tsigas – Fotinis**, Instructor of Education, Caldwell College, NJ, Coordinator of the Hellenic-American Educators of New Jersey, asked her to undertake the direction and coordination of the TF; it also requested Dr. **Constantine Hatzidimitriou**, Regional Director of School Improvement, Regional Learning Support Center 3, Board of Education, City of New York; to contribute to TF as expert on improvement aspects of Primary and Secondary Education. To enhance the formation and function of the TF, the Council appointed a Steering Committee consisting of: Professor **Christos P. Ioannidis**, Director, Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Queens College, CUNY; **Katina Efthymiatou-Stabile**, Professor and Chairperson, Emerita, Department of Social Sciences Queensborough Community College, CUNY; and **Constantine J. Efthymiou**, Ph.D., Coordinator of the Advisory Council on Hellenic Education of the Hellenic Link, Inc. Furthermore, in collaboration with the TF, the Council will take action in the future to complete the panels of **Advisors** and **Reviewers**, who will be needed by the TF for fulfillment of its mission.

We are pleased to inform our members and readers that there has been very enthusiastic responses by colleagues in the Academic and Educational communities to our invitation to contribute to the mission of the TF. The following list includes early respondents:

Peter A. Bien, Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Emeritus, Dartmouth College, N.H.; **Maria Hnaraki**, Ph.D., Director of Greek Studies, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA; **Aristotle Michopoulos**, Professor and Chairman of the Greek Studies Department at Hellenic College/Holy Cross, Brookline, MA; **Eva Prionas**, Ph.D., Lecturer in Modern Greek, Coordinator, Special Language Program, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, Member of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages, President, Modern Greek Language Teachers Association; **Vassiliki Rapti**, Ph.D., Preceptor in Modern Greek, Modern Greek Studies Program, Department of the Classics, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

Modular teaching of cultural themes We remind our members that now they can read under the caption “Modular Teaching of History” the entire Paper of Dr. C. Hatzidimitriou “**Modular Teaching of Hellenic Cultural Themes: The Crucial Link Connecting Content and Pedagogy.**” on our Web Site (<http://www.helleniclink.org>). It is pivotal for the development of resource guides for teachers who teach the Global History sequence in high schools, and also to great cultural advantage in Greek Day Schools and Charter Schools. Beside its thorough background documentation and crystalline presentation of the relevant socio-pedagogic principles involved, the author provides a thematic example (Greek Revolution of 1821) and how it could be presented in American classrooms to capture the interest and imagination of students contextually in the frame of their American social fabric, culture and history. Our Advisory Council is studying how to set in motion the preparation and publication of such resource guides for a long series of identified Hellenic cultural themes. We do recommend a careful reading of the above definitive and educationally most significant article, in the hope that some useful suggestions, might emerge from the community for the practical application of the article’s recommendations.

CJE

Greece and Europe

by

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Professor of Philosophy

The spectacle of a miserable Greece sinking in debt and begging the other countries of the European Union for help is too painful for many Greeks in Greece and the Diaspora to witness and to bear without breaking their hearts. It shows that Greece perhaps was not ready to join the Eurozone, and certainly that it is not capable at the present time to handle the difficult financial situation by sustaining successfully the pressures of the unfolding international economic crisis.

The situation is so critical that affords the opportunity for reflection regarding Greece's place and its possible future in or out of the EU. The time has come for the Greeks and their political leaders especially to face reality and to decide whether they wish to remain in the EU and play with its rules of engagement as the poorer of poor relatives of the South; or whether they prefer to remind themselves of their traditional Greek pride (*philotimo*) and act accordingly.

In the latter case, they must be honest with themselves and try to get out of the Eurozone and even out of the European Union altogether. They may leave Europe to Europeans and keep Greece for the Greeks and its citizens. They may then learn to live like their Spartan ancestors with little money and material means, but with much precious freedom, dignity, pride, and glory.

In retrospect, the late Andreas G. Papandreou was right, when he rhetorically declared that "Greece belongs to the Greeks," and not to Europe or the West, as his political opponents claimed. It is rather unfortunate that he did not mean it, but used it as a political ploy to get more concessions from the EU thirty years ago. The sums that he received from Europe he distributed to his political friends unwisely, instead of investing them to educate the fellow Greeks and improve their competitiveness economically and otherwise in the EU. However, the policy that tells the Greeks, or any other people, that they may "borrow and spend money that they do not have," is a recipe for disaster. He should have known better as a "distinguished economist," he claimed to be.

It is not only ironic, but also tragic that now the son of Andreas Papandreou now, Mr. George Papandreou, as head of the newly elected Socialist Government of Greece, is called upon to pay the price and face the quotidian and unprecedented humiliations in the centers of the EU power. In this case, the old Greek proverb "for the sins of parents the children will pay" has come true!

Anyway, times of serious crises can also provide great opportunities for responsible decisions and possible changes of direction. The decisions which the Greek Government and the Greek political leadership (or at least of the two major parties) will have to take soon should be based on the following four fundamental traits of present Greece and its historical Hellenism.

The first reality is the fact that, by any measure, Greece is and will remain for the foreseeable future one of the most beautiful countries on earth. Her clear blue skies, her clean Aegean islands, her sandy and sunny beaches, have been the preferable destination for high quality visitors, who know to appreciate the glorious history hiding behind the physical beauty of its land. It has been divinely placed in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, at the point where West meets the East and North meets the South, and this meeting has been culturally the most fertile ground of all for the last three millennia. The warm sun of Hellas and its Aegean and Ionian breezes can become valuable sources for renewable and sustainable clean energy at the present and in the future.

The second reality is precisely the fact that Greece-- or Hellas-- has the most glorious history of any nation on our planet, not only in Europe and the West, but also ecumenically. From the Persian Wars in the distant past to the recent two World Wars, Greece has fought vigorously and victoriously

on the side of freedom. No other nation can claim so many great heroes (Heracles, Theseus, Jason, Odysseus, Achilles, Oedipus, Helen, Macedon, etc); or so many well-known poets (Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Cavafy, Kazantzakis, Elytes, Seferis, etc) or even great philosophers (Thales, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc). Greece was present as a protagonist in the historic dramas it unfolded in Classical times, in Byzantine times, or in modern times on the fight for freedom.

The third reality is the Greek people themselves. As history has shown, the Greek people diachronically have proven to be very intelligent, creative, generous, proud, passionate, and very competitive. They thirst for knowledge and strive to succeed and excel in every task they set their minds and their hearts on. This may not be so evident these days, of course, when historical circumstances have conspired to keep Modern Greece artificially small, weak, and dependent on the so-called European powers, which deep in their hearts do not really desire to see the Modern Greeks prosperous, so that others can claim that they are the real inheritors of past Greek glories. One has to look at the Greeks abroad to see what they are capable of accomplishing indeed.

The fourth reality is precisely the fact of the present greatness and of the future greater potential of the Greek Diaspora. It is a fact of life for Greece today that almost as many Greeks live outside Greece as they live in Greece. They live and work, thrive and excel in every field and in every inhabited corner of the globe. As a rule, they are aware and proud of their Hellenic Heritage and really concerned when they observe the Fatherland to be treated with the kind of contempt that we have witnessed currently in the news media in Europe and beyond. It is time therefore, that this other "Greece outside Greece" becomes better organized, politically aware, with its economic muscles more fixed, and its appealing image more visible internationally.

Based on these Hellenic traits and realities, the political leadership of Greece, especially of the two major political parties, should be able to find the way to cooperate sensibly in order to accomplish the following tasks, and preserve the honor of Greece and the dignity of its people:

1. Take Greece voluntarily out of the Eurozone and out of Europe completely. Greece does not really need Europe as much as Europe needs Greece and its historic glory.
2. Protect the Greek borders from entry of illegal immigrants with Greek soldiers, and keep Greece for Greeks and their brothers abroad, who should be invited to return home.
3. Learn to live modestly and virtuously, within the limits of the country's ample means, knowing that happiness cannot be found in external goods, but in internal excellence.
4. Educate the young Greeks in the spirit of their wise ancestors, so that by imitating their virtues will become again men and women of Hellenic values and successes.

These measures do not promise to make the Greeks wealthy easily and quickly by borrowed money, as previous Greek Governments did unwisely and irresponsibly. But, if adopted and applied prudently, they have the potential to make Greece a model of modesty, honesty, and happiness, as Aristotle defined happiness, "an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue."

Alternatively, the Greeks may continue to promise the Europeans what they know that they cannot do, keep cooking their book keeping, and allow Greece to become the punching bag of the Europeans and of the whole world. Greece, its people, and its historic heritage deserve better.

¹ Dr. Christos Evangeliou is Professor of Ancient Hellenic Philosophy at Towson University, Maryland (cevangeliou@towson.edu) .He is the Honorary President of International Association for Greek Philosophy, and the author of several books including the most recent, *Themata Politika*

In the Midst of Despair a Harbinger of Good News

In the present gloomy environment of the world economy and especially in the crisis in which the Greek finances seem to be embedded, the Greeks of the Diaspora cannot be the exception in expressing disappointment and resentment. They voice such feelings by various means, at their meetings and in their blogs, whenever they communicate via the internet. But, not all of them are overwhelmed by a depressing mood. Some are even ready to express justified hope for the future, based on a positive attitude coupled with firm reconstructive action. One case in point is the following letter sent by Mr. Dimitri Dandolos, who admonishes his blog compatriot interlocutors, that not all is dark and that the charter school ODYSSEY, product of their endeavors in the Community of Wilmington, Delaware, emits a very bright picture with the potential to contribute educationally to the revival of Hellenism in their area and beyond:

Αγαπητοί «πονεμένοι» αδελφοί,

Let us take our disappointment, anger, resentment, loss of trust, fury, rage.....and all those negative feelings stemming from all those events and circumstances everyone has described so eloquently in the attached emails and turn them into positive energy, ενέργεια that will help support the values and ideals of Hellenism and may protect the future of motherland Greece.

If you think it is hard to do, let me set the stage and show you how:

- *In less than 4 years, the Odyssey Charter School has enrolled over 400 American students, who are taught Greek Language and Culture by Greek Ministry Teachers on a daily basis!*
- *During the past 2 years, Odyssey has received Superior School Status by the Delaware Board of Education, as a result of statewide testing!*
- *After 3 years of hard work, this June, the School will be completing the first ever (worldwide) FLES (Foreign Language in Elementary School) Greek Language Curriculum for K-5 Public School students! The complete Manual and expertise may be shared with any school that desires to teach Greek in an elementary school setting!*
- *Under the auspices of Harvard University, Odyssey has begun planning for student-teacher Academic and Cultural Programs with schools in the Province of Argolis, Peloponnese, Greece! This September, a 5th- Grade class and a K-Grade class will begin the first Projects with their Greek counterparts in Nafplion!*
- *On April 15, 2010, the Delaware Board of Education approved Odyssey's application to expand from a K-5 to a K-12 Public Charter School!*

- *Under the leadership and dedication of our homegrown Principal, Tony Skoutelas, little miracles are happening at Odyssey on a daily basis. Most importantly, the miracle of of Greek Παιδεία*
- *Has been accomplishing its original intent, which is to make knowledge available to all members of our community, despite of race, ethnic origin, gender and/or any other differences!*

So let's bring to an end the παράπονα and focus on the Μεγάλο Έργο at hand! Let's roll up our sleeves, "stick our hands in our pockets," enroll your kids and grandkids at Odyssey (Warning: there is a long waiting list!), and do whatever you are capable to support the Greek Public Charter School. A School that in a couple of years will have an enrollment of over 1,000 students, all of them well educated Ambassadors of our Hellenic Heritage!

So, that in the future we may do less Lamenting and more Celebrating, and we all feel much better, join this effort!

Dimitri Dandolos

Editor's Note. We heartily congratulate Mr. Dandolos for inserting in the on-going discussions among fellow-Greeks the true Hellenic Spirit, which, as millennia of history have attested, is mightier than the bleakest adversity ever confronted the Greeks. We thank him for giving us permission to bring his privileged letter to public view and we wish to assure him that the Hellenic Link is determined to move in the direction of his shining exhortation

Professionals and students in every discipline or field of endeavor, whether of Greek Descent or Philhellenes, are cordially invited to join the Hellenic Link, Inc. as members. It is quite easy and useful! Just contact us at any of the indicated addresses

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