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Department of Greek Education Makes Resources Accessible to Educators, Students During Pandemic



Though the GOARCH Clergy-Laity Congress usually occurs every two years, this year's was notable not only for its commemoration of the Centennial of the Archdiocese, but for its in-person return after convening virtually in 2019. The regathering of so many clergy and laity face-to-face again was cause for celebration, and it inspired reflection among delegates on the challenges that complicated—and renewed—various ministries across the Archdiocese during the pandemic. At the Department of Greek Education, for example, facilitating Greek language instruction remotely has been a main concern.

"It is truly important that we continue to preserve the Greek language throughout the parishes in the Archdiocese. With over 30,000 children and 5,000 adults learning Greek in our school and programs, we are the driving force behind the Greek language in the United States," said Director Anastasios Koularmanis, who joined the Department in 2020 with Associate Director Father Gregory Stamkopoulos.

During the Department's breakout session, as well as during the final Plenary of the Congress, Koularmanis and Stamkopoulos shared that Greek education webinars continued on a monthly basis throughout the pandemic, with a special focus on providing teachers guidance for remote instruction. Moreover, through the generosity of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, $150,000 worth of technology devices and software (like the online Greek language program Ellinopoula) were distributed to Archdiocesan District parishes that showed interest and requested assistance. The Department hopes to expand the initiative to the rest of the Archdiocese, too; with the possibility of continued remote and hybrid learning in many parishes, the need for current technology is a top priority, states the Department's Report to the Congress.

Koularmanis also noted that the "greatest struggle" for his team was identifying which parishes around the country have Greek language schools or programs. The

lack of comprehensive statistics makes it difficult to assist and administer to all parishes, but the Department hopes to collect the necessary data to unite all programs and educators under the Archdiocese.

Learn more about the Department's activities over the past two years below— or read the full Department report here.

Resources for Educators & Students:

Over the past two years, the Department of Greek Education has ensured access to continuing education for Greek teachers, as well; in November 2020 and 2021, it hosted its day-long Annual Greek Education Conference for its second and third consecutive years; meanwhile, in Fall 2021 and Winter 2022, and in an ongoing collaboration with Democritus University of Thrace, it facilitated educators' participation in the Greek teaching certification program. In honor of the Bicentennial of the Greek War for Independence, and in cooperation with Μουσείο Σχολικής Ζωής και Εκπαίδευσης, the Department also organized a series of weekly workshops for teachers across the country, with an additional 15 lesson plans available on its website.

A number of essay and art contests were also hosted throughout 2022, engaging children creatively in parishes across the country, even from afar. Papaloizos Publishing generously sponsored all contests.

Publications:

Along with building upon its strong partnerships, the Department has also produced its own educational material. In 2021, it released The Great Mystery, a children's book about the history of Hagia Sophia as narrated by a small cat. The story aims to teach students about one of Orthodoxy's most sacred sites while exposing them to the Greek language. Funded by Leadership 100, The Great Mystery has now been released in both Greek and English. The Department also released the first GOARCH Greek language teaching framework, covering instruction for Pre-K through 8th Grade in day schools and language programs.

Finally, to commemorate the Centennial of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, the Department will also release «Οι Ρίζες μας» ("Our Roots")— a children's book highlighting traditions celebrated by Greek Americans around the country— in Fall 2022.

General Information about the Department:

The Department of Greek Education provides competent leadership and effective resources for the elementary, secondary, and afternoon school programs of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The Department assists parishes in establishing and sustaining a Greek studies program that includes the teaching of the Modern Greek language, Greek history, Greek culture, as well as Greek Orthodox faith. It also works directly with principals and/or clergy to strengthen Greek Orthodox identity, curriculum and assessment, accreditation, personnel, and administrative/ teacher professional development in their schools.

The Department also works with the High Council of Greek Education, which was reestablished in November 2019. Comprising 30 members representing each Metropolis, the High Council aims to support a more sustainable Department with greater oversight and accountability. In collaboration with the Department, the High Council is currently tasked with projects such as organizing and producing webinars, professional development, resource material, and more to assist schools and programs around the country. The High Council is expected to become a more permanent and active component of the Department of Greek Education.

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