



HELLENIC LINK, Inc. ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΣ ΣΥΝΔΕΣΜΟΣ

Member Update Bulletin

Ενημέρωση Μελών, Φίλων, και Συνεργαζών του Συνδέσμου

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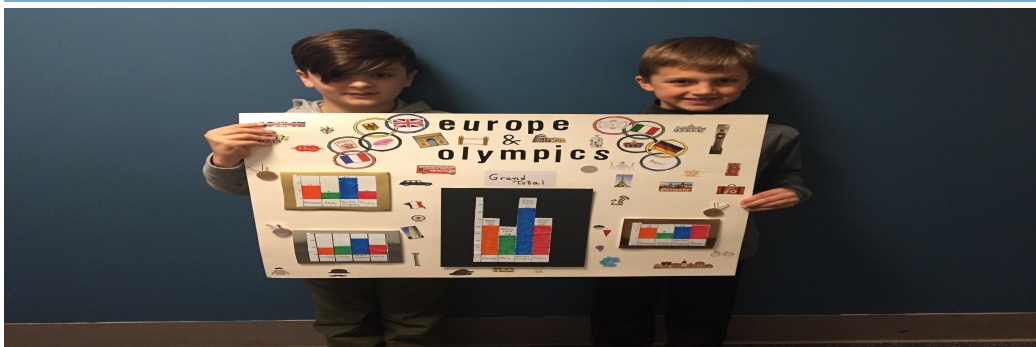
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Students from Mrs. Nicki Tantalus's class, 2nd-place winners of State competition in the subject of Mathematics and the Olympics.

HELLENIC LINK NEWS

In June 2017, the Bulletin drew the curtain of the school year 2016-2017 with an optimistic note on the status of Hellenic Education in the USA (Bulletin 148, June 2017). The source of the optimism as noted was a Report of didactic accomplishments and plans for the future of the Odyssey Charter School (OCS) at Wilmington, DE. On the basis of that report, we ventured to predict that "OCS was embarking on a course of upgrading itself to a research/teaching institution to serve as proving ground for modern teaching of the Greek language and culture suitable for the 21st century." At this time, 12 months later, we find ourselves in the pleasant position to confirm

the continuation of advancement efforts by OCS, but to such a high level that our expectations of a year ago would not have considered tenable. The surprising good news came in the form of a new Report on the School's transactions and accomplishments in the school year 2017-2018. We received the Report from OCS and we gladly present it to members and readers of the Bulletin without detailed comments; they are certainly capable to extract their own conclusions on the significance of the Report's contents. We only wish to point out that the rapid development of Hellenic Studies at OCS came primarily as a result of the vision and purposeful

management of its President Dimitri Dandolos and the expert guidance and dedication of the Dean of the Greek Program Professor Marina Mattheoudakis. Under their robust direction, the phenomenal diverse and deep seated advance resulted from an impeccable and well-aimed collaboration of the OCS with the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the Department of Education of the State of Delaware and an increasing number of other academic institutions and expert individuals. In addition, we wish to express our felicity that the Hellenic Link, true to its name and charter objectives, was able to contribute to the reported developments its unifying and supportive service. CJE

**The Greek Language Education Program
Odyssey Charter School**

School Year 2017-2018

Professor Marina Mattheoudakis

June 4, 2018

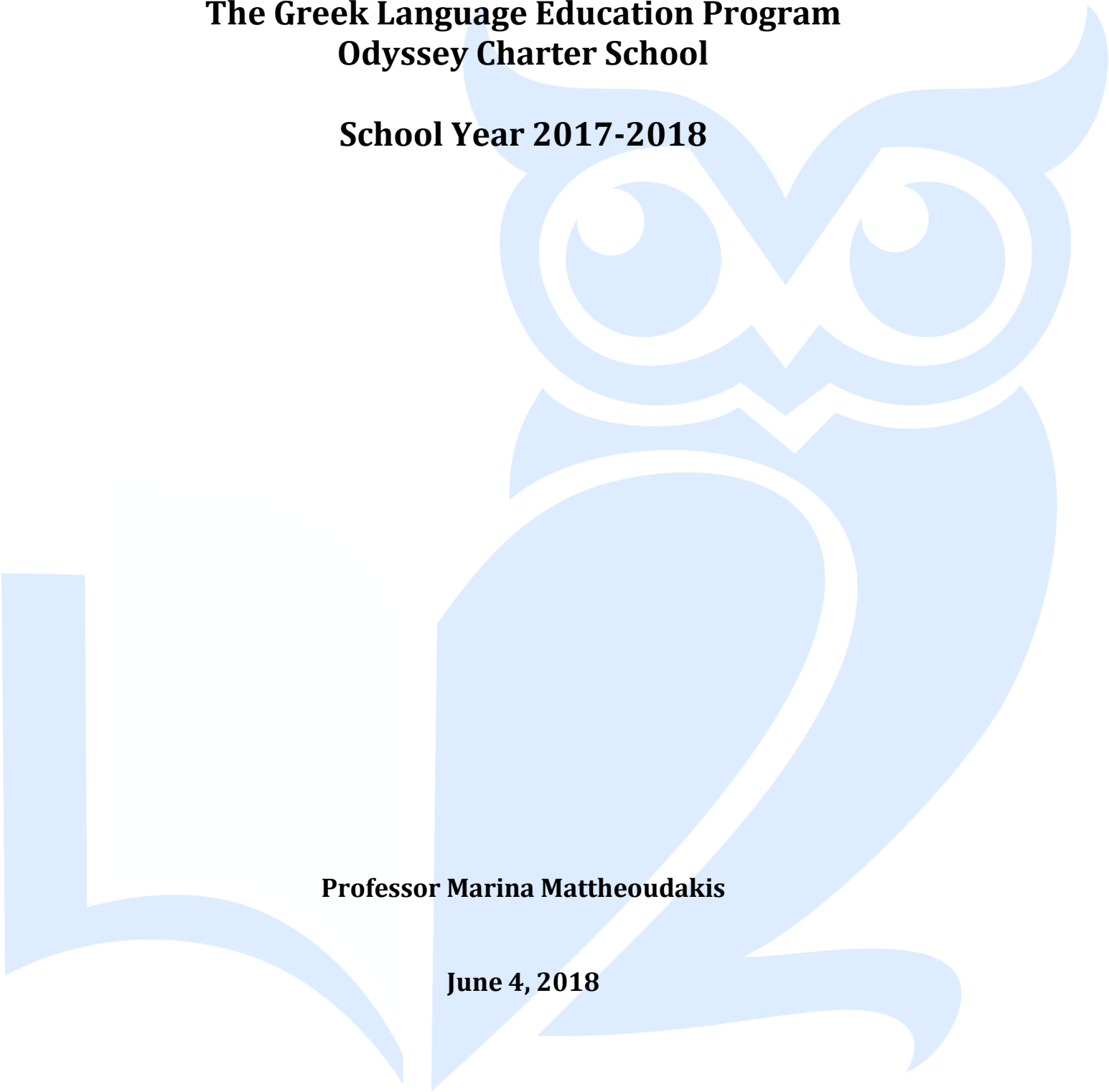




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Introduction

Odyssey Charter School (OCS) was founded in 2006 and since then it has been growing steadily, having reached today a student population of nearly 1,800 students. As part of the school's vision and mission, OCS has embraced an Educational Model based on the instruction of the Greek language and the Hellenistic Heritage of Western Civilization and pedagogy. This strategic vision has been able to promote the ideals of Hellenism, including the continual pursuit of higher education, the adoption of democratic methods and respect of other's personal beliefs and values. These are expected to be understood and appreciated by Odyssey students through their instruction in the Greek Language and Culture (Humanities) and through building cross-curricular links between the Greek language, Mathematics, Sciences and the Arts.

During his term as President of the school Board, Mr. Dimitris Dandolos encouraged all members of the OCS community to reinforce the school's tradition of academic excellence and rigor and he inspired the idea of **an integrated American and Greek Educational Model and Language Curriculum**. Also, under the leadership and guidance of Dimitris Dandolos, the school Board, leadership and staff are committed to working harmoniously to create a world-class environment where students will learn and thrive as global citizens, and every adult will have opportunities for professional and personal development. In order to materialize this strategic vision, Mr. Dandolos initiated a collaboration with the School of Modern Greek, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece through the Rector/President of the University Professor Pericles Mitkas and the Chair of the School of Modern Greek, Dr. Marina Mattheoudakis. More specifically, Mr. Dandolos invited Dr. Mattheoudakis to assist him in the implementation and improvement of these goals and objectives. To this aim, in July 2017, Dr. Mattheoudakis was assigned the coordination of the Greek language program at OCS, the updating and integration of its curriculum and most importantly the immediate design, implementation and supervision of a new Dual Language Immersion Program (DLI) in English and Greek, which was launched in September 2017 starting from the Kindergarten.



1. The Dual Language Immersion Program

In 2008 Odyssey Charter School introduced a Greek FLES Curriculum aiming to help learners develop **basic communication skills** in Greek while also **reinforcing the core curriculum**. This was a pioneer project which aimed to promote the teaching and acquisition of Greek as a foreign language at school.

Twelve years after the introduction of the FLES Curriculum, this is being restructured so as to address the changing needs of the school but also take into consideration the recent regulations regarding World Language Learning in the state of Delaware (<https://www.doe.k12.de.us/domain/139>). Together with the restructuring of the FLES curriculum, the school has launched this year (2017-2018) the first dual language immersion program in English and Greek in the state of Delaware. Forty-six students of various ethnic backgrounds enrolled in the program. The implementation began in the kindergarten and will expand one grade every year.

The Dual Language Immersion program that the OCS is implementing follows a two-teacher model: one teacher is teaching students entirely in English, while the other is teaching entirely in Greek. The core academic content is split by subject area between the Greek and the American teacher. The Greek teacher teaches math, science and Greek language arts and the English teacher teaches social studies and English language arts. Greek and English classes are held in two separate classrooms designated as Greek and English language classrooms respectively. On a daily basis, the instructional time is split into two so that children can have a balanced exposure to both languages.

The immersion students are following the same standards-based curriculum in these content areas as non-immersion students. This program allows us to teach the *core concepts* that are part of the kindergarten curriculum *in Greek* and at the same time *teach Greek through content*. The Greek curriculum is also covering core concepts in math. The primary focus of the mathematics curriculum in kindergarten is to enable kindergartners to develop whole-number concepts and use patterns to explore number, data, and shape. While learning mathematics, students are actively engaged in using concrete materials and appropriate technologies such as calculators and computers.



1.1 The English-Greek Integrated Curriculum

For the implementation of the new DLI program, an innovative integrated English and Greek language and math curriculum was created. Dr. Mattheoudakis' role was instrumental in the design of this curriculum which has been informed by (a) **the Common Core State Standards (CCS) in K-12 English Language Arts and Mathematics**, (b) **the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (ACTFL)**, (c) **the ACTFL can-do benchmarks which state the performance indicators for foreign language learners**, and (d) **the certification of attainment in Greek**, and in particular information provided by the Centre for the Greek Language (www.greek-language.gr/certification) regarding the language structures, vocabulary and pragmatics that learners of Greek as a foreign language should gradually acquire as they progress in their Greek studies.

The Greek language curriculum for the K immersion actually materialized the strategic plan as this has been articulated by Mr. Dandolos and has provided the foundation on which the integration between the American and Greek program of the school can be further developed. The DLI curriculum for the Kindergarten was nominated for the Innovation Award (IDEA Awards –for the Innovation, Dedication, Education, Admiration) Delaware Charter Schools Network in 2017.

In order to reinforce the teaching of the Greek language in the immersion kindergarten, on November 1st 2017, the school hired a new teacher from Greece, Maria Paraponiari. Ms Paraponiari is a qualified kindergarten teacher with an expertise in music and drama education. Since November she has enriched and reinforced the program by teaching the Greek language and by creating her own songs based on the kindergarten language curriculum of the immersion program. Singing in Greek about common themes and topics such as *daily routines*, *family*, *colors* and *fruits*, has enabled young kindergartners to acquire not only the segmental but mainly the suprasegmentally features of the Greek language, such as rhythm, intonation, and stress.

Three times during the school year, the immersion program was observed and informally evaluated by Ms. Lynn Fulton (Education Specialist, World Language Immersion), Dr. Gregory Fulkerson, (Director Language Acquisition Workgroup), and Ms. Ana Richter (Field Agent Spanish Immersion, Delaware Department of Education).



1.2 Assessing the Language Growth

One Greek Math and one Greek language test were designed in order to assess students' progress in the immersion classes. These were given in February 2018 and again in May 2018 at the end of the school year. At the same time, immersion kindergartners, just like the rest of the kindergartners at school, are tested on ELA and Math in English by taking the STAR Test in May. Those tests allow us to trace immersion students' progress in Greek and in English and thus compare them with their non-immersion peers.

The February test results in Greek have been analyzed and though preliminary, differences between immersion and non-immersion students in the Greek language are already evident in aspects such as syntax and vocabulary: immersion kindergartners produce more syntactic utterances as well as more lexical phrases and collocations. What is equally important is the fact that the STAR test results indicated that immersion kindergartners outperformed their non-immersion peers in both ELA and Math, a fact that reflects the balanced gains of those kindergartners in both languages and the absence of any kind of delay in their native language development. These findings are very encouraging for the new DLI program of the school as they prove that bilingual education does not impact negatively on students' first language and thus provide support for and further promote the vision of the school.

2. Creating networks, spreading the word

The role of Dr. Mattheoudakis in the promotion of the Greek language program is pivotal. In close collaboration with Dimitris Dandolos, she has created networks of communication with various educational institutions in the U.S. and in Greece so as to create a solid basis for the promotion of the strategic vision and for the creation of collaborations and exchange programs with U.S. and Greek universities and schools.



2.1 Collaboration with academic and other educational institutions in the U.S. and Greece

In particular, contacts were made with Greek language academics in high ranking U.S. universities, such as Dr. Maria Kaliambou (Yale University) and Ms. Mika Tsikoura (Penn University) as well as with Dr. Spyridon Doukakis (from the American College in Greece). They were all invited to give talks to the OCS Greek faculty and observe Greek language and Math classes. Additionally, a series of collaborative projects with educational institutions in Greece and the U.S. were initiated this year. In particular:

(a) Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Odyssey Charter School in collaboration with Delaware Department of Education has agreed to sign a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The objective of the MoU is for the institutions to develop collaborative research and education programs, to develop exchange and professional development programs for students, staff and faculty in both the State of Delaware and in Greece, to support the teaching and learning of the Greek language and culture in Delaware public schools, and to support the teaching and learning of the English language and culture at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Additionally, the School of Modern Greek, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki has submitted a proposal (see attachment) for the foundation of a branch of the School of Modern Greek Language (SMG) in Wilmington, Delaware, U.S. The School will belong to the Aristotle University and will be supervised by the committee appointed every two years by the Faculty of Philosophy. The School will be housed in the campus of Odyssey Charter School, Wilmington, Delaware and is expected to offer quality training to teachers of Greek as L2 in the U.S.

(b) University of Delaware

A series of meetings have taken place between the Dean of the Greek Program at OCS and Mr. Dandolos with academic faculty of the UD to discuss the unmet needs of foreign language teachers in DE and the role that the University of Delaware, the DOE, and foreign language schools could play in



offering more specific support for World Language teachers in DE, possibly in the form of a more specific ARTC strand.

(c) University of Western Macedonia, Florina

During the school year 2017-2018, the school initiated a collaboration with the University of Western Macedonia in Florina, Greece. In particular, Professor Charalambos Lemonidis, <https://eled.uowm.gr/teaching-stuff/lemonidis-charalampos/> worked closely with the Greek teachers of Math in K-4. The team of teachers had monthly skype meetings with Prof. Lemonidis in order to consult him on (a) the use of Math terminology in Greek and their plan to create a glossary of Math terms, (b) the use of Greek narrative for the teaching of Math, (c) the employment of effective techniques for the teaching of Math, (d) their participation in Math projects.

Additionally, Math teachers are planning to prepare their students next year for the Greek *Kangaroo Math Contest* (<http://www.kangaroo.gr/>) and to design webpages with interactive applications for the teaching of Math to students K-4. The webpage for grade 4 is currently being designed by Mr. Vassilis Guidoglou – a Math teacher.

(<http://4thgreekmath.neocities.org>)

(d) Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University, Nafplio, Argolida

The Center for Hellenic Studies (CHS), Harvard University organizes every year a High School Summer Program in Nafplio, Greece. This is an innovative program for talented high school students with passion for learning and a desire to excel. As a result of Mr. Dandolos' close collaboration with Harvard, for the first time this year since its establishment in 2012, one place at the program has been exclusively reserved for a selected Odyssey Charter School sophomore student. After an initial internal selection, three OCS students applied for the scholarship and **Olisa Devaja** was finally selected by the committee of the CHS, Harvard University. The program starts on July 5th and ends on July 21st and will introduce students to the foundations of Social Sciences. Apart from Olisa, a 7th grade social studies teacher, Greg Altmeier, has also been selected to join her in the program. Odyssey



Charter School will cover transportation and accommodation for both the student and the accompanying teacher.

(e) State elementary schools, Nafplio, Argolida

Another collaboration is that between the lower and middle school at OCS with two elementary schools in Nafplio, Greece: the 5th Elementary School of Nafplio and the Elementary School of Aghios Andrianos. The collaboration was possible thanks to the excellent working relationship of Mr. Dandolos with Ms. Matina Goga at the Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University, in Nafplio, who brought us into contact with teachers from elementary schools in the wider area of Nafplio. The aim of these projects was dual: (a) to bring students from both countries in contact through skype meetings, and (b) to allow them to work ‘together’ on commonly agreed projects (e.g., *recycling, bullying, birthday celebrations*). The communication established between the two schools is expected to be the beginning of further collaborative projects that will reinforce the integration of the American and Greek program of the school. It is hoped that this bridge of communication will give the opportunity to both teachers and students in the two countries to get involved in more projects in the near future.

2.2 Presenting the DLI Program in academic fora

To date the Dual Language Immersion Program of OCS has been presented at the ACTFL conference in November 2017, at the University of Delaware on December 6th, 2017, at Yale MacMillan Center on January 23rd, 2018 and at the *Language in Focus* conference in Thessaloniki, Greece on May 2nd. More recently, on May 31st, Dr. Mattheoudakis presented at the *International Conference on Multilingualism and Multilingual Education* (ICMME18) in Vancouver, Canada, the preliminary findings of our research into the immersion kindergartners’ language development in Greek. Additionally, a relevant article has been submitted for publication in the ACTFL magazine *Language Educator* and an abstract has been submitted for an international conference on *Dual Language Immersion education*.



3. Supporting the Greek language teachers

In order to support the Greek language teachers at OCS, Dr. Mattheoudakis encouraged them to become members of the ACTFL and enter a mentorship program initiated last month by ACTFL. This program aims to help early career language teachers succeed in their current assignments and learn the skills to be successful long-term in their careers. Mentees are matched with a mentor at OCS (another more experienced Greek language teacher) since the matching needs to be made on the basis of language, level, interest and location. The vast majority of our Greek teachers have chosen to enter this program.

4. Developing the Greek language program: The way forward

As the Dean of the Greek program at OCS, Dr. Mattheoudakis has tried to provide all students with opportunities to improve their language skills and receive differentiated or individualized instruction, according to their needs and language skills. To this aim, remedial classes for weak students were scheduled on a daily basis and additional extra classes were offered once a week after school.

In order to maintain and even increase student motivation, we encouraged and tutored 5th and 6th graders to participate in the Ellinomatheia exams (Center for the Greek Language) for certification of level A1 (according to the Common European Framework of Reference).

In order to address our young learners' needs in Greek, in collaboration with Ms. Maria Paraponiari, Dr. Mattheoudakis has started authoring a storybook/textbook for the teaching of Greek as a foreign language. Some of its content (stories) has already started being piloted with 1st and 2nd graders. Additionally, a digital library is currently being designed where audiovisual material created and used by Greek teachers has been uploaded and stored. Similarly, teaching sessions in Greek Language and Math classes have been video-recorded so as to be used for training purposes.

Our combined efforts for improving the Greek program at OCS have started bearing fruit. Two second graders, under the guidance of Ms. Niki Tantalou – their math teacher –, came 2nd in the state of Delaware and 1st in the region after participating in a Math poster contest: “Math and the Olympic Games” (see photo attached).



Odyssey Charter School

Nurturing a Lifelong Love of Learning

Dr. Nick T. Manolakos *Headmaster*

Finally, we are currently planning the growth of the Greek language department as four new teachers are going to join the Greek faculty in August 2018. These are highly qualified teachers of Greek as a foreign language and we are looking forward to welcoming them on board.

Contact:

Marina Mattheoudakis
Professor in Applied Linguistics
Dean of the Greek Program
Odyssey Charter School
Wilmington, DE



Marina Mattheoudakis is an Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics at the School of English, Faculty of Philosophy, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She is a graduate of the School of English and holds an MA in Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language (University of Birmingham, U.K.) and a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from the School of English, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Her research interests lie in the areas of second language acquisition, bilingualism and bilingual education, language teaching methodology and corpus linguistics. She has participated in various research projects (the most recent of them being the teaching of foreign languages to learners with dyslexia, DysTEFL2, which was awarded the ELTons Awards, 2014). She has presented her research in national and international conferences and she has published her papers in refereed journals, books and conference proceedings. In 2005 she founded, with the support of the School of English, A.U.Th, the 3rd Experimental School of Evosmos, which is the first primary school in Greece that is supervised by a university foreign language department. More recently she founded in the School of English the Lab of foreign language learning, teaching and assessment in the school context. She has been the President of the supervisory committee of the 3rd Experimental Primary school of Evosmos since 2011, the President of the Greek Applied Linguistics Association since 2014 and more recently she became the President of the School of Modern Greek, A.U.Th. and of the Centre for the Teaching of Foreign Languages, A.U.Th.

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