

## **Maria Kasmirli: Curriculum-enriching activities, 2011-12**

I have varied career experience in academia (philosophy) and higher education management, and wide-ranging interests in the arts and humanities. With this background, and with support from the school's management and fellow teaching staff, I was able to offer various additional, curriculum-enriching activities to my students and the school during the past year. Some of these activities are outlined below. This document accompanies the yearly plans I have submitted to Ms Filippaki.

**Comenius project.** I initiated the school's involvement in the current round of Comenius projects, and, with the managers' support, prepared, organized, and ran a preparatory visit to Heraklion by representatives of potential partner schools in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Turkey. As a result of this, the participants agreed to plan a joint Comenius project on an environmental theme, with each school's representative submitting an application to the relevant national agency. As the SEE representative, I then prepared the school's application to IKY and submitted it. (The outcome is still pending.)

**Ethics coordinator.** With my background in philosophy, I was able to act as informal advisor to colleagues in relevant areas of the curriculum, especially ethics. I offered handouts and gave sample presentations of tutorials on various topics. Ethics is an interesting subject and one that comes naturally to children of all ages, when introduced appropriately.

**Creative writing project.** I am interested in creative writing and encouraged my students to write. Together they devised, wrote, and illustrated a short children's book, *Sticker The Magical One*, intended for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. The students translated this into five additional languages: French (with Ms Pascale's help), Finnish, German (with Ms Julia's help), Greek, Italian. The project brought together language, writing, poetry, art, and ethics. On Library Day, my students introduced and read the book to younger classes. The book dealt with animal rights and empathy for others, and we have used it to stimulate discussions of ethical issues with students of various ages.

**Shakespeare project.** As their contribution to the end-of-year celebration, my class worked on a project based around Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Work began with study of passages from the play (using the original texts) in the context of language study, ethics, and history. The class recorded a discussion of their thoughts about the play and its characters, and then decided to act out Shylock's famous monologue, interpreting it in ways that show how relevant Shakespeare is to current events. Their performances were videoed and presented at the school's annual celebration and on the internet. There has been much praise for the students' work on the project.

**MEDASSET clean-the-beach project.** I organized the primary school's involvement in this environmental awareness project, making the application and taking eight classes to the beach. This visit built on previous environmental awareness work, including visits to the Crete aquarium and Natural History Museum, and discussions of relevant ethical issues.

**Contribution to Intermath competition.** I helped Ms Dina with the school's participation in the Intermath international maths competition and encouraged the primary section to take part. I also helped Ms Dina with her after-school maths club, which taught maths to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders in a fun way.

**Class projects.** Throughout the year, I ran various projects with my class, in which students were encouraged to link different curriculum areas and supplement their studies with their own research via the internet and other sources. Projects included: (a) *Empires project*: Each student researched an empire of their choice, drawing on themes from history, geography, European history, literature, ethics, music, art, and other areas. (b) *Senses project*: Students were introduced to the biology of the sense organs (including a dissection of a sheep's eye!), wrote poems on the theme of the senses, and studied Braille (making links with discovery of the world studies and international language day). (c) *Europe project*: Students developed their understanding of European history and human rights by imagining a trip through time, starting with the French revolution and

finishing with the European union. We studied Dickens, Hugo, and Les Miserables (the musical), bringing together various curriculum areas. We also created artwork based on European geography and national boundaries.

**Class pets.** Students were encouraged to keep and study animals (guineau pigs) as class pets. They learned to care for the animals and observed their behaviour, making links with discussions of discovery of the world, ethics, and language.

**Class blog.** Since students wished to record their observations of their class pets, I encouraged them to start up a class blog, which they called *the wasabi class*. They maintained the blog and posted their thoughts, experiences, and stories on it.

*Maria Kasmirli*  
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