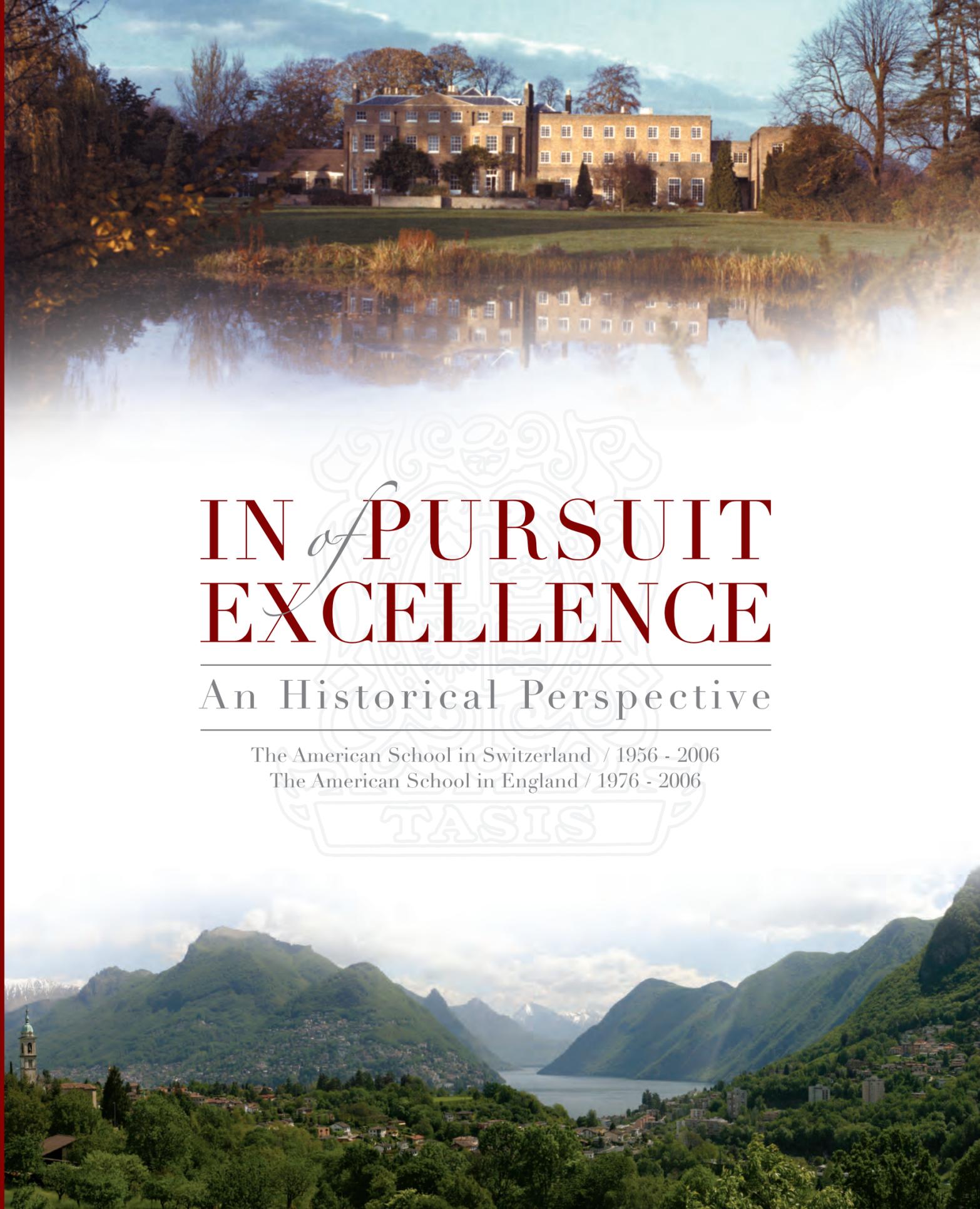




1956 - 2006



IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE - An Historical Perspective 1956 - 2006



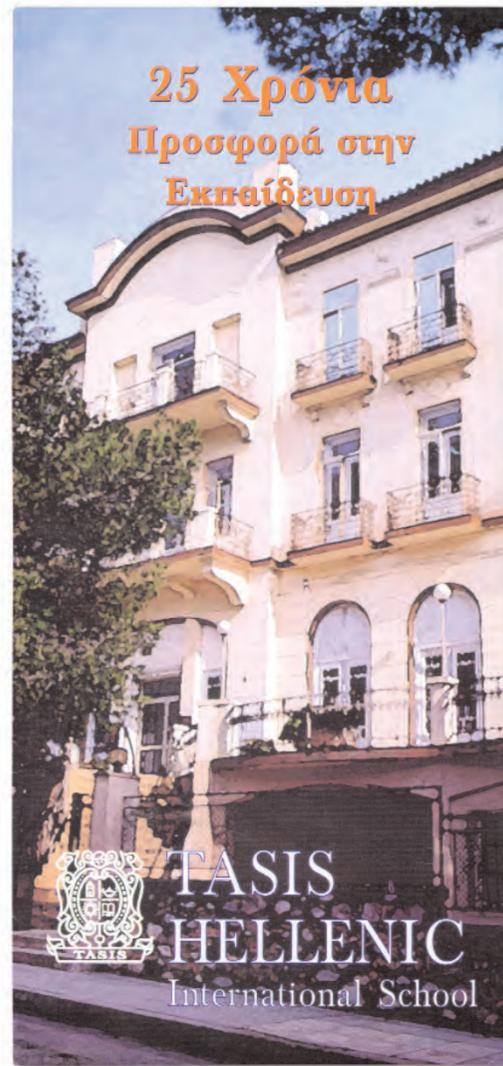
IN *of* PURSUIT EXCELLENCE

An Historical Perspective

The American School in Switzerland / 1956 - 2006

The American School in England / 1976 - 2006

Looking Eastward



Over the years recruiting for the TASIS schools has extended globally. Although an office in New York has had the long-term responsibility of spreading the word about TASIS in the United States, as the need to recruit throughout Europe and the Middle East became increasingly important, admissions officers were delegated to spread the word about the program across the continent. It was after such a recruiting trip to Saudi Arabia in 1978 that the idea of starting a school in Greece came about and was presented to Mrs. Fleming. American parents in the Middle East voiced a need for a boarding program closer to home with an academic curriculum somewhat less demanding than those being offered in either Switzerland or England for their children. Initially Mrs. Fleming was not convinced, but after a visit and finding a suitable building to rent in which to house the school, she decided to go ahead, though with an element of caution which she outlined in a letter to a friend:

We're off to Greece! . . . I am simply renting property and not investing further in real estate! In the first place I have no money to do so and have more mortgages than there are pearls in a necklace . . . I am not too worried politically, yet it also seems wise in that part of the world not to risk capital after we have learned the sad lesson of Beirut and Iran. I will, of course, have to invest in another library and science laboratory, though I am holding this to the minimum needed and trying to amortize them over the five-year period for which we have contracted the hotel.

There is, as always, a large element of risk as to whether we will get the students and be able to implement our ideas and hopes, but we have every reason to believe that there is a need to be serviced. My own choice would have been France as I have always wanted to have a school there, but the tax situation and the general cost of

living are so high that I was scared of going into it. The glories of Greece, the source of so much of our Western heritage, and its sunshine [make it] an ideal location for a school and it seems that the schools that are there now are not doing too excellent a job. I naturally feel a certain trepidation that is inevitable, and I hope will be overcome by the success of the venture.

Although market research had indicated that the school would open with approximately 100 students, it actually opened with over 600 owing to a fortuitous occurrence and Mrs. Fleming's seemingly never-ending willingness to take risks.

Dr. Robert Betts, a distinguished scholar and the founder and director of the Hellenic International School, had begun his day school eight years previously with a student body of just 25 which now numbered 500. He and his business partner had reached the decision that they no longer wished to continue running the school. They both felt that Mrs. Fleming would be able "to take on the Greeks and walk away smiling." She was asked if she would like to incorporate this school into her own. Since it was a well-established kindergarten through grade 12 institution, with good classroom facilities, library, science laboratories, all of which would no longer need to be included in the hotel conversion, it seemed too good an opportunity to turn down. There was one complication, however, in that the curriculum offered preparation for the British examination system as well as for the more familiar American one. The newly hired American members of faculty would also need to work alongside the existing staff. Because of these complications and since the headmaster elect had no experience of large day school populations or of British education, he decided not to accept the position after all, and a hurried search for a successor was put in motion.

It was at this period in the history of TASIS that Mrs. Fleming hired a female to head one of her schools for the first—and last—time. Ruth Clay had been working in Saudi Arabia and was well known there, which was considered an asset when the nucleus of the boarders were to come from the Middle East. She was an accomplished speaker and conveyed confidence—attributes valued by Mrs. Fleming in the leaders of her schools.

G.M.



Headmistress Ruth Clay with students

TASIS HELLENIC: The Best Kept Secret in Town



Campus of TASIS Hellenic International School

High above Athens, nestled in the leafy northern suburbs at the foot of Mount Pendeli, a devoted group of energetic international educators gather each day to carry out important work on a project that is quietly changing the future of many young lives. They are the teachers and administrators of TASIS HELLENIC International School, whose experiment in Anglo-American international education is meeting with overwhelming success. In a world that has come to accept that "small is beautiful" TASIS HELLENIC is an outstanding example of an institution that is interested more in the dynamics of its educational program than in increasing its enrollment. The School's location on the quiet back streets of Kifissia and Vrilissia is not broadly publicized, and many assume from its unusual name "TASIS" (an acronym for The American School in Switzerland) that it is a Greek school. Nonetheless, during the past ten years, thousands of families have made a point of learning more about one of the best kept secrets in town.

One of the interesting features of TASIS HELLENIC has been, given the continuity of the faculty, its ability to adapt to meet the changing needs of the expatriate community. This has resulted in the development of a more international dimension and the growth in popularity of its British curriculum. The majority of students are native English speakers working towards a U.S. college-preparatory diploma. However, more and more Europeans are finding that the School's British curriculum prepares them for higher education in their native countries. Students still have the choice of following either the American or the British curricula. Such flexibility widens the educational options for these students, and this is a welcome feature for the globetrotting children of multi-national expatriates who are often transferred at very short notice.

The goal of a TASIS education is not only to give students a strong intellectual grounding, but also to instill a commitment to international understanding and a sensitivity to others. TASIS students are encouraged to learn about

their host community in a variety of ways. They are involved in numerous community service projects—everything from planting trees to helping disabled children—which is much appreciated by the Athenians. Through these charitable activities and their many local course-related field trips, TASIS HELLENIC students have many opportunities of getting to know the people of Greece, their needs, attributes, rich history, and their immense contribution to the culture of western civilization.

Greek American Trade Bulletin (Excerpt)
March-April 1990

TASIS Greece will also enroll increasing numbers of students of many different nationalities whose parents are undertaking professional assignments in various locations worldwide. TASIS Greece's offerings include the opportunity to prepare for British G.C.E. examinations as well as courses leading to the International Baccalaureate Diploma.

Fernando Gonzalez (1981)

I also remember, when TASIS Greece was being started up, sending two of my young progeny off from England to Greece overland in a VW beetle. They were under 20—Gaby des Champs and Ann Clements—and they set off for Dover fancy-free without even a map: "Oh, we'll buy one on the ferry . . ."

Mary Hart-Danby (2004)

The story of the two young secretaries packing up to go off to Greece to get the new campus started outside of Athens, realizing only as they were about to set off that they still needed a map, typifies, perhaps, the enormous enthusiasm and confidence of those fortunate enough to have participated in the early years of the TASIS programs—and may be considered by some as symbolic of the way some of the programs developed—with the "roadmaps" being "picked up" when and as needed "on the way."

Kate Woodward (2005)





Elementary School Principal **Pat Yassoglou** with students.

Starting a school in Greece was an idea that had come from my trip to Saudi Arabia. There was a need for a General Studies program to educate the average student. When I proposed this to the Board, they said, why not—Greece was as good a place as any. I wanted a place close to the Middle East and Saudi Arabia, from where we had 250 boarding students. There was a huge market for us, in the heydays of the late 70's. So the Board approved it and off we went. I spent six months living in Greece, setting up the school and, with the help of **Chris Frost**, hiring teachers and getting the facilities ready. We were starting in an hotel, and right next to us, adjacent to this hotel, was another school called "**The Hellenic International School.**" Their people came over to meet with me and asked why we were starting a school. So I said that we believed that there was a market for a TESIS-style school. And they said: "Why don't we merge?" to which I replied: "We don't take partners in schools; we do our own thing." They wanted us to take care of the boarding students and the housing, and they would be responsible for the education. I then said: "Our Board would never approve that, but I tell you what we can do—we can take over your school," which was a quite gutsy proposal because they had 500 students at the time, and we had none. Actually, the

Board approved it and we took over Hellenic International School, because it was easier than starting a school from scratch, particularly in Greece, and we got a ready-made school that we could educate our students in. It was a huge success from day one, with 80-90 boarding students and ca. 500 day students, and that school grew to 750 students within three years. Then, Greek politics took over. There was a Socialist government where private schools were not held in high esteem and they made it very difficult for us to operate. The numbers started to drop and we clearly got concerned about the safety of our students and moved the boarding program to Cyprus.

We never owned the school in Greece—we only rented it. In 1999, we took on a partner with a franchise agreement, part of which was the use of our name for the transition of five years. For us, it meant that he took on all the liabilities and all of our staff, so we didn't have to fire anybody or close the school. But in 2004 we decided not to extend the contract, and it has now changed to the "Athens International School." We no longer have a financial commitment or responsibility for the school.

Fernando Gonzalez (2005)

A Special School

A dread for the color blue was the result of my first day at TESIS HELLENIC. I was a mere seventh grader straight out of an American school where kids wore and did whatever they pleased. I was used to having 30 people in my classes—people I hardly knew or cared about. I thought all schools were like that, and enrolling at TESIS changed my views on a number of things. As I gradually came to realize, being a TESIS student is something as special as belonging to a certain family—a family we have come to call our "TESIS family." My six years at TESIS have been very memorable. The friendships I have made with kids my age and with teachers will last for a lifetime. It is so amazing how a group of about 300 people can be so hospitable, warm, sincere, and friendly with each other. This is very rare in our day, and I'm so thankful that I was given the chance to be part of the special school. I'll never forget our Tag Days, cabarets, dances, proms, bake sales, detentions, study halls, slave sales, EMAC competitions, and class trips. These happy memories will stay with me forever, and even now I look back at them with a faint sense of nostalgia. I know I am really going to miss this place when I graduate in 16 days.

Christina Alexandra, TESIS Hellenic '90 (1990)

... Then I was persuaded to look East. I didn't particularly want to, but I was persuaded to look in Greece, and that school, TESIS Hellenic International School, is still going strong with almost 400 students, exclusively day. We start-

ed out wanting a boarding school there, and, in fact, we did have a boarding school there of 175 boarders, TESIS Greece. Then politically Greece became difficult in terms of its stance toward Americans. They were very anti-American because of our bases, so we moved the boarding department to Cyprus, which was another Fleming folly, one of the ones that you might say I lost instead of won! The school was successful, but financially it was a loss. The people who were there loved TESIS Cyprus and it was on its way to becoming a good school too, but then the oil market fell in Saudi, and most of our students came from that part of the world. We stayed on in Greece with a day school, but we are again concerned because the school is in a rented property. Do we want to stay in Greece on a long-term basis, and is it worth investing to purchase in a country so politically unstable? That's one of those decisions I am supposed to make tomorrow, or the next day, or the next week.

I have had a few setbacks, of course, but I never lose any sleep over them. I just go onto the next project because you can't expect to win them all. One does make mistakes. Sometimes mistakes are made because of other people, when you allow other people to influence you. I trust my own instincts more than I do almost anyone else. It is usually when I am influenced by others that I get into trouble...

MCF

Transplanting TESIStry



A week or two after arriving in Athens to assume my role as Headmistress of TESIS Greece, I sipped tea on our wisteria-covered terrace with a parent who had educated two of her children at TESIS Lugano and was enrolling a third with us. I was taken aback by her sudden assertion that what she saw "just isn't TESIS." Her words crystallized our immediate challenge: to create from the material at hand a school that would be genuinely TESIS. The material at hand was substantial. From the sunshine on the blue Aegean to the terraced elegance of the Cecil, we had beauty. Across the street we had an affiliated day school with a steadily increasing reputation for academic excellence. I didn't know it yet, but we had a brilliant team of enthusiastic teachers selected with remarkable acumen by **Christopher Frost**, as well as a student body with a genuinely sunny disposition.

It was there for the making. All we had to do was discover the components of this elusive quality of "TESISness" and make it happen here. As a newcomer to TESIS, I realized that there was an indefinable specialness that had to sweep down from Switzerland, via England, to Greece. One of my first clues was contributed by the inimitable and invaluable **Alexa Mason** (former secretary to **Peter Stevens** when he was Headmaster in Lugano). Alexa chanced to remark of someone who had come by for an interview that the person struck her as a perfect "TESIS type." Realizing that I was on to something, I looked to Alexa for more limits as to the nature of TESISity and she proved an invaluable guide. Gradually, under her tutelage I got the hang of it. I learned that it also had something to do with opening banquets, receptions, welcoming speeches, and flowers. Some place I sensed a style, a signature... a very individualistic signature, indeed, as I ultimately realized. "**TESIStry**" begins with **Mrs. Fleming**; that became obvious. Her sense of beauty, of graciousness, of appreciation for individuals, and the life and education she envisioned were the source of the TESIS hallmark. Clearly, the magic originated with her and spread itself among the "TESIS types" she selected.

Thus, our new teaching team caught the spark from the sprinkling of TESIS old-timers. **Gabrielle Des Champs**, who

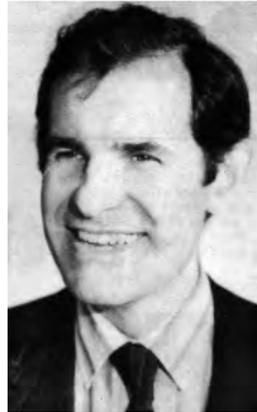
had done the initial on-site spadework with **Fernando Gonzalez** in the spring, stayed on to run the admissions office. Not content with that (and in the true spirit of TESISism) she branched out into birthday cakes and Halloween (or was it Guy Fawkes?) apple bobbing. **David Chandler**, a recidivist from the England campus, showed us the stuff a TESIS activities director is made of. Only he could motivate 50 teenagers who don't know each other to play charades and like it; sing-alongs with original lyrics about campus life and the people became part of the ambience he created. The absolutely foundational **Gerry Roy** (another TESIS recidivist from England) kept us sane and balanced (as sane and balanced as one can be without being in serious violation of TESISality). **Bertha Seifert** combined the TESIS lifestyle with retirement (only Bertha could simultaneously retire and not retire); thanks to her we learned to hate the scales as rendered by Gerry Roy practicing in the early morning hours. We even got some timely hints from a few students who left a safe thing in England and Switzerland to help make it TESIS in Greece. **Kim Copeland**, **Ralph Radcliff**, **Katherine Short**, and **Alexandra Putman** saw to it that no tradition got lost in our shuffle.

I still work on comprehending the indefinable essence of TESISology, but I think I have some inklings. It's all the obvious things that our catalogues describe: high academic standards, low student-teacher ratio, articulate educational philosophy, quality teachers, fine facilities, and more. That we have, but TESISism inheres in less obvious forms. It has to do with carnations and chocolate bars and personal notes from advisors placed in students' rooms to welcome them to TESIS. It's a dorm resident fixing a soothing cup of tea for a student awaiting a Disciplinary Review Board appearance. It's the entire male faculty risking life, limb, and machismo in a student-faculty football game. It's senior banquet nostalgia and graduates who write us the day they arrive home. It's faculty caroling by candlelight in the student corridors the eve of Christmas vacation. Always it's the something extra—a little more imagination, a little more caring, a little more extending of ourselves.

In the much-needed (but curiously empty) peace and quiet now that the students have left for the summer, a few of us are left to ponder our product. Did we create the genuine article—a real TESIS school? Well, if we hadn't, would two-thirds of the faculty be backpacking off to Africa together for the summer? Would we be excited about next year during the final exhausted week of this year (like phoenix from ashes, I must say)? Would we all, every one of us, be coming back to do it all again and even better in September? Actually, I think we've succumbed to an uncommon strain of international virus known as TESISitis. Message to purveyors of antidotes—don't call us. We'll call you.

Dr. Ruth Clay, Headmistress TESIS Greece
1979 - 1983 (Alumni Magazine 1981)

An Interview with the Headmaster



John Kidner, Headmaster
1983 - 1984

Today: Last year TASIS HELLENIC offered both a day and a boarding program, whereas, after the move of the boarding department to Cyprus, you are now running what is totally a day school. Do you find this makes TASIS HELLENIC a very different school now?

Mr. Kidner: Of course, academically the school is very much the same, with the exception of the loss of a few courses from the General Studies program, which was instituted at the inception of the boarding department four years ago. However, there definitely is a different feeling this year. The day students now feel that they are top dogs—in the past it was natural for the time and emphasis to be somewhat more on the boarders, since they were the students who were actually living at the school 24 hours a day, and they needed to feel the attention more focused on them. But now the day students are taking the lead rather than following along with whatever the boarders organized in the past in terms of trips, dances, or other social activities. The two groups of students even seem to blend better now at a distance. We had wonderful team visits from old TASIS HELLENIC boarders who are now at TASIS Cyprus, and the kids seem closer than ever. I think the day faculty have benefited too and are able to be more relaxed because of their time away from the school—and the students themselves certainly benefit from the time they spend with their families.

Today: Mr. Kidner, you are Head of the TASIS school with both the largest number of nationalities and the most diverse spread of curricula. Could you give us an idea of the

special flavor or feeling that this may give to your student body and campus?

Mr. Kidner: We do have 28 different nationalities represented at TASIS HELLENIC—which include 123 U.S. citizens and between 70 and 80 Greek Americans. For all these different students, we offer American College Preparatory, GCE, Advanced Placement, and ESL courses. We find that this combination allows us to be much more flexible in adjusting to individual students' needs than a high-powered International Baccalaureate program which is extremely demanding and more limiting. Our combination of courses allows students to participate in two programs if they so desire, for example, following two level courses along with other courses in the American College Prep curriculum. We have no big splits along international lines within the student body, which is very nice—in fact, there is a general feeling of cooperation and interest in each other's backgrounds which manifests itself most clearly, perhaps, in our very popular International Day in April. Parents participate too, and the entire community enjoys the chance to share their most interesting cultural differences. As far as faculty are concerned, the mix of nationalities which comes about because of offering both the GCE and the American programs is very fruitful. We end up with both American and English nationals as teachers, as well as, of course, Greeks and Greek Americans who live locally. Their presence definitely adds piquancy to our international community.

TASIS Today 1985 (Excerpt)



Bettina Zachariou, '94

TASIS Hellenic has been a light in the private sector of schools in Greece. I grew up in TASIS and I have a special place for it in my heart. I attended from kindergarten to 12th grade and never regretted one single year. I actually was on the TASIS campus in my infancy! My parents held church services on Sundays in what is now the Theater.

TASIS is not only an academic environment, but also one of the best tools to developing international understanding and union amongst nations, cultures, and ethnicities. I have learned how to be globally aware from growing up in this school more than anywhere else.

It is more than just educational . . . it's experiential.

Bettina Princess Zachariou
TASIS Hellenic '94 (2000)

The school in Greece ran very successfully as a combined day and boarding school for three years. Then problems arose. A very strong anti-American sentiment manifested itself in Greece in the early 80's as the Communist Party gained strength. Ruth Clay convinced Mrs. Fleming that it would be opportune to move the boarding section out of the country and suggested Cyprus since it was relatively close to Greece and the Middle East.

Fernando Gonzalez, Director of Development at that time, tried to convince her, unsuccessfully, to consider Majorca instead. He knew of a school there for sale and he felt Spain offered a more acceptable culture, and, most of all, it was not a politically divided island as was Cyprus, with all the complications such a situation implied. But her mind was made up and she was not swayed. In 1983 the boarding section of the school left Athens and the 50 or so students moved to Cyprus.

G.M.



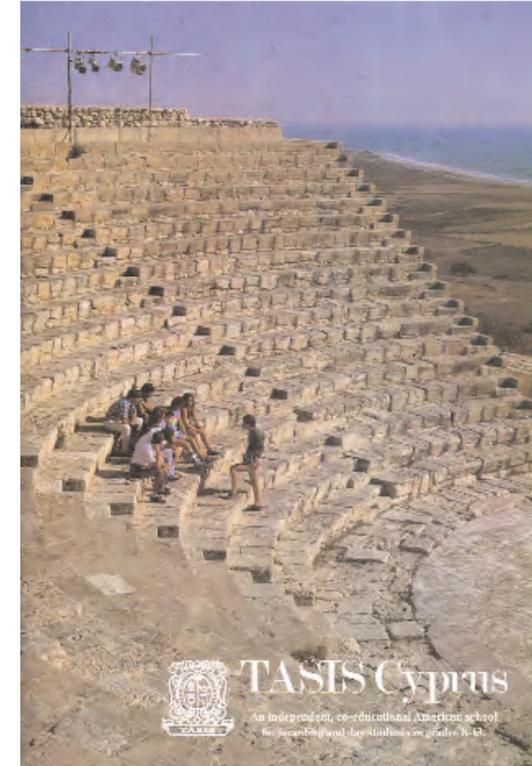
TASIS Cyprus



In 1983, in a speech dedicating her new campus in Cyprus, the importance of her expansion into the international arena is emphasized by Mrs.

Fleming to her audience: *You are part of the TASIS dream which started 30 years ago—with 12 students—and now there are 2000 students each year from 40 countries of the world. What better formula to teach international understanding based on rigorous academic training . . . than having our young people live and work together and helping them build toward a world of peace rather than self-destruction; how better than in the tradition of the best in independent education to teach our young to value and thus preserve the magnificent heritage of Western civilization and freedom.*

G.M.



Exploring the historical sites and experiencing the cultures first-hand of various countries around the rim of the Mediterranean Sea, the students of TASIS Cyprus participated in the School's first In-Program Travel for a week in October. The 8th and 9th grades travelled to Crete; 10th grade to Egypt; 11th grade to Athens and its environs; and the 12th grade studied, in particular, the art and architecture of Italy.

TASIS Today, Winter 1986



TASIS Cyprus chemistry class

The American School in Switzerland is proud to announce the opening of TASIS Cyprus in September, 1983. Located in a spacious hotel and grounds on the outskirts of Nicosia, the island's capital, the School offers American College Preparatory and General Studies curricula for co-educational boarding and day students of all nationalities in grades 9-12.

The founding of TASIS Cyprus is a further commitment by TASIS to offer the highest standards of independent education in Europe. The location of Cyprus at the crossroads of Greek, Turkish, Arabic, and European cultures and its proximity to the Middle East make the island particularly suitable to serve the educational needs of expatriate students living in Saudi Arabia and other neighboring countries. The variety and wealth of cultural and recreational facilities on the island include archaeological sites dating back to 7,000 B.C., the Troodos mountains where skiing is available, and the plentiful sandy beaches along the southern coast.



The pool courtyard

A fall in the oil market and the consequent decline in the number of American families stationed in neighboring Gulf States reduced the student population, which led ultimately to the school's demise just three years after it had opened.

G.M.