

Prolegomena for a Comparative Analysis and Overview of Efforts, Studies and Recommendations concerning Greek-American Schools from the 1920's to the Present.¹

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Abstract

This article presents a preliminary overview of recommendations made for the improvement of Greek-American day and afternoon schools between the 1920's until 2015, based on a review of printed sources from within the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and external observers and commentators. The overview indicates that similar recommendations have been made and repeated throughout this lengthy period with only a few being partially or fully implemented. What emerges from this overview, is that recommended solutions for improvement are already known, and that instead of investing in additional studies and reviews, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and its communities should invest in and implement the many solutions already proposed. A Brief Addendum is included which outlines the implementation of Greek Bilingual Education Programs in NYC public schools and the improvement efforts of the University of Crete's Paideia Project.

Keywords:

*Greek-American schools;
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese
Greek Bilingual Education;
Private and charter schools
Paideia Project*

¹ As this study was being completed, two important new books appeared; the first edited by Fevronia Soumakis and Theodore G. Zervos, [Educating Greek Americans: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Pathways](#) (Palgrave Macmillan: 2020) and the second by Alexander Kitroeff, [The Greek Orthodox Church in America: A Modern History](#) (Northern Illinois University Press: 2020). It is also a pleasure to acknowledge once again the many resources and insights concerning Greek-America that my esteemed colleagues and friends, Steve Frangos and the late Dan Georgakas have made available to me.

Ever since their establishment in the early twentieth century, Greek language schools have struggled with limited resources to address the needs of both the newly arrived immigrant community and established and more assimilated Greek Americans.² Closely tied to the Greek Orthodox Church's need to maintain some level of Greek language understanding for religious purposes these schools were and continue to be perceived as important institutions for maintaining a Hellenic identity within multi-cultural/ethnic American society. The centralization of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in the 1930's also led to its organization of a Higher Education Council which sought to bring some standardization to both Greek afternoon and day schools, uphold standards of instruction, and address common needs and problems. These church related schools continue to be the largest network of Greek cultural and language instruction at the pre-collegiate level in the United States despite the recent inroads of Greek Charter and private schools.³ Clearly, understanding their past and present problems and needs is crucial for the Greek-American community to continue to make effective use of this vital network of educational resources for the preservation of Hellenic culture, identity and language going forward into the twenty-first century.

This study will analyze and compare Greek school problems and recommendations identified by insiders and outsiders based on commentaries and studies from both within the Archdiocese and external observers and organizations based on written sources. This analysis will seek to determine if the Greek schools needs have changed over time, what if any solutions have been implemented and what structural changes have been made or are still pending. In short, what are the success and failures over time and what are the continuing needs going forward. It must be emphasized however, that our survey is a kind of prolegomenon— which seeks to serve as a baseline for more comprehensive research and is limited in its scope. One should also note that

² It is likely that the first Greek language school pre-dates the consolidation of Greek family and community life during the early twentieth century—however, little information survives concerning the New Smyrna schoolhouse beyond its bare existence. See: D. P. Panagopoulos, New Smyrna: An Eighteenth Century Greek Odyssey (Gainesville: University of Florida Press: 1966). The first Greek school established during the era of mass immigration was opened in Chicago in 1906; see Andrew Kopan, “Greek Education in America and the Third Generation of Greek Americans: The Case of Chicago,” in Christos P. Ioannides, ed., Greeks in English Speaking Countries (Aristide D. Caratzas, New York: 1997) 161. Also the Lagios dissertation cited immediately below pp. 37-39.

³ For the fullest background information see: George Arthur Lagios, “The Development of Greek American Education in the United States: 1908-1973, Its Theory, Curriculum and Practice”, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Connecticut 1976; whose dissertation remains the most detailed and comprehensive study of Greek American schools despite its date. For supplemental subsequent information see: Constantine G. Hatzidimitriou, “Church-Community Relations in the United States,” in C Ioannides, ed., Greeks in English Speaking Countries 69-87 and George C. Papdemetriou, chapter 6, “Greek Orthodox Religious Schools,” in Religious Schools in the United States, K-12 ed., by Thomas C. Hunt and James Carper, (Routledge Revivals, Garland Publishing Company, New York & London: 1993).. See also the comprehensive bibliography which also includes unpublished dissertations on Greek-American schools by Kyrou Alexandros K., and Stavros K. Frangos, “Central Works on the Greek Diaspora,” manuscript draft copy provided by Steve Frangos; eventually published as chapter in Stavros E. Constantinides ed., Greece in Modern Times: An Annotated Bibliography of Works Published in English in Twenty-two Academic Disciplines During the Twentieth Century vol. I pp. 355-378 (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press Inc.: 2000).

our limited study has found, that virtually every commentary or survey presented contains almost no reference to any previous recommendations or observations and presents them as if they are being presented for the first time without any discussion of any past successes or failures.

Our information was collected from official and unofficial published accounts and commentaries both scholarly and anecdotal that have appeared since the establishment of the first Greek schools in 1908. These have appeared in a wide variety of publications including travel accounts, community histories and articles in the Greek ethnic press. First we will review the sources accessed chronologically and will identify the issues/problems each source revealed and any solutions proposed. The survey is not meant to be complete or even comprehensive, but seeks to serve as a basic collection of information that can serve as a baseline for some future comprehensive study that will systematically collect and study all available written sources. Major lacunae include, for example, the rich source material from the important newspaper *Atlantis* and its monthly magazine, archival sources from the schools themselves and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, American local and federal governmental archival information, and Greek government diplomatic reports etc... In fact, we have only been able to make sporadic use of accounts from Greek community newspapers such as the *National Herald*, *Proeni*, and the *Orthodox Observer* and only had very limited access to information from major and local community organizations such as the American Hellenic Education Progression Association (AHEPA) and Greek-American Progression Association (GAPA) through secondary sources.⁴

Nevertheless, we will argue that despite these serious limitations, the written sources surveyed reveal a pattern of common needs and proposed solutions that have been repeatedly proposed, yet, rarely acted upon or systematically implemented to make long term effective changes. These historical patterns of observations and recommendations need to be taken into account in any new proposals for structural reform and implementation. On the whole the majority of the needs and problems remain unresolved. Thus, it is not more surveys or studies that are needed but the effective implementation of recommendations repeatedly made. Finally, a brief addendum will also be added by Dr. John Spiridakis utilizing unique archival sources concerning the Greek government funded Paideia project in the 1990's and Greek bilingual education in NYC public schools in the 1980's based on the author's first-hand experience. Both impacted Greek language schools in the metropolitan NYC area and had national implications and they will be discussed in terms of their identification of problems and recommendations for changes as well.

In one of the earliest written accounts of the establishment of the Greek-American community (1913), Thomas Burgess, a non-Greek Protestant clergyman, mentions a need for funding and facilities for schools and remarks that the immigrant focus on preserving the Greek language for

⁴Demetrios J. Constantelos, ed., *Encyclicals and Documents of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America* (Patriarchal Institute For Patristic Studies: Thessaloniki: 1976) has published selections from the Archdiocese archives; see pp. 330-389, 64-659, 1090-1149, for those concerning education. Unfortunately, none of the reports concerning Greek American school problems are included. Most of the documents concern the Archdiocese's efforts to collect statistical information and school related celebrations.

their children will not prevent them from becoming good Americans.⁵ This observation surfaces the tension between preserving ethnic identity while at the same time enabling and supporting Americanization. Interestingly, Seraphim Canoutas (1918) who arguably provided the earliest detailed account of the existence of Greek schools states that up to 1912 there were only two to three schools in the United States and that between 1913-18, forty had been established. He makes no distinction between day and afternoon schools but clearly the latter are meant. The schools are mentioned as part of the list of newly established Greek Church communities he provides but unfortunately he does not mention any problems or recommendations concerning them.⁶ Similarly, J. P. Xenides, in his survey of the Greeks in America (1922) mentions the existence of one Greek American day school and implies that there are approximately 150 others attached to churches but does not discuss any needs or problems.⁷ I am certain that a survey of the Greek press for the first two decades of the twentieth century will yield information concerning the schools that Canoutas lists however, as I have pointed out above these sources were unavailable to me. An indication that this is indeed the case, is the next source presented which is both important and rich in details.

In 1926 Ioakeim Alexopoulos, the Bishop of Boston published a series of remarkable articles in the *National Herald* newspaper entitled: “The Dangers Facing Hellenism in America and the Means of Saving It,” a series which was also issued as a pamphlet.⁸ It is clear that the overall purpose of the series was to argue for a centralized Church which would unite communities and provide support to improve the quality of the clergy and other church related services in order to preserve Hellenic identity and the Orthodox faith. In it however, he also outlined many problems related to Greek schools education which can be summarized as the following, that:

- 1) children of mixed marriages are not being Hellenized and being rapidly assimilated;
- 2) churches and schools don't exist in many small cities and towns and even those in large cities are too far from where Greeks live;
- 3) the lack of any central authority means that church communities are divided along political and social lines and as a result scarce resources are wasted because two are established where only one is needed;
- 4) there is no mutual support among communities and too much power is in the hands of unqualified laymen who control the community;

⁵Burgess, *Greeks in America* 75-8. Thomas J. Lacy, *Our Greek Immigrants* (1916) does not mention the existence of any Greek schools.

⁶ Canoutas, *Ellenismos* 199-208. This number conflicts with the number of only fifteen community schools and one-hundred churches that is given in the *Panellenion Emerologion tou Etous 1918* [*PanHellenic Almanac*] (published by Steliou Paphite and Elia Varouchake, New York: 1918), 15.

⁷ J.P. Xenides, *The Greeks in America* (George A. Doran Company, New York: 1922) 108.

⁸ Ioakeim Alexopoulos, [Bishop of Boston] *Oi Kindynoi tou en Amerike Ellenismou kai ta mesa tes diasoseos autou* [*The Dangers Facing Hellenism in America and the Means of Saving It*] (reprinted from the *National Herald* Newspaper, Boston: September 1926).

- 5) Greek afternoon schools have poor schedules and facilities—lacking even heat and light—and use poor teaching methods;
- 6) Greek schools need educational materials to instill cultural pride and need to utilize music and pictures (more modern methods) to reach and motivate students;
- 7) the age levels in afternoon schools are mixed together and should extend to older ages.
- 8) there is a need for a Greek Youth organization to support what is done in school.
- 9) there is a need for trained Greek teachers who can bring some uniformity to instruction
- 10) a centralized church administration could make schools uniform, improve quality and unite scattered resources. [It is implied that financial resources are lacking and the schools are not being supported].

Given the number and range of issues identified, this 1926 listing can be considered as a kind of baseline going forward. In the analysis that follows and in our conclusions, I will refer to this list to help illustrate how the same or similar issues come up again and again in our written sources.

As is immediately evident, Bishop Alexopoulos identified many Greek school needs and problems only one of which, that of poor facilities had been mentioned previously by Burgess. All of the needs he identifies are fundamental, and as we will see, are repeated by subsequent writers. The solution for solving all of these problems according to the Bishop, is the creation of a centralized Greek Church structure that would unite communities and scattered resources and provide a standardized approach to education designed to promote the Greek language and preserve Hellenic identity and the faith. Although not explicitly stated, one must understand the context of the Greek communities at that time being addressed by Bishop Alexopoulos; his call for unity was being made during a period when the political divisiveness between Royalists and Venizelists was still rampant, and had divided Greek-Americans into warring camps whose lack of cooperation and mutual hostility even resulted in legal actions fought in American courts. In fact, during the First World War (WWI), the Greek monarchy was widely perceived to be pro-German and it was Venizelos who brought Greece into the war on the side of the United States. These political divisions during WWI continued after the war and played a major role in the catastrophic failure of Greece's pursuit of the Great Idea in Asia Minor up to 1923.⁹

In fact, this new Central Church authority, what is now the Greek Orthodox Church of America, was established in 1921 and was incorporated in New York the following year, however, when Bishop Alexopoulos wrote his series it was still in formation and had not won universal acceptance within Greek America. His call for unity and identification of problems was designed to win adherents and promote this new structure. Indeed, our next written source indicates that the newly formed Archdiocese prioritized educational needs and sought to address them.

⁹ Theodore Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, M.A.) 138-159, 185-209. For the impact on Church communities see pages 281-309. For a contemporary assessment concerning the Asia Minor Catastrophe, see: A. A. Pallis, *Greece's Anatolian Venture - and After. a Survey of the Diplomatic and Political Aspects of the Greek Expedition to Asia Minor* (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd: 1937).

With the enthronement of Archbishop Athenagoras as the leader of the newly established Greek Orthodox Church of North America in 1930, a new era for Greek-American education began.¹⁰ In 1931, Asterios Asteriou under the direction of the Archdiocese issued a report on the status of education and Greek schools.¹¹ In it, he identified the following needs and problems:

- 1) the creation of more day and afternoon schools to preserve ethnic and religious identity.
- 2) Greek language instruction needs to be in the spoken language
- 3) Books written for Greek-Americans need to be used instead of imported books from Greece
- 4) Better qualified Greek teachers for both day and afternoon schools
- 5) Better salaries and the offering of pensions for Greek teachers with community and Greek government support.
- 6) The need for a central Archdiocese Educational Council with local inspectors in order to monitor and improve school quality.

As is well known, Archbishop Athenagoras made education a priority and in fact, did create an Archdiocese Educational Council in 1931 and instituted a wide range of reforms in order to address many of the problems identified in Asteriou report and those earlier identified by Bishop Alexopoulos.¹² Once again the historical context is important particularly with regard to the focus of what version of Modern Greek was being taught. In fact, the issue of demotic (commonly spoken Greek) as opposed to more formal, puristic Greek (Katharevousa), was not only hotly debated at that time but continued to be an educational issue in Greece and the United States for the next half century.¹³

An invaluable example of how the new Archbishop attempted to address both the content and language issue for Greek schools is a copy of a kind of textbook or resource guide for Greek school teachers that was privately produced but endorsed by the Archbishop. It is entitled: “First Greek-American Children’s Anthology for the Greek children of America” written and compiled by Mime Demetriou in New York in 1935. It is 157 pages long and contains what are presented as unique texts written especially for the Greek American context—that is poems, monologues, dialogues, comedies, dramas, letters and songs...¹⁴ Among the many items is a two act play entitled: “The Greek School in America: A New Era—A New System—For Home and

¹⁰ George Papaioannou, From Mars Hill to Manhattan: The Greek Orthodox Church in America Under Patriarch Athenagoras I (Light and Life Publishing Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota: 1976).

¹¹ The Asterios Steriou report of 1931 is summarized by Lagios, “The Development of Greek American Education,” 47-53.

¹² Papaioannou, From Mars Hill to Manhattan 141-3.

¹³ Concerning the so-called language question, see: Linos Polites, A History of Modern Greek Literature (Oxford University Press: 1973) 10-14.; Peter Mackridge, The Modern Greek Language (Oxford University Press: 1985) pp. 6-11.

¹⁴ Mime Demetriou, Prote Elleno-Amerikanike Paidike Anthologia dia ta Ellenopoula tes Amerikies (New York: 1935). The copywrite is 1935 by James Demetrius.

School.”¹⁵ The play is focused around two mothers one who sends her child to a poor old fashioned Greek afternoon school which her son hates—and another mother who sends her son to a more modern Greek school which her son loves and finds highly effective. The language of the dialogue is interesting because it contains many English and “Grekenlish” words and is written in a kind of mixture of demotic and puristic Greek (what is sometimes called *kathomiloumene*).¹⁶

In the unpopular school, students are punished using corporal punishment and the teacher is very strict, old fashioned, uses puristic Greek and does not engage the students in ways which help them understand that learning the Greek language and modern Greek culture and history is useful in America. In fact, this school is largely modelled on the methods and culture of schools in Greece and is so burdensome that most of the students are alienated from Greek language and culture. Rote memorization and grammar is prized and students are not encouraged or rewarded. On the other hand, in the popular Greek afternoon school, the teacher engages the students by singing songs and making learning fun and interesting. English is used as well as spoken Greek during the lessons and connections are made between Greek language and culture and America. In fact, specific examples are given to show that a knowledge of Greek language and culture is useful and valued in American public school. Students are given incentives like money to buy ice cream and fruits and other treats are available during class. Corporal punishment is not used and the students are eager to come to Greek afternoon school because it is fun and connects them with their culture and each other. In the last scene the mother of the unpopular Greek school child takes him to her friend’s Greek school even though it is further away because it will encourage him to preserve his language and culture. In this school play we have a contemporary example of how the Archdiocese hoped to reform Greek American school and how many of the existing schools were perceived.

Some similar problems/issues that Alexopoulos and Asteriou identify in their reports include are: the need for more schools; 2) the need for better quality Greek books and instructional materials; the need for better trained teachers. The issue of a lack of financial resources is implied by Alexopoulos since he highlights the poor facilities the schools are using and that resources are being divided among competing Church communities serving the same geographic areas. Before, turning to the question of whether the creation of a central authority solved these identified problems/issues, let us turn to another written source from the same period.

Manoles A. Triantaphylides was one of the pre-eminent scholars of modern Greek of his day. He was a professor at the University of Thessaloniki and one of the leaders of the pro-demotic or Greek vernacular movement in Greek education. In 1939 he visited the United States and as one

¹⁵ “To Ellenikon Scholeion En Amerike: Nea Epoche—Neon Systema—Eis to Spito kai Eis to Scholeion.”

¹⁶ Very little serious work has been written on the language of Greek immigrants in America. The classic study is the dissertation by James E. Alatis, “The American English Pronunciation of Greek Immigrants: A Study in Language Contact with Pedagogical Implications (Ohio State University: 1966). For a collection of words and texts and a discussion of Greek immigrant language, see: Steve Demakopoulos, (New York: 2000).

would expect, he made a point of visiting as many Greek schools as he could throughout the country. Fortunately, he published his observations in the text of a lengthy lecture on his travels to America.¹⁷ Not surprisingly, he noted the need for instruction in demotic Greek in the schools and for instructional materials designed to promote the spoken language, which was also identified in the Asteriou report. He also identified several other issues: the need for standardization of instructional materials and methods; the need for teacher training with an emphasis on the living language instead of memorization, the need for teachers and students to visit Greece in order to reinforce their learning; special instructional materials for students who don't speak Greek at home and differentiated materials for all others according to age groups; and finally he argued for a formal system to review teacher quality. Like others, Triantaphylides felt that Greek Americans should implement a unified, patriotic approach to solve these problems involving private support, the Church and the Greek government.

Many of the same issues had also been highlighted in an earlier article on education in the Archdiocese's publication the *Orthodox Observer* in 1935, which added the need for increases in teacher salaries, a standardized curriculum and the creation of a data system on the number and kinds of Greek schools.¹⁸ Under Archbishop Athenagoras Greek education became a priority. He issued two education focused encyclicals, one in 1931 and another in 1941, which created a Archdiocese Supreme Board of Education and led to the founding of the Saint Basil Teachers Academy in 1944.¹⁹ The Board was to provide the centralized leadership that had been envisioned and Saint Basil's was focused on improving teacher quality. Additionally, there was a significant investment of resources with the result that the number of Greek schools expanded from 284 in 1932 to 450 in 1937.²⁰ What is especially remarkable is that Athenagoras' encyclical even advocated for the creation of Greek afternoon schools in communities which had no Greek Orthodox Church.²¹

Nevertheless, despite these gains and significant reforms, when Babis Malaphouris, a journalist and community leader, wrote his detailed history of the Greek American community in 1948, he noted that several problems persisted; among these were the need for schools designed for the

¹⁷ Triantaphyllide, Manoles, A., *Ellenes tes Amerikes: Mia omilia* [The Greeks of America: A Lecture] (Athens: 1952) pp. 26-37, 61, 63-71, 91-3. Concerning his life and work see: Stavros Kambourides, *Viographies Ellenon Logotechnon* [Biographies of Greek Writers] (Pella, Athens: 1978) 163.

¹⁸ Cited in Spyros D. Orphanos and Sam Temberis, "A Needs Assessment of Greek American Schools in New York City," in *Education and Greek Americans: Process and Prospects* edited by Spyros D. Orphanos, et. al., (New York: Pella Publishing: 1987) 186-7.

¹⁹ Concerning St. Basil's Academy see Lagios, "The Development of Greek American Education," 204-243, and the Ph.D. dissertation by Fevronia K. Soumakis, "A Sacred Paideia: The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Immigration, and Education in New York City, 1959-1979," (Columbia University: 2015), 122-157.

²⁰ Papaioanou, *From Mars Hill to Manhattan* 147-151.

²¹ George Papaioanou, *The Odyssey of Hellenism in America* (Patriarchal Institute For Patristic Studies: Thessaloniki: 1985) 391. It is interesting to note that in the author's brief account of Greek language schools he acknowledges the failures of Archbishop Iakovos' predecessors and claims that under this Archbishop the Greek schools are undergoing a renaissance without indicating that any specific problems were resolved, see pp. 392-3.

American not the Greek environment, and the lack of effective educational methods and materials focused on the living language capable of engaging Greek-American students.²² Although the financial issues especially the lack of facilities and low teacher salaries are not specifically mentioned, it is certain that these persisted and that the Archdiocese and Greek government had not created a structure of monetary support in collaboration with the Church based communities that housed the existing day and afternoon schools. That this was indeed the case, was also stated in two Archdiocese related commentators also from 1948, the first by Professor Basil Blassopoulos found the schedules of Greek afternoon schools were a problem because students were tired, that their teachers were ill prepared, and that the textbooks were poor and did not meet student needs; the second commentator professor B. Ahlades, writing in the *Orthodox Observer* summed up the situation by questioning whether there had been any improvement in Greek American educational system at all.²³

Our written sources for the decade of the 1950's consist of two histories of the Church by Archdiocese insiders and a travel account by a prominent Greek academic.²⁴ It is not surprising that Basil Zoustis, an administrator and Peter Kourides, a legal advisor, who worked for the Archdiocese for many years do not concentrate on problems. In fact they clearly feel that the Archdiocese offers the Greek community high quality educational programs and that its education department has been successful in dealing with most school needs. Nevertheless, Zoustis recognizes several persistent needs: 1) the need for a uniform system of teaching, 2) a centralization of school standards, 3) better qualified teachers, and 4) a lack of uniform and high quality instructional materials. Kourides adds that afternoon and day schools continue to need more funding and better facilities. The information provided by these two insiders indicates that although progress had been made with the creation of an Archdiocese centralized educational department and establishment of the St. Basil's Teachers Academy in 1944, there was still a lack of qualified Greek school teachers and uniform curriculum and teaching standards. Apparently the long standing fiscal issues, that is, the lack of funds and proper school facilities, persist. Concerning instructional materials, Elias Ziogas, a prominent Greek intellectual who visited several schools, observed that although some of the new instructional materials produced by the Archdiocese were good, that was still a critical need for educational materials designed for Greek-Americans and the American context. He also adds that many schools were still teaching purified Greek instead of the demotic spoken language. Obviously, a centralized Church

²²Mpampe Malaphoure, *Ellenes tes Amerikes 1528-1948 [Babis Mapafouris, The Greeks of America]* (Issac Goldman Company, New York: 1948 pp. 188-190, 340-343. A translation of a small portion of his book appeared in the *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, vol. XIV, nos. 1 & 2 (Spring-Summer, 1987), 79-104.

²³ Lagios, "The Development of Greek American Education," 64-5.

²⁴ Vasileiou Th. Zouste, *O en Amerike Ellenismos kai e drasis autou [Hellenism in America and Its Accomplishments]* (New York: 1954), 238-244; Peter T. Kourides, *The Evolution of the Greek Orthodox Church in America and Its Present Problems* (Cosmos Greek-American Printing Co., New York: 1959); 43-44; Elias, K., Ziogas, *O Ellenismos tes Amerikes: Autos o agnostos [The Hellenism of America: Its Unknown Aspects]* (Athens: E.A. P.A.: 1958). Pp. 97 -101.

establishment was not the solution to the meeting the needs of its Greek schools as Bishop Alexopoulos and others had hoped.

Our discussion of the decade of the 1960's suffers from a lack of primary sources, although I am certain that there must be newspaper, travel accounts and other documents that were not accessible to us. This decade also saw the enthronement of a new Archbishop Iakovos in 1959, who was to become the longest serving leader of the Archdiocese and who was very effective in raising the profile of the Church within the American national scene. In fact, it was under Iakovos that Greek Orthodoxy was recognized as a major American faith. Iakovos himself, played an important role in national politics such as the Civil Rights movement and American foreign policy towards Greece.²⁵ He also served as president of the World Council of Churches and was active in U.S. politics. Like his predecessors, Archbishop Iakovos made the reform and expansion of Greek afternoon and day schools a priority during the 1960's. This was also a period of new Greek immigration which helped support the building and expansion of the Archdiocese educational network of schools. In fact, Archbishop Iakovos reported that in 1964 there were 14 day schools and 515 afternoon schools (there were 358 in 1956).²⁶ The limited success of the Greek teachers preparatory program also led to the Archbishop's attempt to have it accredited as a teachers college, an effort which was unfortunately never succeeded.²⁷ The solution implemented later of incorporating the program into Hellenic College was also unsuccessful and did not solve the ongoing problem of preparing teachers for Greek American schools.²⁸

According to Archdiocese archival information quoted in Fevronia Soumakis' dissertation, in 1962 a report on education was prepared by Phillipos Emmanuel and the Church's Educational Committee for the Church-Laity Congress of that year. The problems identified were familiar—the lack of modern educational practices similar to those of American schools; a lack of extracurricular activities integrating both the American and Greek curricular programs; a need for uniformity and standardization of the educational programs; low teacher salaries, difficulties in attracting the best teachers; and a continued lack of funding which resulted in facilities. Thus, despite the great expansion of schools and increased immigration from Greece the familiar issues of the past continued. In order to address the lack of uniform standards the Church's department of education issued handbooks, new resources and guides however, these did not solve the

²⁵ Rev. Miltiades B. Efthimiou and George A. Christopoulos, History of the Greek Orthodox Church in America (Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America, New York: 1984) treats many aspects of Archbishop Iakovos' administration of the Church. See the chapter by Emmanuel Hatzimmanuel, "Greek Education and Learning in the Iakovian Era," pp. 260-70, concerning Greek schools. The best statistical account of Greek afternoon and day schools circa 1965 can be found in the appendix to Lagios, "The Development of Greek American Education," 269-296. For a recent assessment of his political actions, see: Athanasios Grammenos, "Political advocacy along ethnic and national lines: the case of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America," (SEESOX Diaspora Working Paper Series No. 9, University of Oxford: August 2019)

²⁶ Lagios, "The Development of Greek American Education," 72-4.

²⁷ Lagios, "The Development of Greek American Education," 232, 234-6.

²⁸ See the detailed assessment by Soumakis, "A Sacred Paideia," 153-8.

problem. Similarly, in order to address the financial problems an increase in community subsidies was proposed and a central amount was initially provided, however these were soon discontinued.²⁹

The early 1960's also saw the publication of Theodore Saloutos' detailed history of the Greek-American community. This groundbreaking study is still indispensable and is full of insights into many aspects of the institutions generations of Greek immigrants established in their new home. Unfortunately, Saloutos did not devote much attention to Greek schools. He did however, document a few familiar problems; the poor schedule and facilities of afternoon schools, the lack of funding in general and the lack of qualified teachers most of whom were Greek born. He also noted that unlike in Greece, the schools in America are controlled by the Church and that many parents do not support them to the degree they should.³⁰ Once again, the familiar problems of the past persisted and remained unresolved.

Documentary sources for the 1970's have been accessed largely through the Lagios and Soumakis dissertations. This decade, given the expansion of Greek immigration, should have led to an increase of both the number of Greek schools and the community resources devoted to them. Although there was a significant increase in the number of day schools and the building of new facilities, on the whole many of the problems of the past continued unresolved.³¹ One factor which had an impact was the establishment of public school Greek bilingual education programs in large urban centers, especially New York and Chicago. These programs now offered a free alternative to the traditional Greek afternoon and day schools that proved attractive to many parents.³² Nevertheless, Lagios reported that the number of Greek day schools had grown to 19 by the school year 1975-6.³³ Soumakis noted that a 1970 Report from the Archdiocese Committee on Parochial schools highlighted familiar needs such as revising teacher education requirements, salary scales, curricula and the need for books.

Some progress however, was in fact made during the 1970's. In New York City a significant success was that in 1972 the Archdiocese was able to have the NYS Education Department recognize Modern Greek as a language that could be awarded high school NYS Regents credit and developed a three year Modern Greek Language syllabus for high schools. This achievement has lasted over time and hundreds of students have been able to gain high school credit for their command of Modern Greek. Additionally, the Archdiocese published a series of Greek language and culture books to meet the needs of Greek American schools instead of relying on materials

²⁹ Soumakis, "A Sacred Paideia," 98-100.

³⁰ Saloutos, *The Greeks* 72-4.

³¹ Peter C. Moskos and Charles C. Moskos, *Greek Americans* (Transaction Publishers, New Jersey: 2014) 75-81; Constantine Hatzidimitriou, "Greeks" in *The Encyclopedia of New York City* ed. By Kenneth Jackson, (Yale University Press: 1995), 503-4.

³² John Spiridakis, "Greek Bilingual Education: Policies and Possibilities," in Spyros D. Orfanos, Harry J. Psomiadis and John Spiridakis, eds., *Education and Greek Americans: Process and Prospects* (Pella Publishing, New York: 1987) 73-81.

³³ Lagios, "The Development of Greek American Education," 294.

from Greece or private publishers. Also noteworthy was an internal report in 1975 by Michael A Catsimatides which indicated that teacher qualifications had improved because of the work of the St. Basil's Academy and that the day schools were following state education standards.

The local press was not as positive as the Catsimatides report however, and the *National Herald* in 1978 reported that day and afternoon schools still had many unqualified teachers and that some day schools in New York were led by non-Greeks who could not support the language and culture needs of their communities.³⁴ Nevertheless, data from New York City Greek Day schools indicated that many of their graduates outperformed their public school peers on standardized tests. Another noteworthy achievement during this period was that the Greek Ministry of Education recognized the service of Greek language teachers in the day schools and granted them a publicly funded pension. Unfortunately, this long sought after achievement did not last and was eventually done away with.³⁵ It may be that the greatest success of the decade was the establishment in 1970 of a summer camp for Greek-American youth named Ionian Village in the Peloponnese. This facility and its educational program has provided Greek schools and communities with the ability to send children who have not been to Greece to visit the homeland and structured experience that has reinforced Greek language and culture. The program appears to have been highly successful with hundreds of alumni, and should be the subject of a detailed study. It is a good example of what can be achieved if systematic funding, consistent supervision, and targeting a specific need is focused upon. By the end of the 1970s however, the Director of the Archdiocese's school system highlighted the same basic familiar problems, the shortage of qualified Greek teachers, the lack of adequate funding, and the low salary scales especially for Greek teachers.³⁶ The same individual continued to call attention to these problems during the 1980's.

Emmanuel Hatzimmanuel served as the Archdiocese's Director of Education from 1968 until 1989, longer than anyone who has held that post. We have already noted the problems he highlighted through the studies of Lagios and Soumakis. For the 1980's however, we were able to directly access two of his publications from 1980 and 1982, which add some additional issues. He noted that there was a lack of support of Greek community schools by its intelligentsia and that they were rarely supported by Greek academics with university affiliations and resources. Similarly, he also noted that financial support from wealthy Greek-Americans was largely lacking and that the Greek government provided limited and sporadic support. Interestingly, despite his long tenure as the system's central educational leader, he also highlighted that a lack

³⁴ Soumakis, "A Sacred Paideia," 108-116.

³⁵ The Greek government also added education staff to its consulates and embassy and sponsored seminars and travel to Greece for teachers from Greek-American schools. Although documentary information was not available, it appears that much of this support significantly decline or disappeared by the mid-1990'

³⁶ Soumakis, "A Sacred Paideia," 117-120.

of centralization compromised school quality and made schools dependent upon the whims of local church boards.³⁷

In addition to Hatziemmanuel we were able to access several detailed written sources for the 1980's. Constantine Tsirpanlis, a journalist, ethnic leader, and academic, visited several Greek schools and incorporated his observations into his research on Greek-American history and culture. Like others before him he noted: 1) a need for professional teaching staff; 2) a need for improved instructional methods incorporating technology; 3) a need for targeted professional development for Greek teachers; 4) that school facilities were poor and needed improvement; 5) a lack of financial support by community leaders; 6) that Greek school instruction needed to be reinforced by the home; 7) that Church control of schools was problematic; and 8) that many schools lacked quality books and libraries. Most of these needs and problems were also included in the study of NYC Greek schools published by Spyros D. Orfanos and Sam Tsemberis who added the often repeated need for increased teacher salaries, the need for the use of new technologies, and the differentiation of instruction to better meet the diverse needs of Greek school students.³⁸

In September 10-12th 1988, the newspaper *Proine* published a detailed survey of Greek schools in New York City in a special weekend edition insert based on school visits and interviews. For the first time, Greek language programs in the public schools being offered were also included an indication that they had grown in importance and influence.³⁹ Three different journalists contributed to this survey and identified various problems/issues that they highlighted needed to be addressed. Most if not all had been previously identified and once again remained unresolved. The most significant were that: 1) Greek children were caught between two cultures and needed special attention to address this need; 2) tuition varied from school to school and grade levels; 3) with the exception of one Brooklyn day school technology was not integrated into instruction; 4) there was no uniformity among teacher knowledge or preparation or the books being used; 5) the American environment discouraged the use of Greek and immigrant parents did not encourage speaking Greek at home because they needed to learn English; 6) new immigrant children were in the same English classes as American born students; 7) more instruction on Greek culture was needed instead of only language; 8) there was a lack of qualified Greek teachers because of the closure of the Saint Basil's Academy program; 9) in-service training for teachers were needed; 10) there is a need for books specifically for Greek-Americans; 11) there was a need for parent

³⁷ Emmanuel Hatziemmanuel, Skopoi, epidioxeis kai epiteugmata tes Ellenikes paideias tou en Amerike Ellenismou [Purpose, Goals and Achievements of Greek Education in America] (Athens: 1980); Emmanuel Hatziemmanuel, "Hellenic Orthodox Education in America," in Harry J. Psomiades and Alice Scourby eds., The Greek American Community in Transition (Pella Publishing, New York: 1982) pp. 181-89.

³⁸ Kostantinos N. Tsirpanlis and M. Savvides, Agnostes selides tes istorias tou Ellenismou tes Amerikes [Unknown Pages of the History of American Hellenism] vol. 1 (New York: 1983) pp. 230-5; Spyros D. Orfanos and Sam Tsemberis, "A Needs Assessment of Greek American Schools in New York City," in in Spyros D. Orfanos, Harry J. Psomiades and John Spiridakis, eds., Education and Greek Americans: Process and Prospects (Pella Publishing, New York: 1987) 185-203.

³⁹ As we have already mentioned, Dr. Spiridakis will discuss their impact elsewhere in this study.

outreach and additional support; 12) local community boards continue to hire teachers who do not meet Archdiocese guidelines; 13) the Archdiocese's education department failed to supervise schools, for example some of the principals did not know Greek, were not Orthodox and were unable to meet school cultural needs; and 14) many schools lacked financial resources. The only positive developments identified were that the Greek government was taking a more active role than in the past. For example, with its support, summer programs for Greek students and teachers were being offered and some Greek day schools were being provided with Greek teachers paid by the government. The survey also noted however, that there were declining enrollments due to the slowing of immigration from Greece and a lack of parental outreach to recruit new American born students.⁴⁰

In order to address the often repeated need for the use of new technologies, the Archdiocese finally launched a new educational initiative during this decade. Based in a new facility in Astoria Queens in NYC, Yiannis Simonides, a former NYU professor of Theatre Arts and an active member of the Greek community, helped initiate GoTelecom which produced a series of original video programs on Greek language and culture. Many of these were of high quality and involved academic, political and cultural Greek community leaders and dealt with issues of assimilation, education, religion, social problems and other perceived needs. Topics on Greek history and culture were also included and this author participated in and organized an award winning program on the Greek Revolution involving several prominent Greek-American academics. A thirteen part series entitled: "The Greek Community Today" contained at least two programs that focused on education, one called "The Primacy of Learning," featuring Mary Bucouvaris teacher of the year 1989, Dr. Fotios Litsas and Dr. Spyros Orphanos, and another called "From Dolmades to Dukakis," featuring Dr. Alice Scourby, Dr. Charles Moskos, and Reverend Karloutsos.⁴¹ Also noteworthy was a first of its kind video series called the "Hellenic Company," designed to teach young children Greek in a fun and "Sesame Street" type modality which included Saint Basil's Academy as a venue. These videos were distributed and used by Greek Schools, communities and Churches throughout the United States and many continue to be seen on the internet.⁴² The initiative however, was short-lived and declined during the 1990's with the departure of Simonides and changes in the Archdiocese administration. Although, occasional programs continued to be produced and distributed the systematic initiatives begun were not continued and built upon.

⁴⁰ Panos Papanikolaou, Maria Zesiade, Takes Karpoutzoglou and Giannes Lapatsanes eds., *Proine* newspaper: Evdomada insert, (Saturday-Sunday, September 10-12, 1988) [detailed overview of NY Greek Schools including public schools that offer Greek language].

⁴¹ *GoTelecom Video Catalog* circa 1989 page 10. From my private collection. The videos need to be preserved and studied as do the many Greek television programs that were aired during the 1960's and beyond.

⁴² Concerning GoTelecom see: www.gotel.goarch.org . We know of no study of its impact and history and urge some future researcher to conduct one. My comments are based on my participation in its programs during the 1980s and interaction with Yiannis Simonides and Aristide Caratzas who was on the GoTelecom board. I recall that there was at least one video program specifically on Greek Schools and education. Unfortunately, this program and others were unavailable to me.

The newspaper *Proine* continued to provide its readers with insights into the conditions of Greek schools in the NYC area into the 1990's.⁴³ In 1992, the newspaper published what appears to be the most detailed survey of the Greek schools in the NYC area ever attempted. It is implied that this was done because of a perceived crisis which probably reflects conditions elsewhere in the United States. For example, in one weekend edition it detailed the economic problems of St. Demetrius Day School of Astoria, the largest Greek school outside of Greece, which was having difficulties paying its mortgage because of declining enrollment which also forced it to charge high tuition. Once again, an endowment or some central fund to support Greek schools was called for. In fact, the problem of declining enrollments was highlighted for all the Greek schools, both day and afternoon, in the NYC area in this survey which contained detailed statistics for each one including some financial information. The many details given cannot be fully outlined here but suffice it to note that once again the familiar problems of poor facilities, low teacher wages and the need for instructional materials designed for Greek Americans were highlighted by the many educators, parents and students interviewed. The problem of low teacher wages was not limited to the Greek departments, but several interviewees mentioned that many non-Greek English language teachers were leaving because of low wages. This situation existed, despite the fact that the Greek government was providing free Greek books and funding Greek teacher pensions at that time.⁴⁴ A notable achievement was the Greek government had recognized a grade equivalency for students transferring from Greek school programs to schools in Greece. Saint Nicholas, which had grown as immigrant families moved to the suburbs was no exception to declining enrollments. Its size and facilities however, enabled it to differentiate instruction among Greek speakers in new ways that led to more effective instruction.

We suspect that in order to illustrate the enrollment crisis, the writers published historical enrollment information for each day school.⁴⁵ Because this publication is not easily available we will cite the statistics given below fully acknowledging that they may contain omissions:

- 1) Saint Demetrius School of Astoria including the Saint Catherine annex: 1974 (725); 1977 (1010); 1980 (1400); 1991 (860); 1992 (750).
- 2) Three Hierarchs of Brooklyn: 1985 (175); 1990 (150); 1992 (100).

⁴³ Adam, Michale, et.al., *Proine* newspaper Series on Research on Greek Schools, October 3-4, 1992 (pp. 17-20); October 5, 1992 (pp.14-5); October 6, 1992 (pp. 14-16); October 7, 1992 (pp.14-15); October 10, 1992 (pp. 14-15); September 28th,1992. Extensive research and interviews with administrators, teachers, parents and teachers of all the Greek schools in New York City.

⁴⁴ A lengthy interview with the education officer of the Greek Consulate of NY is also included in the series.

⁴⁵ In the same issue, Constantine Parthenis, the highly respected and long serving Assistant principal of the Greek department of Saint Demetrius of Astoria was interviewed and stated that the number of afternoon school students nationally was approximately 30,000. For many years, the Archdiocese Yearbooks contained enrollment information for every Greek school—which was the case into the 1990's. We do not know when this was ended. The statistics for the NYC schools listed in the newspaper could be verified and added to by surveying this yearbook source. After our research was completed, Dr. Demosthenes Triantaphylou, the first principal of St. Demetrius High School made us aware of some recommendations he made that were published in the newspaper. Most of these, repeat what had been already noted in past and subsequent studies.

- 3) Koimises tes Theotokou of Brooklyn: 1974 (292); 1987 (200); 1991 (222); 1992 (245).
- 4) Saint Demetrius of Jamaica: 1974 (380); 1980 (450); 1990 (225); 1992 (175).
- 5) Metamorphosis of Corona: 1975 (305); 1986 (74); 1990 (150); 1992 (151).
- 6) Cathedral School in Manhattan: 1973 (215); 1987 (51); 1990 (110); 1992 (125).
- 7) Saint Spiridon in Manhattan: 1973 (280); 1990 (138); 1991 (103); 1992 (80).
- 8) Timiou Stavrou of Brooklyn: 1987: (235); 1990 (200); 1992: (194).
- 9) Constantine and Helen of Brooklyn: 1973 (308); 1980 (220); 1990 (140); 1992 (135).
- 10) Saint Nicholas of Flushing: 1977: (42); 1985: (425); 1990: (365); 1992: (354).
- 11) Greek American Institute in the Bronx: 1960: (450); 1975 (200); 1990 (170); 1992 (154).

The list above, although certainly incomplete, illustrates a pattern of declining enrollments which probably reflects a similar situation in other Greek communities throughout the United States. The number of persons interviewed and range of topics discussed in the newspaper *Proine* series is so rich in information that it may very well merit a separate study as a “snapshot” of Greek school perceptions and issues at that time. We have only “scratched the surface” in this brief overview.

To a great extent the issues we have noted above from the newspaper *Proine* are noted in the study by Eva Konstantellou published three years later. Despite the fact that the article appeared in a Archdiocese related publication, she notes that too much power is in the hands of the Church Councils and that governance continues to be a problem. Low teacher pay, declining student enrollments, a reduction of classroom time devoted to teaching Greek in day schools, and a lack of modern teaching methods and materials are highlighted. For the first time, the problem of a lack of ethnic diversity in Greek day schools is mentioned which up to this point has been considered a strength reinforcing ethnic identity. As others have done in the past, Kosstantellou suggested the consolidation of Greek schools and programs in order to increase their student numbers and focus limited funds for their support.⁴⁶

To some degree, the 1990’s could be considered as a decade of crisis for Greek schools. That this was indeed a reality, is highlighted by the fact that Spyridon, the first Greek-American Archbishop, organized a national Commission on Greek Language and Culture sometime prior to March 1998, to study the problems and propose solutions. Chaired by John A. Rassias, a prominent academic from Dartmouth College, the Commission included 25 other prominent Greek-Americans from academia, the public sector, business and politics. The group’s mission was described in an issue of the *Orthodox Observer* in early April which also highlighted familiar issues such as: a lack of professional development for Greek teachers and incentives to improve their skills, that school volunteers were rarely rewarded and/or recognized, that teachers and students were not given opportunities to experience Greece; that language studies were not

⁴⁶ Eva Konstantellou, “Greek-American Day Schools in the Context of U.S. Educational Multiculturalism: History, Present State, and Future Prospects,” in *Studies in Honor of His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos* edited by N.M. Vaporis, (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Press: 1995) pp. 379-388.

integrated with cultural content, and that technology was not being integrated into instruction.⁴⁷ Chairman Rassias called the effort “a big stakes operation... we don’t want our heritage to die.. our ethnic identity is at stake..” He also said that “I want to create the first national open forum for the first time ever... the purpose is to make the public aware of what is happening in our schools and why the attendance in our Greek schools is decreasing.” The Commission was to issue a report in one year and include information from thousands of people. This scope and number of prominent members of the Commission was unprecedented and indicates how serious the Archdiocese viewed the Greek schools crisis and how committed it was to uncovering causes and promoting solutions.

The Archbishop’s Commission on Greek language and Hellenic Culture issued its report on May 27, 1999, which was published in booklet format of 110 pages with the revealing title of: “The Future of the Greek Language and Culture in the United States: Survival in the Diaspora.” The report was organized in three Parts each having three sections. The problems/issues identified found that:

Part I

- 1) Attitudes exist that undermine the vibrant, joyful instruction of Greek, because:
 - Archdiocese and many priests do not consider Greek education a priority
 - Many priests do not speak Greek and do not promote Hellenic culture in mixed communities
 - Greek teachers do not feel supported or valued by the system and parents; this lack of support results in less hours of Greek instruction.
 - Mixed student levels in classrooms create self-esteem problems and a lack of adequate instructional materials resulting in a lack of motivation to learn Greek.
- 2) Parents: A disappointingly small percentage of Greek-American parents send their children to Greek school and maintain the Greek language at home, because of
 - Increase of mixed marriages leads to smaller and smaller percentage of families who value speaking Greek and reinforce it in the home.
 - Distances to schools and high tuitions
 - Lack of systematic and effective parental outreach to promote the advantages of bilingualism.
- 3) Organization: The schools suffer from a lack of coordination among themselves and with the public school system, because of:

⁴⁷ Eleni Daniels, “Archbishop’s Commission on Greek Language and Culture,” in *Orthodox Observer*, April 5, 1998, p. 6. The same article indicates that the Archdiocesan community school system consisted of 19 Greek American parochial day schools serving about 4,400 students and 281 afternoon schools with an enrollment of nearly 20,000. One should note that Constantine Parthenis stated that the afternoon schools had an enrollment of about 30,000 in 1992.

- little cooperation between schools and communities to solve local problems and needs.
- too many schools resulting in a waste of local resources the creation of barriers that do not promote student enrollment and do not co-sponsor extracurricular activities.
- varied instructional levels and quality which do not meet public or take advantage of public school educational resources and standards.

Part II

- 4) Curriculum: There is a paucity of articulated curricula that would enable a better progression from lower to higher grades and allow students to sit for a common examination. There is also a significant underutilization of literature in the curriculum.
- 5) Educational materials. Greek schools need more and better educational materials, their books and ancillary materials do not always match what is available in French, Spanish, Japanese, etc. Materials that may have been appropriate in the past are now outdated. Children's needs and circumstances have changed. Some of the books employed fail to relate to American ways and are particularly inappropriate for students from mixed marriages.
- 6) Pedagogy. Greek parochial schools need to match the public schools and other schools in their awareness of diverse and effective methodologies. Especially needed are strategies to de-emphasize grammar and to teach Greek as a foreign language.

Part III

- 7) Teacher Preparation: found that many Greek teachers were unprepared and received little or no effective training, because:
 - it is assumed native Greek speakers can teach Greek without training
 - the available training is lectures and does not use modern instructional methods
 - many of the teachers are from Greece and do not understand American culture and Greek-American student needs
- 8) Compensation: found that there is a critical shortage of Greek teachers, because
 - the salaries are grossly inadequate, and a lack of health insurance and retirement benefits.
 - a lack of moral support and recognition
 - the requirements to obtain a pension from Greece are rarely met.
- 9) Finances: found that most Greek schools lack financial resources, because:
 - there is a lack of shared responsibility between the Archdiocese, the community and the Greek government
 - most communities do not engage in adequate fund raising to support their school.

The report also contained seventy-three recommendations to be implemented on the national or local level, for improvement in the above categories. On the whole they contained sound detailed suggestions but very few new ideas. In fact, the Commission report points to the same familiar problems that have been repeatedly surfaced in the many other written sources we have outlined in our historical survey. It is especially interesting to compare the problems and issues identified to those mentioned over 70 years earlier in 1926 by Ioakeim Alexopoulos, the Bishop of Boston. Like Bishop Alexopoulos, the Commission called for decisive action and warned that Hellenism's survival in the American diaspora was at risk and that Greek identity may be lost in less than a generation. The main difference between the two calls for action is that Alexopoulos argued that identity could be maintained without a knowledge of Greek while the Commission stated that knowledge of the Greek language was crucial to its survival.⁴⁸ It appears that none of the recommendations were ever acted upon. The main reason for this may be that Archbishop Spyridon was replaced in August 1999, barely three months after the report was completed.

That the Greek Schools crisis of the 1990's was perceived to be very serious is also indicated by another report, this one over 300 pages, also issued in 1999, which was international in scope. With funds from the Greek government, the University of Crete conducted a survey and study of Greek schools in Australia, Canada, the United States, Germany, Argentina, Sweden, Great Britain, and Russia-Georgia-Ukraine.⁴⁹ Dr. John Spiridakis was the U.S. project coordinator, and Dr. Hatzidimitriou participated in research and professional development activities in the NYC area. Spiridakis will discuss the Paideia project findings in the addendum presented below, however it is worth noting that many of the same issues surfaced in the Archdiocese's report and our earlier written sources were repeated. Similarly, it appears that the recommendations of this report were also never acted upon, and were in fact not greatly differentiated for each nation and culture studied.

There is evidence that the decline of Greek schools continued into the new century. In 2005, Hellenic Link, a non-profit organization of Greek-American academics based in the northeast, published a "Hellenic Education Plan for America," founded on research conducted by a special education committee drawn from its members. The opening paragraph of this Plan stated that:

The malaise that Hellenic education suffers from is a function of adverse conditions faced by the Greek language and culture schools, schools that are attached to local churches.

These conditions generally include a) a lack of adequate material as well as psychological

⁴⁸ John A. Rassias, Peter Bien, et. al., The Future of the Greek Language and Culture in the United States: Survival In the Diaspora. A Report From the Archbishop's Commission on Greek Language and Hellenic Culture (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, New York: 1999).

⁴⁹ Michales Damanakes, Paideia Omogenon: Theoretikes kai empeirikes proeggiseis: Synolike ekthese-melete tes epistemonikes epitropes tou Panepistemiou Kretes [Theoretical and Practical Approaches: A Comprehensive Study of the Academic Commission of the University of Crete, E. DIA.M.ME.,: Rethimo: 1999).

support, by the local churches and their parishes, b) meager and/or ineffective support from Greece, 3) a lack of language teacher availability, d) textbooks not meeting the needs of Greek American children and youth, e) lack of vertical and horizontal coordination in the school curriculum, f) little use of modern instructional methods and new technologies in the classroom. A significant result of these adversities is the gradual reduction of students enrolled in Greek parochial schools.⁵⁰

As is immediately apparent all of the problems identified above had been repeatedly discussed and called for resolution by all the previous observers and investigators we have presented. The plan also called for a close collaboration between the Archdiocese's school system and Modern Greek studies programs based at major universities throughout the United States something which has yet to take place. The document also contains an important list of Greek-American Day school fiscal deficits which show how the enrollment crisis had impacted the resources of these schools. Like its predecessors, *Hellenic Link* made specific recommendations for action most of which have yet to be implemented.⁵¹

The earlier investigative reporting of the *Proine* newspaper was continued into the new century by the *National Herald*. As in the past, special supplements on Greek education as well as community news stories contain valuable information concerning the status and problems of Greek schools. For example, in 2006 the Greek Education Minister was interviewed and once again the problem of Greek language instructional materials was brought up and promises were made that support would be provided.⁵² The following year a story highlighted the familiar issues of low teacher salaries and training, lack of books, the impact of the closure of St. Basils' teaching academy, and the lack of accountability within the Archdiocese's Office of Education.⁵³ Another *National Herald* special issue on education in 2015, restated now familiar problems but also called attention to the fact that the Archdiocese had finally acted to produce a series of Greek language books specially designed for its students and schools. The series *My Greek [Ta Ellenika Mou]* was produced with input from teachers from Greek-American schools and cost \$700,000. Although the

⁵⁰ The Hellenic Link, Inc. A Nonprofit Cultural and Scientific Association Incorporated in Delaware. *A Hellenic Education Plan For America: Authored By A Collaboration Team of: Members of the Academic and the Educational Communities and The Educational Project Committee of the Hellenic Link, Inc.* (New York: 2005) iv. The entire plan consists of 72 pages. It is important to note that the initiative and completion of the plan owed a great deal to the leadership of Dr. Constantine J. Efthymiou, a retired professor from Saint John's University and president of Hellenic Link.

⁵¹ As of 2022, Hellenic Link appears to have implemented two successful initiatives: the first is a teachers resource guide for the teaching of Byzantine history at the middle and high school levels—created in collaboration with the Hellenic Research Institute in Athens; and the second is the forthcoming adoption of national standards for the teaching of Modern Greek through ACTFL, a national organization for foreign language instruction.

⁵² Dimitri Soultogiannis, "Greek Education Minister Discusses Key Issues Stateside," *National Herald English Edition*, April 8, 2006 p. 2.

⁵³ *National Herald*, January 28, 2007, story by Theodore Kalmoulos. For a local perspective on Greek language schools during this period see: Deno Trakas, *Because Memory Isn't Eternal: A Story of Greeks in Upstate South Carolina* (Hub City Press: Spartanburg, 2010) 130-1.

books had been pilot tested a systematic training program was not implemented and as a result their effectiveness in both day and afternoon schools was being questioned.⁵⁴ Perhaps some scholar has conducted research on how these new long overdue resources are being utilized and if the need for effective instructional materials for teaching Greek to Greek-American children has finally been met. The article also highlighted the existence of new Greek-American charter schools and asked if their competition would lead to an increase in quality.

In conclusion, the purpose of this historical overview was to attempt to document and call attention to the problems and needs of Greek-language schools over time and show that most of their needs although well-known continue to remain unmet. In the opinion of these writers there is no need for any new fact-finding efforts or needs assessments—the needs are well known and there have been a plethora of solutions proposed. What is needed is the systematic and deliberate implementation of effective solutions.

Time and time again, it has been predicted that without effective solutions Greek identity within the American diaspora communities would disappear. This was predicted by Bishop Alexopoulos in 1928 and repeated by *Hellenic Link* in 2005. While the crisis is very real, Hellenic or Greek identity has proven more resilient than most researchers and observers feared. The statistics however, indicate that the decline continues and unless effective changes are made, the dire long term predictions will be fulfilled. The Archdiocese Yearbook for 1983, contained a table of afternoon schools enrollments which indicates that the number of enrollments went from 24,200 in 1970-71 to 31,232 in 1981-82. The Yearbook for 1994 indicates that the number of afternoon school enrollments in 1994 was 40,000. Day school enrollments went from 7,539 in the 1992 Yearbook to 6,386 students in the 1994 (all of these figures include South America and Canada).⁵⁵ The Archdiocese's 2019 Yearbook indicates that during the 2018-19 school year the system had 25 Greek Day Schools and 326 afternoon schools with a total enrollment of approximately of only 17,500 (not including Canada or South America).⁵⁶ If one compares the number of individual schools to those in existence in 2000 one finds that many have closed and the decline in overall student enrollment compared with the recent past is shocking. Although, immigration from Greece has ebbed and flowed, the failure of attracting American born Greek-American youths and families, including those of mixed marriages was the only way to stem the crisis of decline. The Church and the Greek-American communities throughout the United States

⁵⁴ National Herald [Ethnikos Kyrix] Newspaper "To Periodiko: Aphieroma sta Ellenika Grammata" [Special Insert on Greek Letters] (Saturday, January 31- Sunday, February 2015): Vasilike Rousake, "Ekpaideutikos tes Chronias 2014," pp. 3-20; Theodoros Kalmoukos, "O Dieuthintes tes Ar/pes Amerikes Dr. Ioannes Euthymiopoulos milese ston EK gia ola," pp. 25-29; Ioannes Kazazes, "E Omogeneia pleon echei upsiles apaiteseis apo ten ellenoglosse ekpaideuse," pp. 30-33. [Thanks to Antonis Diamantaris and Amalia Kesaris for providing an electronic copy of this issue from their archives]. One should note that the Archdiocese had published individual resource books and teaching guides in the past, however to our knowledge this was the first attempt to publish an original Greek language book series.

⁵⁵Hatzidimitriou, "Church-Community Relations in the United States," 87.

⁵⁶ Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America 2019 Yearbook page 112.

failed to do this. Future generations need our Greek-American schools as did those who came before us, and our leaders and communities must immediately act upon the well-known solutions to the problems we have attempted to document in this overview. Practical, culturally based Greek language instruction can stem and reverse the decline in enrollments if it is implemented in strategic ways that attract Greek-American families interested in preserving their identity and heritage.⁵⁷ We must invest the financial and intellectual resources of our communities to get this done. Our forefathers who left their homes to build a better life for us in America would expect us to always remember who we are and where we came from. We must do everything possible to preserve and build upon the foundations they left us. Their sacrifices and legacy deserve no less.

⁵⁷ For an example of what can be accomplished if new approaches are implemented see: “Archangel Michael Church Greek Language Institute’s New Curriculum,” in the *National Herald*, (English edition) December 4, 2019. See also the overviews of Greek school programs presented in the recent Soumakis-Zervos volume noted at the start of this article.

ADDENDUM ON GREEK BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND THE PAEDEIA PROJECT

Dr. John Spiridakis

It may be that Greek language education had its first incarnation beginning in 1777 in New Smyrna, Florida, however day and afternoon Greek education schools that were set up in immigrant communities before World War I utilized textbooks and instructional methods used in Greece to foster Greek literacy. Initially, Greek was the main language of instruction with English taught as a foreign language. (Costantakos & Spiridakis, 1997). Beginning in 1922 Greek day and afternoon schools in the USA were organized by the Orthodox church units and communities and for day schools Greek became the “other” language added to an all English language and content areas curriculum. The Greek Church and parents wanted children to become Greek Orthodox, learn Greek history, culture and, to the extent possible, the Greek language.

The Greek American day schools continued the Greek curriculum as an added course of study not integrated in any way with the English curriculum. This program design, based on second language education research, constituted a missed “Greek language learning motivation” opportunity for the students who were invariably second or third generation Greek Americans with limited exposure to Greek. Research has demonstrated the cognitive language development benefits of teaching the second (Greek in this case) language in relevant sociocultural contexts and as the language of instruction in content areas such as math, science and social studies. (Spiridakis, 1978;1987).

The Greek church sponsored day, afternoon and Saturday schools that have served students who spoke some Greek at home with parents or, usually, grandparents, and continues to do so until the present time. These students brought with them a linguistic, social and cultural repertoire which changed over time and became vastly different from that of the new influx of Greek students who began arriving in the big US cities after the 1970s. These newly arrived immigrants from Greece found limitations in meeting their needs in the private school system, which added to the need to pay tuition which proved difficult for financially strapped families.

Federal legislation (Bilingual Education Act 1968) and several state education laws enacted thereafter provided funding which was also allocated to create Greek bilingual classrooms, prepare Greek bilingual teachers and curriculum developers and Greek bilingual school administrators. (Spiridakis, 1987).

In response to federal and state education laws and policies supporting “bilingual education” programs, Greek American educators and administrators working in public schools began developing Greek-English bilingual education programs to serve the education needs of Greek immigrants through a curriculum structured differently from the Church connected schools – and

the education was free. The programs were structured to help immigrant (Greek as a first language) students continue their academic progress in Greek while at the same time learning English as a new language. Several “Greek wave” immigrant families welcomed the public school’s opportunity for their children to continue to learn Greek for free and during regular hours of a school day.

Greek bilingual education in the public schools occupied a span of approximately two decades, between 1974 and 1994, and it occurred primarily in the “high density” Greek immigrant communities in New York City and Chicago. (Spiridakis, 1994;1999).

For American born Greek students, a new type of bilingual program meant to attract and educate speakers of English as a first language who wanted to learn Greek emerged. The “Two Way Greek bilingual” program started in an Astoria elementary public school. Now “assimilated” Greek American parents had a Greek education alternative, assuming they lived in the host school district, to the Church Day, afternoon or Saturday classes for their children.

Another public program called “Magnet Schools” emerged in the mid 80’s and Greek school administrators” included Greek with other language education options to appeal to members of the large Greek community of Astoria, in NYC. American born as well as Greek students could learn Greek as a heritage language at the junior high school level. (Spiridakis, 1987).

One outcome of the advent of Greek bilingual education programs in public schools in NYC and Chicago was the flight of parochial school Greek teachers to staff the newly formed bilingual programs. When Greek bilingual programs started in public schools there were no teachers with training in Greek teaching outside of the already operating church afternoon and day schools.

University Greek bilingual teacher preparation programs emerged, generously funded with bilingual federal grants to provide scholarships to prepare Greek bilingual ed teachers expeditiously to assume new roles in the public schools. The recipients of the university scholarships and concomitant public school teaching opportunity were the Greek teachers at the Church schools. Free tuition led to degree and certification and job opportunity in public schools that offered much more generous pay and retirement benefits than Church-affiliated schools.

The lion’s share of federally sponsored scholarships funded Spanish bilingual education specializations, but Greek teachers also obtained university scholarships to become certified public school bilingual teachers or higher education faculty members. Education programs at St. John’s University, Teacher’s College (Master’s degree fellowships), Florida State University (Doctoral fellowships) and other institutions of higher education prepared teachers at the master’s and doctoral degree levels especially for New York City and Chicago schools. Graduates learned to apply pedagogy and instructional practices for teaching Greek immigrant students (L1 Greek speakers) and non-Greek or Greek heritage language Greek students (L2 Greek speakers).

As Greek immigration waned in the 1980's along with the few public school Greek bilingual programs, universities no longer offered Greek bilingual fellowships awarded by the USDE. Parochial school Greek teachers who had made the transition to the public schools as Greek bilingual teachers pivoted into general classroom or English as a New Language teachers in their schools.

In the 1990's, renewed attention of Greek educators, now informed by the research on effective pedagogy and practice for teaching Greek as a first or new language, focused on assisting the Greek Parochial School system. The Greek language component of the day schools, and the curriculum for the afternoon or Saturday classes, of the Parochial schools in large metropolitan areas with largest Greek family demographics, usually hired Greek immigrant teachers, primarily Greek speakers, prepared in Greece to teach Greek as a first language. The teaching methods and materials were simply imported from Greece although materials for Greek as a Second Language materials were created by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese beginning in the early 80's to more effectively respond to the realities of the school language demographics.

The Church criticized Greek language studies not under its control as lacking the essential religious component and there seemed to be some apprehension that public sector involvement in Greek bilingual education would perhaps challenge the survival of Greek parochial schooling. (Spiridakis, 1992). However, church schools continued to utilize methods and materials, by and large, meant for native Greek speakers. There was an effort by the Greek Church Education Department under the direction of Dr. Hatziemmanuel to develop Greek as a Second language materials. There was still a major disconnect however, with the mainly second and third generation Greek students who needed a very different approach to learning Greek. Interestingly, what the Church related schools needed was the methodology used to teach English as a New Language to Greek immigrants, but methods transposed to a very different Greek curriculum. (Spiridakis, 1999).

Another endemic problem of Church schools, especially in suburban areas, was not being able to sustain and support Greek second language studies due to the mobility of Greek families. Assimilation forces took hold of communities. Finding competent Greek teachers to teach in areas in which the community demographics could not sustain a parochial school always was and continued to be a major obstacle.

A new community-based phase occurred in the 1990's and expanded during the new millennium. These were schools set up for Greek language and cultural study and many used Greek as the medium of instruction for certain subjects. These schools were created by community members writing proposals to obtain state-funds with federal assistance. Applicants were groups who wanted an alternative to public schools. The Charter School applications needed to demonstrate a unique curricular theme and pedagogy. Greek language and culture have been the centerpiece of various innovative "Language immersion" pedagogical approaches justifying funding. Members of the Greek American community recognized the opportunity to continue Greek for their

children with public funds, acknowledging that their children would be sharing share the beauty and treasure of Greek language and culture with the wider, non-Greek background community. These Greek-based schools were sometimes received the tacit or explicit support of Church board members who saw it to bolster Greek studies where church day and afternoon schools, due to changed demographics, could no longer enroll enough Greek students to function. A wary Greek Church realized a gateway to Greek language and concomitant Greek Orthodoxy was possible.

Charter School Movement Greek Schools helped sustain and make Greek education available drawing upon the principles of “language immersion” to justify the curriculum. The Charter schools rescued Greek language education as a heritage language for Greek Americans. Where Greek Orthodox Churches could not sustain Greek American schooling due to low enrollments, Charter Schools could function by inviting all students regardless of ethnic or language background, to learn Greek in an “immersion-approach” Greek program. Charter schools were set up successfully in states such as New York and Florida and students in one Charter school in Florida based on a Greek language mathematics curriculum outperformed their peers in mathematics after its inception (Spiridakis, 1999).

PAEDEIA OMOGENON PROJECT

The overall Paideia project was conceived by Prof. Michael Damanakis, of the University of Crete, based on his intensive diglossia research on materials used to teach Greek to children in the diaspora. (“Greek Teaching Materials Abroad” European J of Intercultural Studies, v.5, No. 2, 1989). He found the methods and materials for teaching Greek as a first or second language failed to recognize the wide spectrum of *bilingual*, *bicultural* characteristics and socialization styles of Greek families abroad.

In 1997, Damanakis invited groups of Greek education specialists from several countries including the USA to a week-long “think tank” meeting at the University of Crete in Rethymnon, Department of Pedagogy, to discuss structuring and implementing the goals of his recently funded European Union Project “Paideia Omogenon.” The multi-national, multi-year project had been awarded to the Greek Ministry of Education and the University of Crete. Participating countries in addition to the USA were Argentina, Australia, Canada, England, Germany and South America.

This ambitious global level Project involved several countries with Greek language programs for students preK-12 and was created and led by Prof. Damanakis and his research and development faculty team at the U of Crete, Rethymnon. Prof. John Spiridakis was selected by Damanakis to lead the United States branch of the project. Spiridakis had advocated for the modification of Church sponsored Greek education, specifically the need to revise practices to reflect pedagogy and cross-cultural realities that reflected the needs of Greek as a second or new language. (1987;1994). The next several years of the USA branch of the project involved the largest

number of students and teachers in the “Greek education diaspora”. Damanakis edited a book of articles dealing with theoretical and practical curriculum frameworks. (Damanakis, 1999).

The USA branch of the project involved conducting professional development for Greek teachers from across the country. The Church had been using St. Basil’s Academy for this purpose and the project also did the same. Greek as a second language curriculum and materials development began. Teams of Greek educators were assembled from the large cities – for the USA it was New York and Chicago, to create cross culturally appropriateness materials.

Curriculum and materials development was also informed by a project-led needs assessment of Greek programs, teachers and students. Prof Spiridakis assembled experts such as Constantine Hatzidimitriou, Athena Kromidas, John Siolas, Andreas Zachariou and other Greek school educators as the project’s advisory board related to history, curriculum and assessment, administration of schools and professional development. The project produced a Greek as a second language (GSL) Curriculum (grades 1-8); GSL and Two-Way Bilingual program design and methods professional development activities; and a nation-wide needs assessment survey of Greek school parents, students, teachers and administrators was conducted. (Spiridakis, 1998).

The project needs assessment included attitudinal surveys administered to Greek school administrators, teachers, students and parents associated with the different types of Church related Greek programs: day, afternoon and Saturday types, to get a sense of the needs of these programs. The study not surprisingly confirmed students and parents were not satisfied with the quality of Greek teaching, especially in terms of motivation and relevance. Teachers and administrators were also not fully satisfied with the curriculum or materials as they were ineffective in teaching Greek to non-native Greek speakers, i.e., students having no or little Greek proficiency. The teaching methods, curriculum and materials of Greek Church schools, needed to address the unabated waning interest in the Greek language among third generation Greek Americans, (Saloutos, Scourby, Costantakos, Spiridakis) needed reform. (Spiridakis, 1998).

As part of the Paideia project’s research goals, a small research study (Spiridakis & Baecher, 1998) was conducted comparing the two major Day schools in NYC with two NYC public school counterparts. Mathematics and English language achievement of students was examined. The study found that the Greek parochial school students outperformed their ‘monolingual’ public school counterparts. The study confirmed a possible cognitive benefit of receiving schooling in Greek as well as English, notwithstanding the fact that the project’s survey found that Greek education warranted improvement. (Spiridakis et al, 1998).

The Paideia Omogenon education team at the University of Crete and in other countries addressed the challenge of creating a new curriculum and materials that could be used globally to teach Greek as a new *or* heritage language with a more “global” as well as “local” Greek sociocultural context.

The Paideia Project also focused on field-testing the materials created at the University of Crete as well as the “country-specific” scaffolded Greek as a second language units based on each venue’s needs assessment. The country specific materials were to be consistent with the “global” teaching materials created by the project’s team in Greece, to the extent warranted. For the duration of the project’s six years, in-service training sessions using experts in Greek as a second language methodology were conducted as well as preparation of units by the teams of Greek school teachers and administrators. The Paideia Project published Greek materials for elementary grade levels that subsumed modern Greek cultural artifacts as well as a Greek as a second language (GSL) methodology. Field testing occurred in several Greek schools across America and in the other participating countries. (Spiridakis, 1999).

As a result of the project some schools adopted the Paideia published materials and used them as models to reform their curriculum. Unfortunately, funding was not forthcoming for any systematic follow-up efforts to be implemented beyond the project period.

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