

Saint Katherine Hellenic Education Center

Strategic Plan

Introduction: Education in our community has been of paramount importance for generations. Our Greek School, founded in 1962, initially held classes in a local motel until our first community center was built. In 2008, the Paideia Bilingual Preschool and Nursery added an important element to the educational paradigm at Saint Katherine. Today, Greek School enrollment stands at approximately 150 students including multiple adult education classes. Paideia enrollment stands at over 35 children with the demand increasing yearly.

In spite of these very positive developments and at a time when a casual observer might be inclined to believe we have no issues in this area, the reality is that numerous challenges lie ahead. The children of our community have been taught the Greek language using essentially the same methods for generations. Student attrition is an ongoing problem. Challenges for modern families abound and competition for our children's time in a competitive educational environment is extreme given the abundance of extracurricular activities available. At the same time, demands for educational offerings to the community have increased. These factors and numerous other practical issues facing this and other Orthodox communities prompted a review of our curriculum and teaching methods at Saint Katherine by the Greek School Committee in 2012. During that process, it became increasingly obvious that many of the issues being addressed by the Greek School Committee applied to other educational schools and offerings at Saint Katherine.

In order to achieve the maximum benefit from a review of this nature and to address issues before they became more problematic, the President of the Parish Council formed an ad hoc study group to review all educational programs in our community with a view toward making recommendations to improve curriculum, teaching practices and to implement standard management procedures in our Greek Language School and Paideia Preschool and Nursery. The review was also to include recommendations for possible expansion, reorganization and technological enhancements as appropriate. The educational challenges ahead are numerous and are discussed here to ensure everyone involved understands the gravity of this issue and why we must act now to improve and revitalize our educational programs. The thrust of the ad hoc committee's findings and recommendations provide for a new organizational and management structure for education excellence consolidated as the **Saint Katherine Hellenic Education Center (HEC)** which is described herein.

Mission, Vision, Values, Strategy: Our mission is to educate the children and adults of our community and beyond consistent with the principles and tenets of our Holy Orthodox faith. Saint Katherine will offer the highest quality education to our community of pre-school and K-12 students, as well as adults who seek a broad range of Hellenic language skills combined with knowledge of history and culture. We further intend to achieve our goals through an innovative and stimulating curriculum, using traditional as well as technologically enhanced instructional methods. Student achievements will be quantifiable and teaching methodologies will be consistent with national and internationally accepted standards for language instruction and competency. Our values are rooted in our Hellenism and Orthodoxy. We promote individual and family excellence, education, and above all, our Orthodox Christian beliefs. These values are an integral part of our culture and provide the framework for our decision-making.

The strategy necessary to accomplish our mission requires our commitment to:

1. Offer high quality education, in a climate of trust and collaboration, acting on the belief that each student brings unique talents and deserves our best efforts.
2. Provide Greek language as well as cultural and religious instruction by developing new programs that match our community's needs and interests.
3. Modernize the business and financial administration of the schools and institutional controls, and update the school's academic administration infrastructure.
4. Build a strong, positive relationship with students, teachers, parents and the community.

The Appendix discusses in detail how these goals will become a reality (pg. 5).

Saint Katherine Greek Education Organization and Offerings

To achieve our mission, we propose to create the **Saint Katherine Hellenic Education Center (HEC)**, in order to develop a dynamic and multi-faceted educational system devoted to furthering our Orthodoxy and Hellenism through educational achievement. It will be comprised of the following components:

- **Greek Language School:** Our Greek Language School will incorporate three offerings:
 - 1) Pre-K - 8th Grade Greek School: offering a level-based system with a high retention rate, a standards-based curriculum, and a framework that teaches Greek as a second language.
 - 2) Adult Language School: providing evening classes for adults interested in learning Modern Greek (beginner to advanced).
 - 3) Online education: offering our adult education programs as well as other strategically selected topics through distance education media in order to appeal to a broad range of interests. This offering will begin initially with online tutoring for students whose parents do not speak Greek in the home. This will immediately resolve a long standing issue for many students and parents, and ultimately improve retention rates as well as the quality of the educational experience by providing an effective and ongoing educational dialogue.
- **Community Education:** Evolve our Hellenic Education Center so that it becomes multi-faceted in teaching the Greek language and introducing Hellenism to our broader community. Community education offerings will include a Summer Language Camp for 3-12 year olds. We will also offer short courses/seminars in subjects such as *Greek Cooking*, *Ecclesiastical Greek*, *Byzantine Chanting*, and *Introduction to Greek Language and Customs*. Online education may also be implemented for some of these offerings.
- **Paideia Day School:** We will provide a leading day school that provides high quality education (in Greek and English) that exceeds Fairfax County standards. The two components of our school include the following:
 - 1) Preschool: our preschool will expand while continuing to offer a loving, family environment for 2-5 year olds.
 - 2) Kindergarten: provide a Kindergarten class for 5-6 year olds that exceeds the Fairfax County curriculum, teaches Greek language, and provides innovative instruction of subjects such as Math and Science.

The educational mission of Saint Katherine will be restructured as well as reorganized. A new **Board of Education (BOE)**, under the auspices of the Parish Council, will oversee its management. The position of the **Director of the Hellenic Educational Center** will report to the Parish Council through the BOE. Reporting to the Director will be the Head Teacher/Lead Coordinator of the Greek School, Paideia and Community Education. The new organizational structure is shown below.

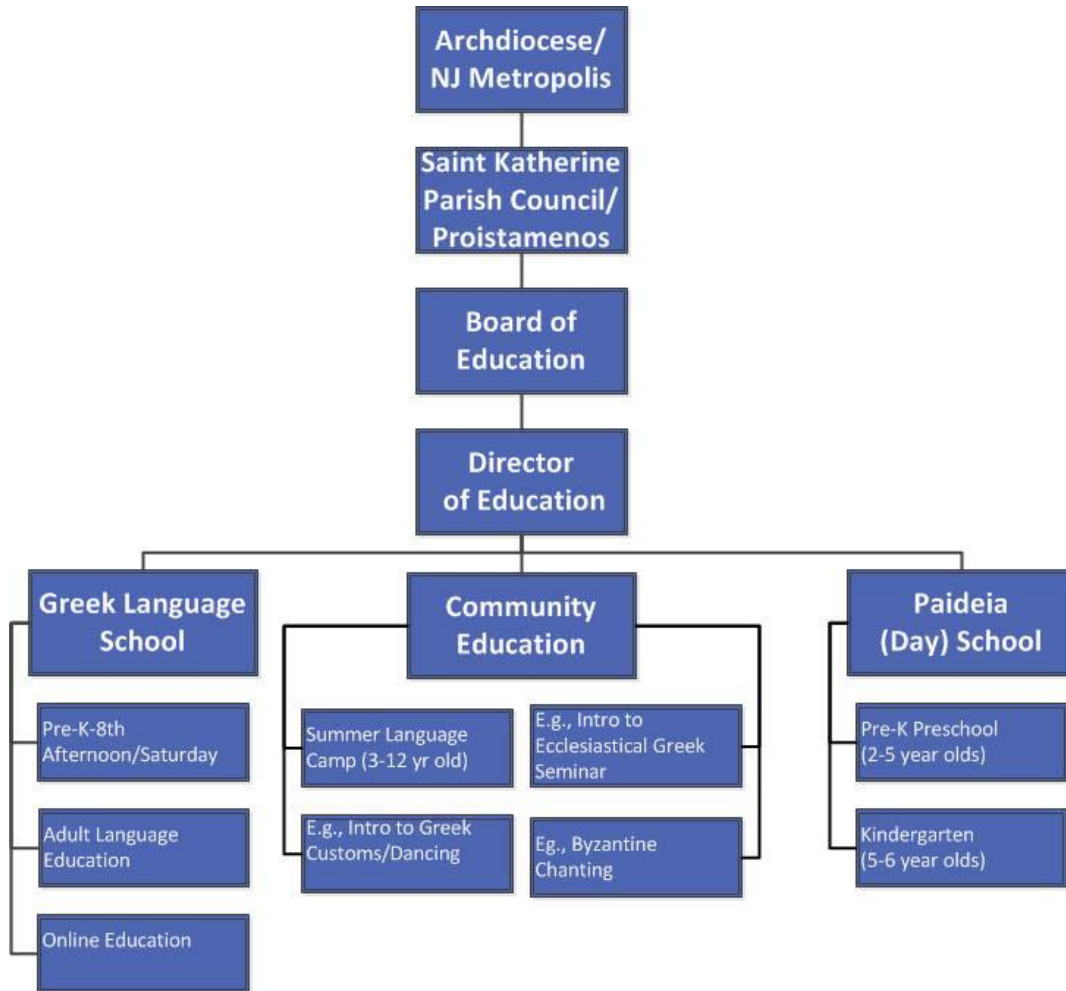


Figure 1. Saint Katherine Hellenic Education Center Organizational Structure

Upon approval, the Parish Council, the BOE and the Director of the Hellenic Education Center are responsible for the implementation of this strategic plan and will use it to plan for the future goals, direction, infrastructure and financial requirements of the HEC. The day to day operations of HEC schools will be carried out in a manner which is consistent with this strategic plan, thereby providing a visible roadmap for education at Saint Katherine now and in the future. The achievements under the strategic plan will be reviewed periodically, and amended as necessary to meet the educational needs of the community. Hence, the strategic plan is a living document to guide the daily functioning of the educational programs and schools of our community, including all financial and legal decisions.

Significant Milestones

To realize this vision, re-organize our schools, and begin enhancing our educational offerings to the community, the following actions will occur:

- **Strategic Plan approval:** Gain approval for strategic plan from the Parish Council. Upon approval, brief the community, parents and teachers of the Greek School and Paideia Preschool. [ECD: February 28, 2013]
- **Saint Katherine HEC Management structure and Director hire:** Upon Parish Council approval, the Parish Council President will appoint the Board of Education. One of the first tasks of the BOE will involve preparing a job description, advertising and interviewing candidates for the HEC Director position. The BOE will make its recommendation to the Parish Council President/Proistamenos, who will review and approve the candidate. [ECD: May 2013]
- **Revise registration procedures/modify tuition structure:** Implement new registration procedures, with an emphasis on pre-registration by the end of school year to facilitate planning and prudent hiring practices. BOE will review and restructure the tuition structures of the Greek School and Paideia Preschool, as needed. [ECD: May 1, 2013]
- **Organization/administration:** The BOE will draft an action plan to consolidate all business functions of the Greek School and Paideia Preschool. [ECD: June 30, 2013]
- **Summer Language Camp:** The addition of a Language Camp (6-8 year olds, space permitting) will complement the existing Saint Katherine summer camp (3-5 year olds). [ECD: Summer 2013]
- **Community Education:** Begin offering 1-2 seminars/short courses for adults (e.g., Dance Workshop, Greek Cooking, Ecclesiastical Greek, etc.). [ECD: November 2013]
- **Revised Greek School curriculum:** The Director, with guidance from the BOE, will review and restructure the Greek School curriculum, in accordance with learning standards and latest thinking among foreign language educators. [ECD: Initial updates implemented by September 1, for the 2013-14 school year; ongoing thereafter]
- **Greek School Technology enhancements:** The Greek School will implement interactive online tools for tutoring as well as online collaboration sites (e.g., Blackboard) to enhance teacher-student-parent communication regarding homework, assignments, etc. [ECD: September 1, implemented for the 2013-14 school year]
- **Paideia Kindergarten:** The Paideia school will continue to enhance its pre-K offering while also evaluating the feasibility of implementing a kindergarten. [ECD: Kindergarten offered by Sept 2014. (Sept 2013, under optimal circumstances)]
- **Paideia Pre-K licensure:** The Paideia school will work towards obtaining a preschool licensure from the State of VA. [ECD: Sept 2014]
- **Teacher training/improved teaching methods:** Both the Greek School and Paideia Preschool will expand the training and professional development offered to teachers and begin modifying teaching methods, in accordance with the revised curriculum. [ECD: ongoing]

Appendix

Setting attainable goals and assigning accountability for achieving success is critical to securing our educational objectives. Activities and tasks required to make our vision a reality follow:

A. Objective 1: High quality education

Offer high quality education, in a climate of trust and collaboration, acting on the belief that each student brings unique talents and deserves our best efforts.

To realize this objective, we will work toward achieving the following goals:

1. *Improve quality of teaching*

Measures:

- Make curriculum more interesting and appealing to young students by promoting innovation and incorporating other resources, e.g., technology, notably by using online educational resources, videos, smart board, posting homework online, submitting homework electronically, and creating an electronic calendar of homework and events for access by parents and students.
- Establish Standards of Learning (SOL) and requisite testing procedures for each level of language instruction.
- The Director of Education, in consultation with the Board of Education, will review the use of existing textbooks for all grades to ensure that they remain appropriate. The decision to adopt new textbooks will be made by the BOE, upon recommendation by the Director of Education.
- Administer annual teacher evaluation. The evaluation will be conducted by the Director of Education and the results will be forwarded to the BOE Chairman. Each teacher will be evaluated on the basis of clear and objective criteria, and performance would be quantified. Evaluation forms would be prepared by the Director of Education in consultation with and approval of the BOE.
- Prepare a manual of teacher responsibilities for each grade. The manual should describe the main tasks of the teacher and the instructional methods that could be applied. It should also describe procedural issues relating to absences, misconduct, and security threats.
- Hire qualified teachers that meet or exceed standards. The BOE, in consultation with the Director, will prepare appropriate academic qualification requirements that must be met by all Greek school teachers. Hiring decisions will be made by the Director and approved by the BOE.
- All teachers will be offered opportunities for furthering their professional development.

2. *Set up appropriate standards for progression that must be met by students*

Measures:

- Initiate a standardized evaluation, administered at Years/Grades [3, 6, and 9], to ensure that only students that possess adequate skills can advance to higher grades. At these benchmarks, students will be awarded certificates that correspond to “Introductory,” “Intermediate” and “Advanced” Greek.
- New students will be required to take a placement test to assess their Greek language proficiency.
- Establish a written code of conduct for students, teachers and parents emphasizing respect for others.

B. Objective 2: Expand our Greek Instruction and Ongoing Education

Provide Greek language as well as cultural and religious instruction by developing new programs that match our community’s needs and interests.

To realize this objective, we will work toward achieving the following goals:

1. *Initiate Community Education Offerings*

Measures:

- The Director, in consultation with the BOE, will prepare a survey that will be mailed to all Parishioners, and possibly to other interested parties in the area, inquiring about potential interest in Greek classes/programs.
- The Director, in consultation with the BOE, will prepare syllabuses and course descriptions (stand alone or sequence) focusing on specific target groups. Some of the courses that could be offered include Greek classes for mixed couples, and Liturgical Greek (to facilitate the reading of Scripture, Church hymnody, and, prepare the ground for the next generation of chanters). Other possibilities include Greek Book Club (Orthodox or secular, to practice spoken Greek), Greek dancing, Greek cuisine lessons, Etymology, and Byzantine music.

C. Objective 3: Business and Financial Administration

Modernize the business and financial administration of the schools and institutional controls, and update the school’s academic administration infrastructure.

To realize this objective, we will work toward achieving the following goals:

1. *Define the responsibilities of the Board of Education*

Measures:

- The Parish Council will approve terms of reference for the Board of Education outlining its role and responsibilities, including the division of labor with the Director of Education.
- Among other things, the BOE will be responsible for: i) staff selection and approval, ii) recommending salary increases to the Parish Council for approval, iii) communications strategy and student recruitment, and iv) public awareness and

value of Greek education (e.g., by lobbying colleges to grant college credit to holders of the Greek Ellinomathia certificate).

2. Define the responsibilities of the Director of Education

Measures:

- The BOE will prepare a manual of responsibilities of the Director of Education.
- The Director will sign an annual contract of employment which will list among other things specific goals to be achieved during the year.
- The Director's salary will be determined by the BOE based on qualifications and approved by the Parish Council.
- The BOE will prepare an appraisal form for evaluating the Director's performance.

3. Budget Preparation

Measures:

- The Director will prepare a draft budget for the forthcoming school year by end-April. The BOE will review it and make amendments as appropriate and submit the budget to the Parish Council for approval in May.
- The budget summarizes and quantifies the Hellenic Education Center's priorities for the following calendar year. As such, it is the product of a careful reflection and discussion between the Director and teachers of the HEC.
- The proposed budget lists projected revenues (based on the expected outcome in the current year and recent trends) and expenditure.

4. Expenditure Authorization and Budget Execution

Measures:

- Upon establishment of the Board of Education and selection of a Director of Education, streamlining finances of the Hellenic Education Center will be examined.

5. Financial Reporting

Measures:

- The Director is responsible for submitting a monthly report to the BOE.

6. Accountability

Measures:

- The Parish Council President will appoint the BOE Chairman and four (4) additional members for a period of 2 years. The Proistamenos and Parish Council President are also permanent members of the BOE. At Large Membership (non-voting) will be comprised of the HEC Director, Registrar (Parish Council appointee), PTA Presidents from the Greek Language School and the Paideia Day School. The BOE will avail itself of expertise and advice as appropriate from an Advisory Council comprised of leading educators. All decisions of the BOE not requiring Parish Council approval are made by simple majority.

7. Student Registration

Measures:

- Parish Council President will appoint a Registrar to conduct registration activities for all HEC educational offerings.
- In order to promote efficiency and sound management, a streamlined registration process will be developed. Pre-registration will be encouraged to the maximum extent possible. Online registration and payment options are among intended results.
- The Board of Education will create a database using the Church's ACS Accounting System. The database will include: i) name of each student, ii) address, iii) emergency contact information, iv) status as Parishioner and v) amount paid, and vi) mode of payment. The Director will maintain the database.

8. Hellenic Education Center Fundraising

Measures:

- The Director, in consultation with the BOE, may organize periodic fundraising events for the benefit of the schools.
- All proceeds from the fundraising will be earmarked for the Hellenic Education Center and deposited into the appropriate account.

D. Objective 4: Community Relations and Participation

Build strong, positive relationship with students, teachers, parents and the community.

To realize this objective, we will work toward achieving the following goals:

1. Enhance communication between teachers and parents

Measures:

- Initiate a "Back to School" night to inform parents and students of the objectives of the course and main topics that will be covered during the school year.
- Introduce teacher-parent conferences in the fall and spring semesters
- Prepare Progress Reports at the end of the fall semester and a final Grade by the end of the spring semester.
- Facilitate communication and an ongoing dialogue between parents and teachers by email and/or other electronic media.
- Each teacher is expected to send monthly updates by email to the parents of students whose performance (positive or negative) warrants attention.

2. Enhance communication between teachers and students

Measures:

- Implement Distance Learning Initiatives by offering homework assistance (teacher will be available for help via video teleconferencing technology on a real time basis). To be implemented for the 2013-14 school year. Schedule for this service TBD.

- Establish a Hellenic Education Center technology to offer direct communication for assignments, etc.

3. Enhance communication between the BOE, Teachers, and Parents

Measures:

- Set up periodic meetings of the BOE, Director, all teachers, and the President of the Greek School and Paideia Day School Auxiliaries.
- Set up monthly meetings between the BOE and the Director.
- Set up monthly meetings between the Director and teachers to discuss ongoing student problems or issues of general interest.

4. Enhance communication with the broader community

Measures:

- Establish a Hellenic Education Center Newsletter that offers a common calendar of events and other information as appropriate.
- Establish a website for the Hellenic Education Center that lists its mission, courses, contact information, etc.
- Advertise the Hellenic Education Center in selected media (e.g., Church bazaars, NOVA course catalogs, etc)
- Establish partnership with foreign language schools in the area.
- Participate in education fairs.
- Establish partnerships with Greek schools in Greece and throughout the Diaspora.