Chapter 23

The Humanities Program: An Innovative Classic

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ABSTRACT

Innovative since its inception, the ACS Honors Humanities program has a long history of more than 40 years as an interdisciplinary team-taught course that examines essential questions through literature, visual and performing arts, philosophy and history. This innovative approach has continued to motivate successive teaching teams to modify and enhance a program that challenges students academically, utilizing the best possible resources and taking advantage of new technology. The program consists of two year-long, completely integrated i²Flex ACS Athens Honors diploma courses and three i²Flex 20-week enrichment courses accessible to students anywhere. This chapter presents two case studies which explain the transformation of the Honors Humanities course from Face to Face to i²Flex. The authors describe and present examples of how they redesigned the courses. They present data on student feedback and findings regarding the benefits and challenges of adopting the i²Flex methodology for this program. This chapter is intended as a reference for teachers, teachers in training and professionals who train teachers.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

From Face to Face to i²Flex

A “modern classic”, the Honors Humanities class was created at ACS Athens over 40 years ago as an innovative, interdisciplinary team-taught course that examines essential questions through literature, visual and performing arts, philosophy and history. The program was innovative at its inception because
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it was conceived to take advantage of the school’s unique location in Greece which provides countless opportunities for connecting classroom study with field study trips. Over the years, field study trips in Greece and Europe have encouraged students to become independent learners while also developing their critical thinking skills and cultural awareness. Generations of students have visited museums and monuments, experiencing the artifacts up close and exploring the masterpieces studied in class. For decades, they have been afforded unique opportunities to think, imagine, conceptualize and create.

Successive teaching teams have continually sought to modify and enhance a program that challenges students academically, utilize the best possible resources and take advantage of new technology. In 2008, we began the journey of transforming the already innovative Face to Face (F2F) model into the completely new i2Flex program. Today, the program consists of two year-long, completely integrated i2Flex ACS Athens Honors diploma courses and three i2Flex 20-week enrichment courses accessible to students anywhere.

We share a map of our journey here through these two case studies as a reference for teachers, teachers in training and professionals who train teachers. Figure 1 shows important milestones along the way.

INNOVATION

Marc Giget is the founder of a series of organizations that study innovation and the impact of technology on our society, including the European Institute for Creative Strategies and Innovation. Once while being interviewed he was asked the question: How do you define innovation? He responded with the following definition:

Figure 1. Significant milestones toward i2Flex
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