

GEKKO KIDS QUARTER REPORT

SEPT, OCT, NOV & DEC



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Gekko Kids

A Short Presentation

Our Vision

Gekko Kids is an educational centre in Lesvos offering alternative education to populations in transit with particular focus on providing education to unaccompanied minors. The centre was launched in August 2017 and is located in Mytilene. Both the space and the curriculum are designed to enable healing and allow the students to develop crucial skills, to settle and integrate into their host culture, and to discover their vocation and calling. Gekko Kids practices a model of education that identifies, enables and invests in its students' passions and talents. Better Days challenges the concept of emergency & traditional education, whilst empowering Gekko students with the opportunity to experience alternative and personalized teaching and become a part of the learning process.

Lesvos Overview

Since September, the temperatures dropped and the weather worsen drastically. In November, 507 unaccompanied and separated children were identified on Lesvos and 1800 children were living inside Moria camp.

Better Days' Gekko Kids Team

IRENE SEVASTELLI

Admissions & Administration

OLGA SALIAMPOUKOU

Photography Teacher -The Light Space

ELENA MOUSTAKA

Managing Director

GEORGE PAPADOPOULOS

IT / Math Teacher - SoS

MARO GALANOU

Financial Director

ANDREW FOLEY

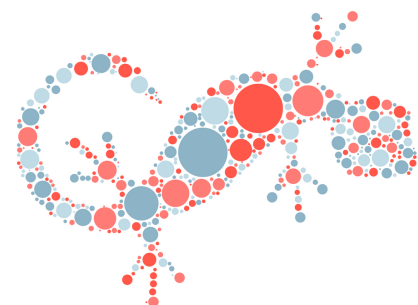
Development Director

JOEL HERNADEZ

Reporting & Advocacy

DEBORAH DE LAMBERT

Volunteer Coordinator / English Teacher - REAL



Gekko Kids

Our Students

UASC, Accompanied children & Adults

Gekko Kids is more than a school -- it is a concept. We built Gekko Kids to provide a safe, warm, welcoming, and stimulating educational environment for unaccompanied minors housed in urban shelter facilities operated by Iliaktida AMKE. At Gekko Kids, students do more than just learn grammar and multiplication tables: they follow personalized curricula that teach them new knowledge, but that also stretches the limits of their imagination. By the end of 2018, enough qualitative data (see previous quarter report) was collected to argue in favor of the constructive and positive impact Gekko Kids has had on the UASC.

UASC (10-18yrs) Morning Zone

In our morning zone (from 9:30 to 12:30), we work with UASC living in urban accommodation shelters in Mytilene. These children follow the public education curriculum with focus in English, Greek, Maths, IT, Geography and Music. It is designed to impart knowledge whilst trying to root them in routine and normalcy. This helps them stabilize, and -- if appropriate -- to transition toward enrolling in public school. Core curriculum in Greek and English is designed and taught by Iliakitda's wonderful staff, 8 teachers amongst whom the following subjects are covered: Greek, English, Math, Art & Music activities.

In October 2018, Better Days decided to expand its educational programming to accept UASC living in Moria camp. On the 24th of September, we launched a pilot project with UASC living in the Safe Zone, a separate facility within Moria for UASC under the age of 15yrs and female UASC. From September 2018 to December 2018, we received 76 registrations from the Safe Zone, who attend classes at Gekko Kids from 2:00 pm to 4:30 pm Monday-Friday. Their transportation is funded by Help Refugees. As of December 2018, Gekko Kids was working with 130 UASC, of whom 22 are girls and 108 boys. Within these 130 UASC, 12 different nationalities were noted (amongst them, Cameroonians, Congolese, Egyptians, Iranians, Iraqis, Kurds, Somalis, Syrians). Around 84% of Gekko's student body are Afghans.

Our Students

UASC, Accompanied Children & Adults

Accompanied Children (10-18yrs)

Additionally, in our afternoon zone (14:30-18:00), Gekko has welcomed the registration of minors living with vulnerable families in urban accommodation who, unlike the UASC in urban shelters, do not receive educational support through the sheltering program. The minors from these families attend public schools, but often struggle to meet their learning objectives and drop out. The afternoon zone allows children in public schools to receive tutoring support and attend complementary lessons and workshops; it also allows UASC who have moved on into the public school system, and accompanied minors in the system, to mingle and support one another. To extend our programming to accompanied children, Iliaktida hired a Greek teacher (part-time) with funding from 'Kalimera'. Most importantly Better Days team provides access to workshops and lessons in English, Maths, Creative workshops and Computers. Transportation assistance is provided to those living outside Mytilene centre. The programme officially launched in January 2019. Our pilot programming during this reporting period saw us receive 65 registrations.

+18 (Youth & Adults)

In January 2018 Gekko Kids facilitated the launching of an Adult Accredited Greek Course. We received 176 registrations. Around 70 adults attended regularly.

Following the completion of 800 hours of Greek intensive curriculum, 40 adults successfully completed the course and were awarded a Level 1 - Certificate of Greek Language by the Municipality authorities of Lesvos in September.

In September 2018 Gekko Kids registered 67 new adults. The new adult language course will start in January 2019. We prioritized registrations for adults who have already received asylum in Greece (or requested asylum in Greece). Iliaktida's team did outreach amongst their own beneficiaries which brought in many registrations. REAL & Better Days cover the teaching needs of this zone together.





Proactive Identification

Gekko Kids students' statistics

Better Days, invests significant time and effort into collecting quantitative and qualitative information about our students - their demographics, their prior education levels and language ability, their interests, their attendance at school, and their performance and evolving engagement in their lessons. By collecting and analysing this data, we help Gekko's educational team to create a conducive and comfortable environment that adapts to our students' different needs and levels.



Data management allows us to:

- Identify exemplary students (e.g. students with advanced proficiency in, or an exceptionally quick acquisition of English or Greek, who can be empowered to assist and induct fellow students;
- Monitor attendance and student intervention plans as decided by the Coordination team in order to support student counselling;
- Track gender ratio (to schematize gender-specific programming and teaching practices to enable a healing environment for trauma-affected students)
- Space coordination & classroom capacity, making it possible for 12 teachers to share 5 active classrooms and provide daily classes and tutorials for over 200 students per day;
- Create Individual Curriculum plans that give students maximum flexibility within the structure of a stable and predictable schedule;
- Design and implement new workshops adapted to prevailing needs;
- Manage capacity, expand programming to receive more students, target new groups, and tackle evolving educational gaps and needs on Lesvos;

Proactive Identification

Gekko Kids students' statistics



- Attract targeted support to help fill gaps and allow us to adjust capacity, duration and quality of programming;
- Manage staff workload;
- Monitor the quality of our programming;
- Create feedback mechanisms and enable participatory program design that takes into account the needs, opinion, and feedback of students;
- Effective volunteer coordination: experienced and skill specific volunteers are invited to fill in programming gaps, mentor our local staff, tutor children with learning difficulties, offer advance english courses and offer specific workshops upon demand

In September of 2018, Gekko Kids launched its new academic year. Between September and December 2018,

Gekko Kids welcomed 195 students from more than 12 different nationalities, speaking more than 7 different languages -- some of them fluent in as many as 5 languages or dialects. At one point Gekko Kids reported 21 different languages.

During the reported period we received students as young as 10 and as old as 63 years old -- divided between children aged 10 to 18 attending in the morning and afternoon periods, and adults aged 18 to 63 attending in the evening zone.

While the demographics at Gekko Kids fluctuate over time, as a function of the origins of new arrivals, movement to the mainland, and camp demographics, our student body is consistently diverse and multifaceted. During this reporting period, from September to December 2018, the large majority were Afghans (see chart).

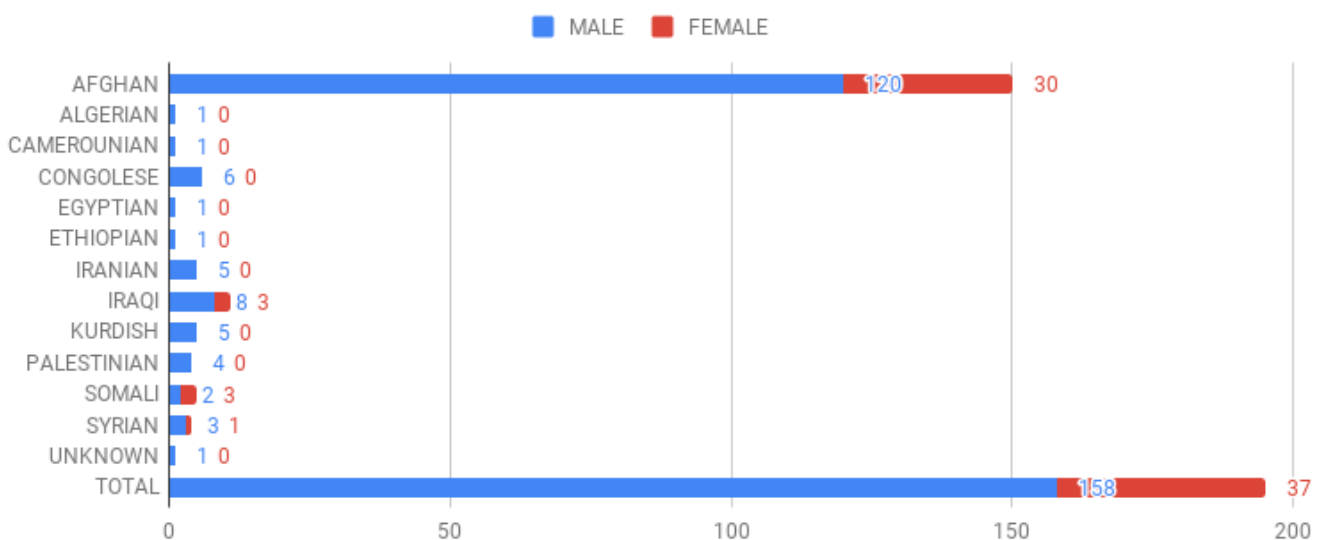
Proactive Identification

Gekko Kids Students' Statistics

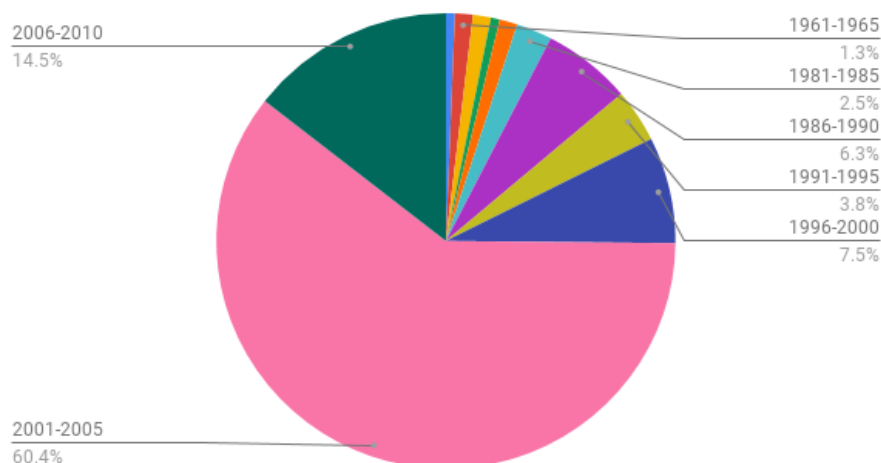


Due to our particular engagement with unaccompanied minor population, Gekko Kids has consistently faced an important gender ratio disproportion (see chart). As of early February, only 17% of our registered students are girls. This makes it all the more important that we focus care and attention to offering gender-specific activities. We are proud to note that these efforts have helped us maintain a high rate of attendance and participation from female UASC living in urban accommodation.

NATIONALITY & Gender -TOTAL STUDENTS / September-December 2018

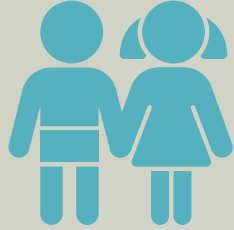


AGE-TOTAL STUDENTS / September-December 2018



Gekko Kids Numbers

130
UASC



76 Safe Zone

54 Urban Accommodations

22 Girls

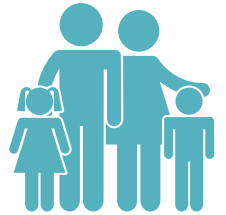
60 Registered in Public School

12 Nationalities

47

**Accompanied Children
Registered in Public School**

4 %



73

Adults & Youth

13 Women

54 Men

6 Nationalities



TOTAL

2 Accredited Classes

195 Students

37 Girls

19 languages & dialects spoken

10 to 63 yrs age range

518 UASC registered in 2018

Programming & Schedule

Parallel Schedule courses offered in 2018

At Gekko Kids it is important for us not to only provide our students with academical classes, but also to offer activities allowing our students to develop special skills.

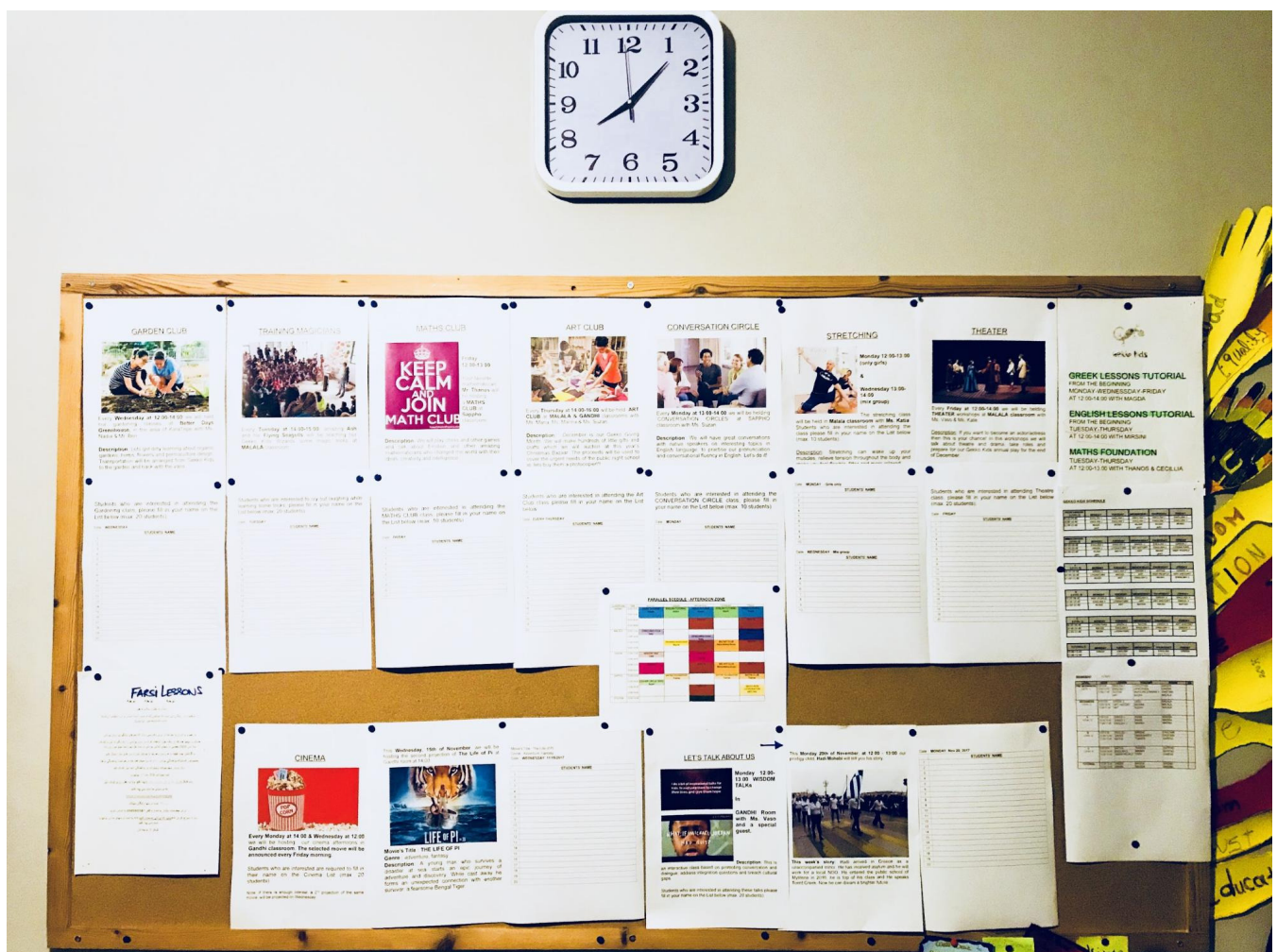
Within the year 2018, we organized gardening activities with the collaboration of Better Days EchoHub hosted in One Happy Family premises. We also implemented Theatre, Photography and Guitar classes. In September 2018, the Theatre and Gardening classes were concluded. However, since the 16th of October, we are offering Dance & Art classes and continue to provide Photography classes for beginners and advanced students, a program funded by The Light Space. Our entire music curriculum is managed and conducted by Connect by Music musicians and therapists.



Programming & Schedule

Regular Schedule

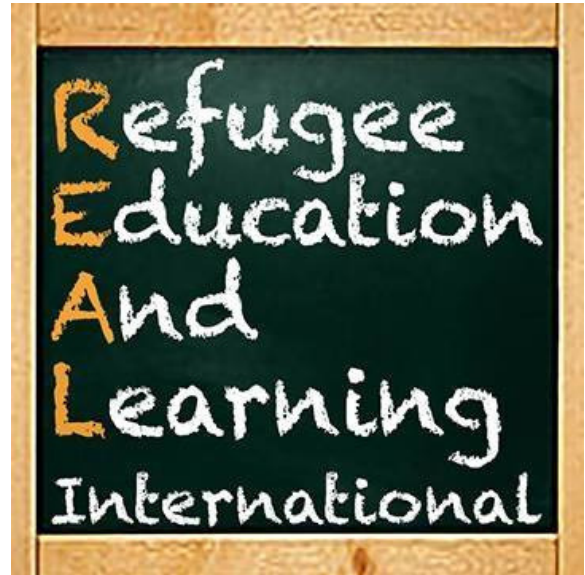
In the morning hours, Gekko Kids offers core classes built around a public-education oriented curriculum that help students build core competencies, prepare to transition of public school if they wish to, and help them build the Greek and English language skills they will need to integrate into their host communities, as well as the numeracy, general knowledge, and computer skills they will need to become productive members of those communities. Over the 2018 school year, Gekko Kids supported over 6000 hours of core education which would not have been possible without the tireless efforts and dedication of the Gekko teachers.



Volunteers & Collaborators

Volunteers

In 2018, Gekko Kids welcomed 44 volunteers who came to Gekko Kids to share their professional experiences and support our educational team.



Collaborators

- Youth Unmuted: NGO Empowering vulnerable youth implementing week-long creative storytelling workshops. Youth UnMuted uses stop-motion filmmaking, photography, music, and creative writing as well as other creative modes to enhance the process of storytelling and creative expression.
- Better Days Eco-Hub is a project of Better Days Greece rising environmental awareness with various activities.
- Gekko-Girls Empowerment Project by Michele Cobble, REAL (girls swimming and bicycling lessons): This project was offered for a month to 13 girls.
- Poliana Art School (scholarship to 12 talented kids) funded by REAL.
- LATRA (STEM): tutoring for small children - volunteering supporting the team with interpretation and daily activities.
- The Light Space (photography) is financing the photography classes for 6 advanced students since the 16th October 2018. The next annual Gekko Kids exhibition is scheduled for April 2019.

Achievements to Celebrate 2018

TOEFL ΕΛΛΗΝΟΜΑΘΕΙΑ

Gekko Kids is proud to announce some key achievements to end this year 2018.

In November, Better Days announced the launching of the “TOEFL” project where our most advanced Gekko students in the English language are prepared to pass the TOEFL exam to accredit their English level. The course is taught by REAL volunteer teachers

In the same period of time, we announced the funding of a Greek Language certificate programme “ΕΛΛΗΝΟΜΑΘΕΙΑ” taught by Paris Rados & Maria Andronikou.

During the reporting period, and with funding from REAL, we have been able to register twelve gifted students to a local art institute, a non profit art and culture organization founded by artists living in Lesvos.

Poliana promotes and encourages creative expression by offering various culture activities. At the end of the ART scholarship program, the students receive an attendance certificate and a portfolio of their work.

Advance English language students have voluntarily started offering English classes (for Farsi speakers) to lower level students during the 12:00-13:00 break. Gekko students are also volunteering in other organizations such as LATRA, The Light Space and Mosaik Refugee Centre. .



Achievements to Celebrate 2018



Christmas Time

Since September, our music students started preparing for our festive event at Gekko and the Christmas Concert of Connect by Music in Kara Tepe camp.



Like last year, on the 21st of December, the last school day before the Christmas holidays, we organized a party, where the children performed two separate choreographies with Irene Sevastelli (dance teacher), one with girls and the other one with boys, played and sang festive songs, ate traditional cakes and snacks and socialized with each other and the Gekko team.



Achievements to Celebrate 2018

We celebrated December's Golden Kids : Mohammed (Afghan), Benedict (Congolese), Attehef (Afghan). During the monthly ritual (Golden Kids Ceremony) the winners receive presents and are congratulated for their exemplary behaviour, performance and hard work.

In early December Parisa (Afghan) was nominated by Better Days to support UNICEF (New York) media team as a trainee photographer. UNICEF who was here to collect material for their global campaign on Children's Rights agreed to publish and credit her work. During their visit, she was mentored by one of UNICEF's most reputable photographer Ron Jacques and accompanied the delegation for 2 days to film and take photographs in Moria camp and at TAPUAT.



Gekko Kids Debriefing 2018

Learning Curves and Pedagogical Philosophy

1

Counteracting the negative impact of limited access to public education and shortcomings of traditional teaching and public school methodologies by focusing on these practises:

- Access to healing and positive space;
- Formatting classrooms accordingly (centres etc)
- Teaching style:
- Methodologies: participatory, SEL, project based approach etc;
- Main Learning objectives:
- Additional parameters: Counseling & Individual curriculum.



At Gekko Kids we have developed a pedagogical approach based on emotional awareness, cognitive development, acquisition of positive social skills, emotional growth, and self-knowledge. It is important to enable deeper communication in the classrooms, subsuming academic goals to develop the creation of a safe space and healing medium in the classrooms for positive learning and development. Gekko Kids is built to resemble a school and provide access to a safe space where students in transit can participate in their own education. Physical spaces play a fundamental role in promoting healing and learning process for children dealing with trauma.



Our teaching methodology is constantly customized to respond to the needs of our students. They need to be fun, cross-cultural, practical to provide students with crucial life-skills. Specific objectives are designed according to whether the activities focus toward sharpening academic skills or buttressing resilience and psychosocial health.



Gekko Kids Debriefing 2018

Learning Curves and Pedagogical Philosophy

2

GEKKO Kids as an avenue to integration, teaching resilience and enabling empowerment:

At Gekko we provide the children with different language classes (English, Greek, German) according to number of demand, students' needs and teacher availabilities. Some of our students are separated children which means that they have nuclear family members leaving in another country with whom they must be reunited (through the family reunification process).

This process can take months, sometimes years, and it is important for us to provide those children with essential pedagogical tools and language skills for their future. English language acquisition is fundamental, as it will increase students' access to information and knowledge of procedures, communicate and socialise better, provide more opportunity for future education once they have been reunified with family members in a different European country.

It is also fundamental for our team to provide our students with high quality Greek language classes, addressed to all our students. A high percentage of Gekko Kids students are destined to obtain asylum and live permanently in Greece. Therefore, it is crucial to provide our students with adapted classes with different levels from beginners to advanced and prepare willing students to integrate greek public schools.



Gekko Kids Debriefing 2018

Learning Curves and Pedagogical Philosophy

Gekko Kids supports the integration of its students within the public school. In September 60 Gekko Kids students have integrated a Greek public school for the coming school year when only 15 were attending at the end of 2017. This significant improvement was made possible through the persistent effort of the Gekko Kids team, in collaboration with the Greek Ministry of Education.



3

GEKKO Kids as an avenue to integration, teaching resilience and enabling empowerment:

Better Days and Gekko Kids are eager to prepare and support their students with accredited classes. As mentioned our center is offering accredited advanced English and Greek language programs. At the end of it, our students will be able to sit for exams and accredit their level of proficiency. Only these two classes are accredited but we also provide semi-accredited Art and Photography classes, which Better Days is eager to move toward accredited programming.



Gekko Kids Debriefing 2018

Better Days' Learning Curve and Pedagogical Philosophy



Better Days and Gekko Kids Culture

We are a multicultural centre that promotes community work and integration. Teachers have come to Gekko from Spain, the USA, Ireland, Greece, the UK, and Germany. We embrace every culture and reflect this in a multi-dimensional approach to teaching. However, we also follow the Greek public school calendar and observe local educational festivities and holidays. In the past we have offered the proceeds of our Christmas and Easter bazaar at Gekko Kids to aid local schools.

We are focusing in developing a special and respectful teacher-student relationship “we listen more and talk less”.

All cultures are equal and are treated with respect. We learn all together and from each other. The students affect the curriculum and can lead their own classes.

Attendance to Gekko Kids is not compulsory. Students come because they choose to come. Better Days philosophy aims to enable agency and empowerment for all children to see that they have the right of choice. We frequently talk about the right of choice and owning the consequences of a decision. We make every effort to not punish bad behavior, but rather to create positive incentives and reward collaborative behaviors.





Challenges faced during the reporting period

Constant alteration of demographics and student body movement, which affect programming and attendance, and which usually correlate to the conditions suffered by asylum seekers on the island.

The high number individuals transferred to the mainland by the authorities created intense turnover in our student body, leaving teachers with mixed classrooms and forcing them to adapt their lessons, continuing to teach while integrating new students without prior experience of Gekko's methods and dynamics.

The Asylum process and relocation and reunification process demand significant commitments from students, who must attend numerous appointments, each of which disrupt their school schedule and sometimes generate stress that inhibits their ability to function in school.

We Gekko Kids are also facing a gap in PSS support.

Working without a social worker or psychologist can seriously inhibit our ability to identify, counsel, or refer issues as they emerge among our student body. Better Days is also looking to strengthen its programming and staff supervision, monitoring the staff's progress and achievements.

Better Days is also still facing issue regarding volunteers coordination. Relying heavily on volunteers to support with volunteer induction and coordination, has affected the quality of our volunteer vetting and coordination procedure and has contributed heavily in the workload of the core team. In 2019, Better Days will actively work towards the securing of sustainable and additional funding to cover Gekko's main operations and longstanding gaps in key personnel: volunteer coordinator, accountant, BD administrator, social worker, Gekko Kids principal etc.



Looking forward ...

Next Steps for Better Days & Gekko Kids

Socrates - Sports and Development project

Better Days is proud to announce the start of a new project in the coming months, focusing on Sports and Development for Gekko Kids students.

Unaccompanied minors are deprived of family structure, languish in even greater isolation and are waging a lonely struggle against their sense of dislocation and often PTSD. Through sports and specifically through the international language of football, the Socrates project is aiming to promote good physical and mental health.

Through this project we are eager to provide our students with a supportive environment, teaching the students teamwork, culture of respect, collective goal-setting and other life skills. This project will encourage them to grow, develop and build resilience towards a better integration and mental health well-being.

Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics - (STEM)

We have secured an additional premises for Gekko Kids which we're excited to be launching soon. The new centre will focus on Science, Math, technology and the arts. The new centre is a further step towards our vision of Gekko Kids by providing a safe and positive experience of education, catering to the needs and passions of our students. The new centre will allow us to broaden our curriculum, offer blended and e-learning, and enable our kids to explore and attain new competencies in the field of science and technology while also improving our facilities and programming in the arts.

Partners, Sponsors & Acknowledgements

Behind every successful program is a team of highly skills and passionate individuals some in the role of teachers others as sponsors or mediators all of which are valuable to the success of this project. We cannot begin to give thanks to everybody who gave their time and support to make Gekko possible.

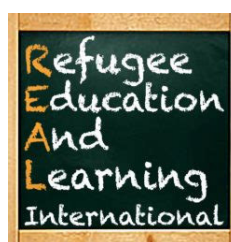
Sponsors & Founders

Better Days operational expenses to manage and sustain quality programming at Gekko in 2018 was generously funded by:

Institut Le Rosey, Help Refugees, Humanity Now, Sea of Solidarity, REAL, The Light Space and other smaller contributors.

Collaborators & Partners

- Iliaktida AMKE
- Connect By Music
- REAL
- The Light Space



The Light Space



SEA OF SOLIDARITY

