

What AdvancED said about ASM:

At American School Macedonia (ASM), the AdvancED Engagement Review Team experienced a unique culture of genuine enthusiasm, collaboration, attention to the individual and intellectual inquisitiveness. Throughout the review, teachers and students were observed to be consistently involved in high interest and engaging activities.

At the end of the second day in the school, one team member remarked, “The teachers are constantly enthusiastic, which I have never seen before.”

Culture of Success

Students at AMS are highly motivated and benefit from a school culture that fosters higher order thinking, values active and student-centered teaching and learning and effectively prepares students to become successful and contributing members of society. This lofty statement is supported by the fact that the MAP scores are consistently above the national averages, the results on the Macedonian Matura Examination are strong and continue to improve over time and 100% of graduating seniors are accepted to universities each year. Perhaps even more importantly, the team found that students genuinely enjoy coming to school. The combination of a collaborative and familiar culture and high-interest, challenging and engaging teaching provides for an intellectually stimulating and supportive learning environment, in which all student can and do succeed.

Students maintain their natural enthusiasm for learning as they progress through the grades, resulting in impressively high success rates

The AdvancED team found students to be highly motivated, collaborative and self-reflective, and this is no accident. As teachers noted in one interview session, motivation is essential to student success. A teacher explained that, “The first month is all about this and we work on it each day.” This is in conjunction with specific training of students on the skills necessary for effective collaboration, differentiation and self-reflection focused on goal attainment. A teacher explained that, “With the peer and group work to help each other, you need to teach them these skills and different approaches. In every class we equip them with different strategies that cut across subjects. And these are constantly reviewed. We show them how one strategy that works in one place can work in another; but in another, no. So they must learn to choose different strategies in different situations.” Such skill development fosters critical thinking, while providing for the locus of control to remain with the student. Lesson plans and observations revealed a high degree of student centered teaching and learning, which in turn leads to self-motivation and enthusiasm for learning. As one

AdvancED team member aptly stated, “They were discussing difficult concepts and you could see that they were all engaged and driving the discussion. I was surprised that what I saw in the high school was the same as what I saw in the elementary school. The kids are alive.”

What parents said during the AdvancED Accreditation

Parents were effusive in their comments about the level of support and quality of teaching their children enjoy at the school. A mother stated, “I searched for a good school for good education and a happy place at the same time. She wasn’t so good in English at first and now she’s fluent in just a few months, because of the teachers’ support and she’s relaxed all the time,” and a father added, “The kids are encouraged to communicate. They make lessons and presentations and teach. In my country, they are not allowed to speak, and the kids are so stressed all the time. They don’t allow them to be kids. Here they are allowed to express themselves. They encourage our kids to ask questions and become inquisitive.” Another father explained that this son spoke no English when he entered the school two years ago as a first-grade student, and that he is now fluent and has completed reading all the Harry Potter books this year as a third grader. Stakeholders repeatedly referenced high expectations and achievement, but not through pressure or competition.

AdvancED Findings

By the end of the Engagement Review, the team concluded that ASM is indeed a very unique and special school community. It is not possible to enumerate and explain the many strengths of the school in such a brief report, but suffice it to say that team members realized quickly that they were experiencing something special in terms of quality education. The students are thriving, parents are engaged and connected, and school personnel are collaboratively constructing ever more effective organizational, learning and support structures. All this is happening in an atmosphere that is at once comfortable, alive with intellectual excitement and totally accepting.