

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE II: INTERNSHIP AT ACI

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Abstract

In this article, we explained our experiences from a two-week period internship at İzmir American Collegiate Institute (ACI). We classified our explanations into three parts: Observations From Mathematics Department, Resources and Materials in Mathematics Department, and Extracurricular Activities of ACI. During those two week time, we breathed the air of the school's unique environment and learned about the most valuable motto of the school: Enter to learn- Depart to serve.

Key Words: school experience, internship in İzmir, American Collegiate Institute.

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Introduction

The purpose of this article was to share our impressions from our two-week period internship at İzmir American Collegiate Institute. We tried to give main ideas about the school in the frame of observations from mathematics department, resources and materials in the department, and extracurricular activities in the school. All of them are placed on the ground of the school's motto: Enter to learn, depart to serve.

Impressions From ACI: Enter To Learn, Depart To Serve

A. Observations From Mathematics Department

One of the most remarkable issues in ACI Mathematics Department was coordination meetings which were repeated every week amongst the same grade level teachers. During those meetings, the teachers were sharing their teaching experiences for their own classes: Which topic had they accomplished, what were the students' responses in some key points, how was the classes' learning process and what were they planning to do next? Additionally they were designing exam questions and the exams' marking schemes together.

For example, we observed three of Lise2 teachers' meeting on the second day of our arrival. The main issue the teachers discussed was the questions of 10th grade mathematics exam. By sharing their evaluations and ideas from their own classes (even they considered the students' levels); Gül Hanım, Mualla Hanım, and Şule Hanım discussed on the question types, numbers of questions asked, and markings of them. Then, they eliminated or adjusted some of the questions to a more appropriate level for all the 10th grade students. When we asked about those coordination meetings, they answered us that during those meetings, they were not only deciding the exam questions and marking scheme, but also the running of the lessons, even examples would be solved during the topic. They believed that way was fair for all students.

As it should be more obvious now, the same grade level teachers have been doing these meetings for every week and the meeting times were already decided on the teachers' weekly schedules. Therefore, all of the teachers were working in collaboration systematically. Another thing that we observed was especially more experienced teachers were leading the meetings and giving support to the newer ones about teaching techniques and content knowledge. Then, as we witnessed in different teachers' different classes; the same grade level teachers' lesson running was almost same-the same examples were solved, the same handouts and worksheets were distributed, the same homework was given.

Except these; in the first week on Wednesday, there was a general exam at the whole school: Academic Monitoring Exam. The whole department had studied together and designed the multiple choice questions which were in the same format with YGS and LYS (national university entrance exams in Turkey) for each grade level. After the exam, all the mathematics teachers at the department convened a round table and discussed several issues about what could be done more for students' success and professional development. Since we had just been involved at the end of the meeting, we just formed a judgment on this way.

Another outstanding issue in ACI Mathematics Department was international mathematics contests. The department had a schedule which 16 international contests were included. Mrs. Öztarhan, the head of the department, really valued those contests. She had several big files with many documents in them about sample contest questions, mostly asked question types in international contests, and workings of possible coming questions. Students who would attend to those contests were usually selected by the same grade level teachers. And for some contests, students were invited according to their previous success for those contests such as AMC and IMC. Additionally, there were many degrees and congratulation certificates of the students. However, as we learned from the teachers in the department, since it is not allowed

to give a hard copy of such documents and exam questions as a school rule, we just had a chance to look through them.

Furthermore, there were two TÜBİTAK groups which were conducted by Şebnem Hanım. One of the groups was included from 9th and 10th grade level students and the other one was included from 11th and 12th grade level students. Because of the works and rehearsals of Ekin Yazın Etkinlikleri, the students could not attend the group for two weeks. So, unfortunately we could not observe the courses that they took. But, Şebnem Hanım explained us what they did in the courses and gave some documents to have an idea. The main concept was number theory and it was aimed to provide critical thinking to students about applications of number theory.

B. Resources and Materials in Mathematics Department

In mathematics department, the teachers had their own resources in addition to the common use resources. It was possible to classify the Turkish mathematics and geometry books which were separated according to grade levels and the English books usually within divided topics such as Calculus, Trigonometry, and Algebra. While the most used Turkish mathematics books was *Esen Yayınları* for each grade level, for geometry it was *Tümay Yayınları*. Those were the books that also students used for their class works and homework. *Algebra and Trigonometry Structure and Method Book 2 (by McDougal Littell)*, and *Calculus (Thomas&Finney)* were the mostly used English books by the teachers.

Furthermore, teachers' edition books were generally used in the department. *Advanced Mathematics-Precalculus with Discrete Mathematics and Data Analysis (by McDougal Littell & Houghton Mifflin)* was the favorite one especially between Lise2-Lise4 teachers. In this book, topics, concepts, written examples, class examples, chapter tests and answers were given within some parts from students' textbook. We thought the nice thing with the book was the extra parts such as Teaching Notes, Warm-Up Exercises, Motivating Section, Problem Solving, Assessment

Note, Using Technology, Communication Note, Mathematical Note, Additional Examples, Suggested Assignments, Supplementary Materials, Making Connections, Error Analysis, Cooperative Learning, and Review Note.

As new teachers we could utilize from those parts quite often. For example, some key concepts were given in the part of Mathematical Note such as “The graph of a function is the set of all points in the plane determined by the function. Members of the range are called values of the function”. Another quite useful part was Error Analysis. It was stated some mostly seen student mistakes in that part. For instance: “Students often evaluate the composition of functions incorrectly because they are not careful about the order. Emphasize that the inner most function is evaluated first. Evaluation then proceeds outward (See Ex.19-22)”. Additionally, as we were educated to understand the importance of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education here, in our methods classes, we liked the examples of the book which were mostly related with STEM and real life issues such as manufacturing, engineering, landscaping, sports, and art.

At library, when we looked for the mathematics books for the students, fortunately, we encountered many game and exploration books related with mathematics topics. In addition to those books there were ‘learn yourself’ book sets for trigonometry, algebra, and calculus topics. There were not many books but it seemed to us that the books were selected carefully according to students’ levels and to provide them mathematical thinking skills in terms of inquiry based learning approach.

Besides all of these, smart boards were the most used materials in the classrooms. The teachers had their notes, presentations, and class works on those boards and this helped them to use the time effectively and motivate students into the classes. Especially for geometry classes, those boards played a crucial role for teachers, Eren Hanım explained. They prepared their

materials suitable for smart board use and made ready for the classes in advance. While doing those preparations some software programs were used by the teachers such as GeometersSketchPad and GeoGebra. Except those, TI graphing display calculators and virtual TI were mostly used equipments in IB classes.

C. Extracurricular Activities of ACI

From the first day in ACI, we were really impressed by flag ceremonies. The respect of the whole school to the flag ceremonies was quite admirable. On the flag ceremonies day- Monday morning and Friday afternoon- before the ceremony; the announcements, congratulations of students' and teachers' works/efforts in some competitions, projects etc. were done by Anet Gomel, the principal of the school and Todd Cuddington, the headmaster of the school. The two languages Turkish and English were used at the same time, as we would get used to it day by day.

One other admirable thing for us occurred the second day of our arrival: 18th of March- Heroes' Day. The program began with the opening speech of Didem Erpulat, one of the assistant principal. Then students displayed a quite attractive play which approached to the war in the frame of peace! The history was kept alive by real images and videos of the war, students' role plays of different soldiers from each side of the war, a Turkish mother and an Australian mother. At the end, the ceremony was accomplished by Atatürk's most known words: "Peace at home, peace in the world!". Then, Anet Gomel arrived on the scene, mentioned about her feelings, and congratulated all the students and the Social Science Department teachers while presenting flowers to each of them.

By the way, there were a great number of extracurricular activities in the school which Irmak Hanım, the extracurricular activities coordinator, had the major part of the responsibility. The two of them that we attended were Destination Imagination (DI) whose advisor was a

mathematics teacher, Şule Hanım and the other one was Junior Achievement (JA), whose advisor was again a mathematics teacher, Gül Hanım. In the first week on Thursday, we attended the last rehearsal of students. They were already the champions of Aegean Region in their lane and were preparing to go to İstanbul, as the last step of the competition. As we learned, the seven students came up with a scenario that they wrote by their own and designed the costumes according to the scenario in time. The teacher mostly guided them about how to use materials without giving any idea since the key point was that students would imagine.

Junior Achievement Club was also impressive. Gül Hanım told us about more than last 10 years' success and the latest ones. As JA Club members, students established a virtual company, Shero. In that company, under the leadership of a general manager all the departments worked quite hard. Some of them took care of the financing business, some of them marketing business, some others worked on consulting business and there were groups of students who worked on designing, presenting the products and so on. At the end of that big effort, the company was awarded in the categories of the best stand and the best company in Brussels. When we attended the club meeting in the second week on Wednesday, Ayşe Nur Gedik, a guest speaker worked in KAMER who was also a graduate of ACI, was there to talk with the students and thank to the Shero company since the income was directly transferred to the charity. That was also a social responsibility project for the women subjected to violence (Further information: http://www.kamer.org.tr/icerik_detay.php?id=199).

Except these, some of JA members participated in Elevator Pitch competition (further information: <http://www.ozyegin.edu.tr/Events/2012-Events/Asansor-Konusmasi-Yarismasi>) and some of them participated in Innovation Camp at Robert College every year counseling under their active and energetic mathematics teacher, Gül Yılmazkoç. There had been many success stories for each of those competitions for each year. For example at those days, they were

planning a trip to Denizli to learn about some successful company and factories more. And the nice thing was this organization was preparing by the helps of one of the old JA Manager who had become a real general manager of a big company Funika in time!

At last, we had chance to attend Ekin Yazın Etkinlikleri on the last two days of our internship. On Thursday, Yekta Kopan was interaction with the students and talked about his career as a writer, journalist, and voiceover artist. On Friday, two caricaturists Cihan Demirci and Sadık Pala were with the students in humor workshop. There had been writing workshop with the participation of several other schools, debating contests, and at the end of the day the Turkish play was displayed at 8p.m., named by Mahmud ile Yezida.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to share our impressions from İzmir American Collegiate Institute. We learned many things about school life in that two-week period. It was quite useful for us to see the continuum of the lessons, to be able to make meaningful connections between the exams, quizzes and given feedbacks to the students, the works of students and teachers in general. ACI teachers and students were quite kind and helpful to us. Besides, we enjoyed the peaceful campus of ACI, the lunches, and İzmir in general. It was such a unique experience for us. Thank you for providing such an experience for us.

"A Bilkent student does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do. On my honor, as a Bilkent student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work."