

Kyiv Private School “Athens” was founded 22 years ago, in 1994, by Oleksii Hrekov, Oksana Balakshyna and Marina Osadcha. My husband and I wanted not only to set up a school for our daughter, but to create school of our dream, school where we would be happy to study if we were children again. There were only 25 kids at our school when we started, but nowadays 435 students study there. Additionally, there are more than 400 children from different cities of Ukraine, who are the students of distant form of education, and about 130 coworkers. So from little school of “family type” we have grown to become one of the largest private schools of Ukraine.

School “Athens” is school of experimental type. And it is time to explain why we are so changeable. During all this period of time we’ve tried to do all our best in order to change the educational system of Ukraine. The modern Ukrainian educational system can be traced back to the Soviet educational system. Actually, for the latter one it was very important not only to teach children but to bring them up as people who could be active members of the Soviet society and therefore were able to set definite goals and achieve them. But after the breakup of the USSR, the educational system not only laid aside communist ideology, but also former social trainings aimed at the development of such significant soft skills as team spirit and volunteer participation in social projects.

Now in most of Ukrainian schools students are merely being taught different subjects, and the efficiency of school is being rated only by the results of final tests, not by achievements and successes of graduates in their grown-up lives. We believe that our country, Ukraine, will be successful in the modern world only if the economy changes from raw and agricultural into creative one. It is creative economy that invests in the development of human potential and abilities of young generation. Famous Ukrainian pedagogue Nikolai Guzik while working with thousands of students not only defined different types of talent, but also pointed at their comparative prevalence.

We are sure that in the modern world young people who have developed “soft skills” will be more successful and happy. It is essential for students to realize exactly which skills and why should they develop. So we have come up with simple and understandable model named “The image of the 21st century individual”. As you can see, this person is standing on two feet, PQ and EQ, they stand for physical health and emotional skills. He is ready to hug the world with his SQ and TQ arms (they stand for social and technological competences). Of course, he is an intelligent guy (I think, you have already guessed that IQ is for intelligence). And, what is very important, he has MQ — morality — in his heart. For us morality is honesty and compassion and it cannot be measured.

This approach is consistently being realised during a child's life in school "Athens". Taking in consideration students' achievement age, we have divided our school into 5 stages: kids aged 6—8 years are students of the 1st stage; 7—10 years old are students of the 2nd stage, 10—12-year-old children are students of the 3rd stage. It corresponds to the students of the 5th and the 6th grades, according to the traditional division of children into grades, as it is commonly used in public schools of Ukraine. For our school the third stage is the end of primary school, as it is considered in many European countries. Students of the 7th, 8th and 9th grades are studied at the 4th stage and the 5th stage is for the students of the two last years of education.

Each of the five stages has its own tasks for students to complete and it is essential for us that a child could become the student of the next stage only when he/she manages to fulfill all the tasks, is able to show his/her own portfolio of achievements and scores definite points in all 5 categories.

Now I am going to tell about how social and soft skills are promoted through our school programme on each of stages.

For the first-year students it is very important:

- to find out that there are some emotions and name them (psychology lessons are called: "I wonder; I feel angry; I am scared; I have something to boast of; I feel happy")
- to realise that everywhere in the world there are some rules which you need to follow;
- to be ready to work in a team while making projects;
- to perform, sing and dance on stage;
- to start taking part in hikes and sport competitions.

We add for kids aged 8—10 such forms of activities as:

- rating game called "Wandering under sail", where students of different ages, working together in one team under the leadership of a teacher, compete with other teams fulfilling different cross-subject tasks;
- the course named " Creative thinking development";
- individual creative projects;
- art therapy;
- practical courses which are taking place out of school (e.g. "Practical Math"; "Nature Study")

Students of different age while studying at our 3rd stage are able to:

- work in one team not only during after-school activities, but also when they are studying "Science", the course, which was created in our school and integrates such subjects as History, Geography, Nature Study, elements of Biology, Physics and Chemistry;

- create their own social projects and make teams to fulfill them;
- participate in different charitable events;
- along with students of the 1st and 2nd stages take an active part in lots of extra school activities which are aimed at development of vast range of abilities (e.g. Dancing, Singing, Chess, Lego, Gun Fu, different kinds of arts, Theatre, Language Clubs, etc)

When children finish primary school and therefore become students of the 4th stage, they are active participants of such activities as:

- debates;
- courses of critical thinking and oratory;
- trimester exams;
- “Immersion”, a special project which is held out of school during a week and has lots of cross-subject and cross-cultural tasks. Students of different ages work in teams under the leadership of elder students. Last September we succeeded to do mutual Polish-Ukrainian “Immersion” with students of Zespół Szkół Prywatnych w Katowicach;
- various types of vocational counseling named “Vocations of 21st century”.

Our elder children, students of last two years of education, besides learning subjects of state curriculum and preparing to pass state exams:

- are divided into three faculties such as “Science”, “Media Technologies”, “Social Activities” and are making their own research projects under the guidance of experts and professionals in these areas;
- have a special day in their school schedule to study such soft skills as project management, time management, family law, financial literacy, first medical aid.

In conclusion, I would like to mention, that our graduates not only successfully enter universities in Ukraine and abroad, but, while studying at universities, manage to create their own start-ups and even organise their own business. Therefore, we consider School’s “Athens” system of bringing up young generation with developed entrepreneurial and innovative minds to be successful and effective.