

DOGS in LEARNING
TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

By

Christina Birbil, Theo Koutsopoulos, Cathy Makropoulos, Stefanos Gialamas
American Community Schools of Athens (ACS Athens)
Athens, Greece

and

Konstantinos Koutsopoulos
National Technical University, Athens, Greece

Athens, Greece

September 2014

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of education is to successfully prepare students for the future, and therefore we cannot continue educating them in ways that address education and market needs of the past. The world has changed exponentially in ways that are not always easy to understand so as to accurately predict the future needs, and prepare students for them. Thus, a new trajectory in education urgently is needed. Today, a fresh, authentic, unbounded, and exciting educational paradigm is needed to educate students for complex, challenging and ambiguous future needs. In particular in primary grades we need to design an environment of engagement with creativity and innovation which should be the norm and not the exception.

At the end institutions of the world must inspire their students to develop the wisdom to transform their educational experience into social, economic, environmental, intellectual and ethical resources to improve their life, but most importantly the lives of people less privileged across the globe. That is, academic institutions, now more than ever, have to provide educational opportunities and experiences which however are determined by their culture defined “by its’ history, policies, management style and most importantly the thinking and behavior of it’s’ constituents” (Pelonis and Gialamas, 2010)

Athens has a culture of developing and implementing innovative programs while adopting an authentic leadership approach. As a result, ACS Athens after almost a decade of research, planning and classroom application has developed and is implementing an authentic educational approach called the **Global Morfosis Paradigm**.

2. THE GLOBAL MORFOSIS PARADIGM

In brief, this dynamic Paradigm consists of three inseparable, interconnected, and interrelated components.: The **Morfosis** (from the Greek word Μόρφωση=Education) Educational Philosophy defined within the 21st century framework, as a holistic, meaningful, and harmonious educational experience, guided by ethos. The vehicle to implement this paradigm, is the **i²Flex** (i square Flex), a non-traditional learning methodology, organically developed by the ACS Athens community of learners. It is supported and supplemented by **Aristeia** (from the Greek word Αριστεία=Excellence) **Leadership** an Innovative Leadership approach which refers to the continuous act of effectively engaging all members of the institution (constituencies) while utilizing their differences, energies, inputs, and diverse qualities primarily for the benefit of the students, and also for all constituencies of the institution. Following is a brief review of the Global Morfosis Paradigm.

2.1 The Morfosis Educational Philosophy

This Educational Philosophy is characterized as follows: It is **Holistic** for it is successfully combining the academic, emotional, physical, intellectual and ethical components ensuring a

healthy and balanced individual. It is **Meaningful** for it is in line with the learner's principles and values as well as with his/her personal and professional goals. That is, the educational experience must be meaningful for the learner who should see it as part of his/her life and not in isolation of knowledge. In addition it must be meaningful in relation to his/her dreams, strengths, desires and talents. It is **Harmonious** in that it refers to the idea that all human dimensions must be in harmony. In other words emotions, intelligence and intellect must be harmonically integrated and the learner helps all parts to stay in harmony. Finally this educational approach is operating within the framework of **Ethos** which is "Doing the right thing when no one is watching you" (C.S.Lewis,2011 and Aldo Leopold, 2006)

2.2 The I² Flex Delivery Methodology.

Drawing on the research and practice of blended learning, i²Flex integrates independent student learning and inspiring learning guided by a faculty mentor and the face-to-face learning that is flexible in terms of time, pace, place, and/or mode. That is, given that much of the world of knowledge acquisition associated with the intellectual process of remembering, understanding and application can be accomplished through online learning activities as well as independent investigation. Students using this methodology are engaged in learning opportunities that exist in many forms, and thus learning occurs anywhere, anytime and for everyone.

2.3 The Aristeia Leadership Trajectory.

This innovative approach is defined by two essential components: the establishment of an Authentic Leadership Identity (ALI) and the creation of a Collective Leadership-Partnership Approach (CPA).

The first component can be expressed by the Socratic philosophy "living a life of meaning begins with the quest to know oneself". That is, the process of understanding where we come from and how life has affected and shaped our personalities, life choices and approaches to living is important in developing and defining a leadership identity. Therefore knowing oneself is a necessary first step in creating the leadership vision and defining its philosophy of education.

The second component is based on defining the professional goals through a process of self-reflection and revision. The questions a leader must continuously ask in order to revise, fine-tune and refine his/her leadership approach are where do we want life to take us, and how can we participate in this co-creative process? Moreover, partnerships and collaborations ensure that there are checks and balances, that other individuals participate in the decision making process and that there is a comprehensive support system in place to ensure that the institution thrives and functions at the highest possible level of achievement. In addition it is crucial that all members of the leadership partnership share a belief in the institutional vision and are committed to striving towards reaching common goals.

Finally it should be noted that recent research confirms the validity of the previously described holistic paradigm. Indeed in a recent paper by K. Koutsopoulos (2014) it was suggested that nowadays in education “a need exists for an integrated approach which is simultaneously pedagogic (i.e. new role of teachers), methodological (i.e. non-traditional learning methodologies), technical/technological (i.e. use of the internet), administrative (i.e. new role of school administrators), social (i.e. a different disposition of parents towards school), political (i.e. a different approach of government to school) and cultural (i.e. new role of students), in dialectic harmony and respecting all aspects of teaching and learning an integral part consisting of pupils, teachers and school administrators.”

3. DOGS in LEARNING: TRANSFORMING EDUCATION (DiL)

Echoing such an integrating Educational Paradigm and based on the ever present desire of the ACS administration to utilize the Global Morfosis Educational paradigm, a new educational approach has been developed and applied by a team headed by Theo Koutsopoulos one of the school’s faculty. More specifically, the program called **Dogs in Learning (DiL)** is designed to use highly trained dogs as an inspirational vehicle to help children understand and apply everyday issues related to empathy and psychology such as: leadership, non-violence, patience, respect, kindness, love, team work, responsibility, confidence, friendship, trust etc. In addition a plethora of curriculum contents at the Elementary School are being taught and learned by students in a meaningful and fun way.

The use of the interaction with dogs as a vehicle to attend to or resolve different issues started after WWII to meet the problems and needs of returning soldiers and have evolved greatly since then. Recent research indicates that interaction with dogs can temporarily affect the release of various neurotransmitters in the brain. Among the most important are: it increases the levels of oxytocin (linked with bonding) and dopamine (involved in the reward-motivation system) and decreases the cortisol levels (an immunosuppressant associated with stress) (Odendal and Meintjes 2003). These results scientifically support the need and feasibility of utilizing/interacting with dogs as well as substantiate the fact that such an interaction incorporates quite a wide range of potential activities, some of which have not been applied, with a wide range of potential groups of people.

The last point clearly indicates that the various programs of dog utilization are not uniform, but they are differentiated according to the goal of the interaction. Indeed, research and experience indicate that up to now there have been three categories of dogs’ utilization:

- **Therapy Dog:** The term is used to describe when a dog is used to benefit people in a therapeutic way
- **Assistance Dog:** In this category a dog is trained to perform specific tasks to help a disabled person
- **Activities’ facilitating Dog:** This is a specially trained dog utilized to facilitate or improve various human activities.

However, as we are well into the 21st century, important differentiations have occurred related to the way we view the dog-human interaction. That is, there is a new category of dogs whose value and necessity are beyond the above mentioned categories. In essence, the thesis put forth in this paper is: **there is a need for a classroom dog which is capable of becoming an inspirational vehicle in learning while assisting children to apply some basics of empathy and human behavior.** Or in other words transform learning at ACS by manifesting the Global Morfosis Paradigm utilizing dogs.

3.1 The “Dogs in Learning” (DiL) Program

The DiL program represents a new approach based on the last category, namely of dogs addressing issues of Psychology and behavioral norms by correlating dogs’ actions with human behavior. More specifically, the program was developed by **Theo Koutsopoulos** (an ACS faculty member and a certified dog educator) in collaboration with **Christina Birbil** (a first grade ACS faculty member) working with children of the elementary school of the ACS in Athens and started with a dog, the beloved three-legged Captain Chip.

The goals of the program imbedded within the ACS School Curriculum are simple and forward. Namely, to link empathy as well as psychological, social and emotional learning within an academic context that highlights behavioral concepts, facilitates learning as well as instills all forms of zoophile in that order. The program is based on the following principles.

Resiliency:

This basic principle refers to a holistic approach to education, which is physical, cognitive, social, emotional and academic.

Empathy:

With this principle the program by using dogs’ behavior and treatment promotes:

- Caring for other people and having a desire to help them.
- Experiencing emotions that match another person's emotions.
- Discerning what another person is thinking or feeling.
- Making less distinct the differences between the self and the others
- Nurturing relationships
- Bring out the best of Human Feelings
- Other.

Emotional Intelligence and Social-emotional Learning:

This principle promotes positive thinking through a series of actions and activities such as:

- Coordinating thinking and actions.
- Critical thinking skills.
- Responsible, ethical decisions.
- Healthy pro-social behaviors.

- Build character – enhance academic achievement.
- Build self-esteem.
- Role-play.
- Educational, fun activities.
- Projects/games.
- Reading featured books.

Promoting Zoophile:

This principle determines the interaction with the dogs, in order to achieve:

- Responsible Pet ownership.
- Caring for class dog (provide for them: food and water, grooming, walking, playing and training).
- Hand on activities with dogs.

3.2 Spiral curriculum Approach.

The DiL program is a well-designed educational program based on a spiral curriculum repeating five key elements, within and implementing the ACS curriculum, using dogs.

The Spiral Curriculum is an old and well-known approach suggested by Jerome Bruner (1960), who claimed that “We begin with the hypothesis that any subject can be taught in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development”. That is, Bruner’s followers accept that even the most complex material, if properly structured and presented, can be understood by very young children.

As a result, the basic features of the spiral curriculum are:

- The student revisits a topic, theme or subject several times throughout their school career.
- The complexity of the topic or theme increases with each revisit.
- New learning has a relationship with old learning and is put in context with the old information.

Which in turn provide the following benefits:

- The information is reinforced and solidified each time the student revisits the subject matter.
- The spiral curriculum allows a logical progression from simplistic ideas to complicated ideas.
- Students are encouraged to apply the early knowledge to later course objectives

It is the simplicity of the approach and the benefits it provides that tipped the scale in deciding to use this curriculum approach in the DiL program. However, DiL operates within the school’s teaching philosophy and follows ACS’s curriculum.

As for the key elements and their spiral position in the curriculum they are the following:

- 1st Grade: PATIENCE
- 2nd Grade: PATIENCE-CONFIDENCE
- 3rd Grade: PATIENCE-CONFIDENCE-FOCUS

- 4th Grade: PATIENCE-CONFIDENCE-FOCUS-TEAM WORK
- 5th Grade: PATIENCE-CONFIDENCE-FOCUS-TEAM WORK-LEADERSHIP

That is, students at ACS using dogs are taught a new element every year while repeating the elements of previous years in a more advanced manner which illustrates depth of knowledge. It should be noted, however that in the educational spiral approach a basic principle is that any child at any stage of his/her development can be taught any of the above elements. As a result, the program can start at any grade level.

3.3 The Dogs at ACS

The dogs used in the classrooms of ACS are highly trained dogs that have an impeccable temperament. That is, they have undergone in-depth positive reinforcement training and thus they have been rigorously assessed to be competent and safe to work within the school environment.

Basically, the classroom dogs at ACS can have many positive benefits, achieving various tasks. That is, ACS dogs can perform a series of objectives from simple to more substantive, the later been the major contribution of the program. More specifically they can be:

Classroom Participants.

The dogs used in ACS can simply be present in the classroom whilst the children are having their lesson(s). As a result, their very presence has a calming effect on the children.

Listening Audience.

By being incredibly calm, ACS dogs are happy to have an individual child read to them or join a group of children in the library whilst they are having a book reading session. As a result these dogs:

- Give unconditional acceptance to children reading, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to struggling, emerging readers.
- Provide confidence to children as they do not make fun of them when they read.
- Perform as amazing listeners, thus providing children with a sense of comfort and love.
- Increase in reading levels.
- Word recognition.
- Higher desire to read and write.
- Increase in intra and interpersonal skills among the children they mix with.

Reward Providers.

It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self esteem. Moreover, if you consider that ACS dogs are gentle and loving and at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the children, then their role as a reward is self evident. That is, those children who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, can be rewarded with spending time during lunch or break to interact with these dogs. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities the children will be allowed to undertake with the reward dogs.

Education Facilitators.

ACS classroom dogs have shown that they can facilitate learning concepts for literacy and language development, mathematics, biology, social studies etc. Faculty members have embraced this curriculum and have enhanced the existing curriculum by providing learning activities including the dogs.

Social Facilitator

ACS classroom dogs can bring much joy and help to all the children they meet and are happy to provide plenty of kisses (liking) and affection to children who are spending time with them. In other words, children who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in an ACS dog.

Psychological Supporters.

ASC dogs can work with children on a one to one basis and thus they can help children who have been bullied, abused, going through upsetting/difficult times or have been scared/phobic of dogs. In addition, they can help low self-esteem students to improve themselves as well as introvert children to become extroverts. Finally, dogs can be used as anti-depressing, improve lack of concentration, anxiety and hyperactivity.

Empathy Providers.

ACS dogs can encourage a broad range of emotional states to children, including caring for other people and having a desire to help them; experiencing emotions that match another person's emotions; discerning what another person is thinking or feeling; and making less distinct the differences between themselves and the others.

3.4 DiL Program implementation

The ACS program was initiated and applied as a pilot program over the last two academic school years, (2012-13 and 2013-14) to three grades of the school (1st, 2nd and 5th). Due to its success, starting this year (2014-15), it is applied to all grades of the elementary school.

During the pilot application time the program team consisted of three faculty educational-staff (dog educator Theo Koutsopoulos, first grade teacher Christina Birbil and their assistant Xenia Vafopoulou) and three dogs and one puppy (Captain Chip in first grade, Iro in second grade and Arno and Talos in 5th grade).

3.3.1 Overall Objectives and Goals

During the pilot period and through the Life of Captain Chip (the first dog of the program), first graders and later second and fifth graders, had an enriched program which has provided them with innovative educational methodologies inspiring and empowering children psychologically, socially, emotionally as well as academically. More specifically:

Psychologically: Children at ACS, who are, growing up in a society, like the rest of the children, where animal neglect is prevalent, become empowered to make a difference and not turn a blind eye. In addition to instill passion in what they do through compassion. Enabling students to care for work with and train a dog, helps them to realize that every action has a consequence regardless of who you are or how old you are. This opportunity has the power to change the way they feel about themselves and others and build compassion, empathy and respect.

Socially: By socializing and training dogs, children at ACS are educating themselves on how to incorporate the dogs into their daily lives through a solid basis of respect. Finally, students learn the basics of animal handling, including:

- How to properly approach and meet a dog.
- Overcome dog phobias (if any).
- Basic training commands (come, heel, sit, sit-stay and down-stay).
- Responsible pet ownership, including walking, feeding, grooming and playing with a dog.

Emotionally: Children across campus had the opportunity to get meaningful moments to bond with available dogs. That is throughout the day students' self-esteem is solidified as they are seeing their dog respond to their requests, thus providing a tangible experience in leadership as well as empowering students to become accountable decision makers in all areas of life.

Academically: The program is integrated into the academic curriculum of the school, differing from the rest of the educational activities in that it utilizes the expertise of faculty who have professional dog training and behavior experience as well as the use of a team of selected and appropriately trained and prepared dogs to enrich and enhance student learning in a variety of subject areas, using different approaches. For example the elementary school children of ACS have been inspired at the pilot stage to write letters to Captain Chip as well as read aloud to him on a daily basis (both activities maintain Fan Club status) and thus inspire children to be more communicative, compassionate and involved. This act of reading aloud to a non-biased

listener enables them to feel safe as well as take risks. In addition, the presence of dogs in the classrooms facilitates the teaching of reading and writing (as it was mentioned) as well as of mathematics, biology, social studies etc.

It should be noted that the overall objectives and goals of the new and complete program are basically those achieved during the pilot period, improved and refined to reflect the experience gained during that time period.

3.3.2 Goals and Objectives by grade.

The overall goals of the program, following the spiral curriculum, were individualized to each grade to fit the age needs and abilities of its students.

1st Grade

Objective: The objective of the 1st grade is to meet and greet dogs as well as train them to obey basic commands using treats. ACS faculty member, works with the children teaching them about dogs and how to handle them (what to do, what not to do and why). In doing so the students are taught about the meaning and importance of patience.

Goal: The goal is for children by training a dog to focus on working with PATIENCE.

To accomplish these goals, first graders have to work closely with their teacher, the homeroom team and a faculty-certified dog trainer. The staff is teaching the children to bond with their dog through socializing and reading to them. The act of reading aloud to a non-biased listener enables children, especially shy readers, to take risks and increase comfort levels ensuring a sense of security which is needed for an overall healthy social, emotional and academic progress. At the pilot period those involved were Christina Birbil (first grade faculty and owner of Captain Chip), the rest of the first grade homeroom team and the faculty and certified dog trainer Theo Koutsopoulos, who help and taught students to socialize and train (basics of animal training) Captain Chip, thus educating children on how to incorporate Captain Chip into their daily lives through a solid basis of respect. In essence the staff involved by teaching the children to train a dog, they inspire them to be patient within the framework of their fan club.

Academically, first graders are inspired to develop reading comprehension strategies based on their wish to write letters to their dogs as well as read aloud to them. In addition, they participate in group discussions, initiate conversations and use a variety of descriptive words related to their beloved dogs.

2nd Grade

Objective: The objective of the 2nd grade is to transfer from treat oriented dog training to “the promise” of a treat. The meaning of that is based on the fact that a dog learns to respect the command requested because of pack leadership. As a result, the key component of this grade teaching is to equate dogs’ behavior with how children behave towards others and why.

Goal: The goal in this grade is simple yet very powerful, namely CONFIDENCE. Students are taught that it is important when working with a dog (and in general) when he/she feels confident about what he/she is doing, then the dog feels secure next to him/her.

To accomplish this goal second graders learn how to bond and communicate with their dogs throughout the day. As a result, as they see dogs respond to their requests, their self-esteem is firmly established. This also provides them with the tangible experience of Confidence.

The second graders at ACS, during the pilot period by socializing and training Captain Chip or the other dogs were educated on how to incorporate the dogs into their daily lives. In addition students learned basic training commands (come, heel, sit, sit-stay, and down-stay) and responsible pet ownership (walking, feeding, grooming and playing with a dog) which allowed them to appreciate PATIENCE and CONFIDENCE.

Academically, second graders can receive help in many subject areas. For example, in mathematics students in a playful way practice to count the number of steps they have to make forward or backwards in a certain area to allow the dog to perform an exercise. Additionally they are asked to count the time (i.e. from 1 up to 5) in order to wait for the dog to finish within a certain time and reward it with a treat, familiarizing themselves with techniques to solve mathematical problems.

3rd Grade

Objective: The objective of the 3rd grade is to teach students how to learn about focusing and time limits using a very energetic dog. More specifically, Focus is built in the classroom through the selection and use of a highly energetic dog. That is, by requiring students to combine focus on that dog with a time limit, they realize that the moment they lose focus of this high energetic dog they immediately lose their focus on themselves. Of course, as the class progresses the time limit is shortened forcing students to act more alert.

Goal: The goal in this grade is to direct the students' attention or effort at specific actions they are involved with, using a dog as an instrument.

Academically, 3rd graders have many opportunities to deal with academic subjects. For example, they contribute in class and group discussion referring to their dog; moreover students are asked to count the number of times an exercise is performed by the dog in order to follow its progress and express mathematical relationships by observing how many times a dog needs to repeat an exercise until it feels confident.

4th Grade

Objective: the objective of the 4th grade is to ask students to participate in exercises with a dog that needs team cooperation to be completed. In addition each time while the task remains the same, the role of every team member changes so they can appreciate the importance that all have to contribute towards the final objective.

Goal: The goal in this grade is to teach students the principle of teamwork. That is, the work that needs to be done is accomplished when each one is doing a part but their work is subordinate to the efficiency of the final outcome, using a dog to reach that conclusion.

Academically: Given the focus of this grade (teamwork) a typical academic exercise is for students to be able to work in a team where each member has a different assigned responsibility/exercise while working with the dog in an obstacle course. That is, students learn to solve measurement problems using different units, one student can keep record of the time needed for the dog to overcome the obstacle, another to measure the height the dog has to jump, another the distance covered by the dog etc.

5th Grade

Objective: The objectives of the 5th grade are based on the psychological theory of human-animal bond and Pack dynamics. Basically it is a unique, kind method in which the dog elect him/her as his leader of his own free-will. In addition, the roles for each team member are decided by the students themselves (as opposed to the 4th grade practice). That is, by deciding themselves what they will do, in essence exercise leadership.

Goal: The goal for the 5th graders is to understand and appreciate how much their relationship with the dog improves if the dog actually wants to cooperate of its own free-will, not by force or control by gaining experience in the theory behind the psychology of the human-animal bond and pack dynamics. As a result, students learn to handle their behavior appropriately and appreciate the notion of LEADERSHIP.

To accomplish these goals the responsible faculty is working with fifth graders so that they can learn about dogs, the pack and how to handle a dog in various circumstances. That is, students can be taught leadership through dogs because key factors of their own character, their instinct and their importance, determine how powerful a dog is and how it reacts responding to the way we act.

A typical exercise used towards that objective is for the faculty (Mr Koutsopoulos at the pilot period) to use a dog (Aika at the pilot period) to show students the importance of the true leader and the bully (bossy behavior) as follows:

One person holds the dog and the faculty approaches her in three different ways

1st way: The faculty approaches the dog reluctantly with slow moves, not confident about himself and indicating that he is a little scared. The reaction of the dog is that she becomes suspicious of her owner and looks at him with mistrust.

2nd way: The faculty approaches the dog with confidence, walking towards her normally and calmly as well as petting her. The dog's reaction is to wag her tail and enjoy the owners petting

3rd way: The faculty approaches the dog walking with big steps, emitting to the dog an aggressive body language. The dog's reaction is to step back and lean on the person holding her. As a result, it becomes fearful and immediately lies down, showing a total surrender to the owner without understanding the reason of his attitude.

This and other examples teach students the importance of true leadership and the correlation to the anti-bullying theory.

Academically, fifth graders in addition to be inspired on the five themes-elements at an advanced level are given the opportunity to work in a series of academic subjects. For example, by measuring the speed of two dogs having different heights, students can correlate the length of a dog's leg with his running ability.

Overall the faculty using various techniques in dog training teaches the children all five key elements, namely: Patience, Confidence, Focus, Team work and Leadership. During the course the students have the opportunity to understand that they lack confidence when they are working for the first time with the dog. By being patient they have to gain confidence in the field while they learn to keep the dogs focus on them and to be focused and calm themselves. In addition they realize that in order to reach their goals they have to work as a team. Finally, by working and handling a dog in this way they become true leaders. Of course, all these are accomplished within and for the benefit of the ACS curriculum.

The dog techniques applied to all dogs and in every classroom are uniform in nature and application, namely: Dogs are rewarded, depending on the dog's task and what is needed to be accomplished in three ways either with food or by petting them or finally by rewarding them with kind words.

In sum, the main contribution of the DiL program is that through the presence and use of dogs in the classroom, a manifestation of the Global Morfosis paradigm is attained. More specifically, following a spiral educational curriculum using five key elements, some basic issues of empathy are achieved by the elementary school children at ACS, such as understanding the emotional states of other people. In addition, they are provided with opportunities to feel connected and safe/secure. This is essential for them, in order to progress in several important behavior modification and understanding at their age levels. Of course, the traditional classroom dog benefits (i.e. facilitating reading, writing mathematics etc.) are also provided.

It should be noted that the five themes-elements of the DiL program can certainly be taught to grade and high school students through other academic subjects or using different educational approaches. However, the position presented here is simple in its explanation, but radical when considered in terms of the current practices in education. That is, educational processes and the teaching of the basic themes-elements such Patience, Confidence, Focus, Team work and Leadership cannot be addressed as successfully in the traditional way. In addition curriculum subjects can be taught more effective and in a playful and enjoyable way when the learner is engaged in the learning process. Providing meaningful hands-on opportunities to children allows them to take their learning to a different level. In other words, these elements and the other subjects can be successfully taught because animals, especially dogs, are capable to attract and hold the attention of and mainly inspire students of all ages (a very difficult task in the traditional approaches). The most representative example is facing the anti-bullying phenomenon which cannot be successfully dealt with unless we accept the fact that

dogs can do it in a manner extremely more effective than the failing traditional efforts. But most important the DiL program represents the successful manifestations of an learning approach which is the dialectic entity of **the Global Morfosis Paradigm**

4. INITIAL RESULTS

The initial results of the pilot application of the DiS program have shown that the classroom dogs at ACS can have many positive benefits, achieves among others, the following:

- Improves reading.
- Overcomes the phobia of dogs.
- Motivates those children who are often not that attentive.
- Helps calm children down.
- Builds confidence
- Forms a bond among classmates and strengthens their team ethics
- Improves academic achievement.
- Provides children with responsibility and encourage them to respect all life.
- Provides happy, playful but constructive time
- Modifies Behavior.
- Promotes Empathy Emotions

4. TO IMPLEMENT SUCH A PROGRAM

In order for the DiL program to be implemented the following persons, support and infrastructure are required:

- 4.1. Faculty training by a certified dog trainer
- 4.2. A dog educator responsible for training the faculty
- 4.3. Acquisition of classroom dogs for each grade which requires their selection after evaluation as well as a series of preparatory tasks such as vaccinations, insurance etc.
- 4.4. A well written curriculum
- 4.5. A series of equipment such as the obstacle course.
- 4.6. Administrative support (either an assistant dog trainer or a “helper” that the certified dog trainer will be responsible for)

5. CONCLUSIONS

The literature indicates that most members of the educational community independent of national conditions, level of education and educational role, (Koutsopoulos, 2013,) have accepted the need for a new paradigm where the holistic role and the advantages offered by Global Morfosis can provide the framework within which it has to develop. As a result, the approach termed in this paper Dogs in Learning is a successful manifestation of that paradigm and an innovative response of ACS Athens to the present day's educational needs. Indeed, DiL can be applied by any school by using properly trained dogs in the classroom, thus allowing teachers and students to teach themes-educational elements that traditional teaching approaches have difficulty or even inability to deal with, in an innovative, playful and effective way.

The DiL program in its infancy proves that young learners can be inspired to reach their maximum capacity intellectually, academically, physically, emotionally, ethically and at the same time develop a kind and ethical personality. We need the next generations of leaders to be leaders with ethos, kindness and mindfulness, basic tenants of the Morphosis paradigm, in order to establish a better world to live in.

6. REFERENCES

- Avgerinou, M.D. (2014, March 19). i²Flex. *The New York Times International & Kathimerini*. Available online at http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_ws16_1_19/03/2014_538303
- Avgerinou, M.D. (2013, Winter). Digital natives, disruptive schooling and other brainteasers. *Ethos*, 8-11.
- Avgerinou, M.D., Gialamas, S., & Tsoukia, L. (in print). i²Flex: The meeting point of web-based education and innovative leadership in a K-12 international school setting. In D.G. Sampson, D. Ifenthaler, J.M. Spector, & P. Isaias (Eds.). *Digital systems for open access to formal and informal learning*. New York: Springer.
- Bruner, J. (1960). *The Process of Education*. Cambridge, MA: The President and Fellows of Harvard College.
- Fullan M., and Langworthy, M., 2013. *Towards a New End: New Pedagogies for Deep Learning*, http://www.newpedagogies.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/New_Pedagogies_for_Deep_Learning_Whitepaper.pdf. Gialamas, S. (2014, May 8). Educational institutions for a more humanistic world. *The New York Times International & Kathimerini*. Available online at http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_ws16_1_08/05/2014_539551
- Gialamas, S. (2014, January 15). Educating for Change. *Panel Discussion*.
- Gialamas, S. (2011, October 13). Leadership collaboration: High school and college environments. *International Herald Tribune*. Available at <http://www.acs.gr/publications/2011/10/13/leadership-collaboration-high-school-and-college-environment.html>
- Gialamas, S., & Pelonis, P. (2009). Morphosis leadership being visionaries in a changing world. *Academic Leadership Online*, 7(2). Available at <http://www.academicleadership.org/327/morphosis-leadershipbeing-visionaries-in-a-changing-world/>
- Koutsopoulos, C. K. (2014). School on cloud: towards a new paradigm. *Themes in Science and Technology Education*, Vol 1, No1 pp. 47-62.
- Koutsopoulos, C. K. (2011). Changing Paradigms in Geography. *The European Journal of Geography*. Vol 2, No 2 pp. 54-75
- Odendaal, J. S., and Meintjes, R. A. (2003). Neurophysiological Correlates of Affiliate Behavior between Humans and Dogs. *The Veterinary Journal* V.6 pp15-23.
- Pelonis, P., & Gialamas, S. (2010). An international perspective of academic leadership. *International Schools Journal*, XXX(1), 72-85.

