



MSA
Sustaining
Excellence
Colloquium:
**Relationships
Matter**



Letter from the Head of School

Dear Pinewood Community,

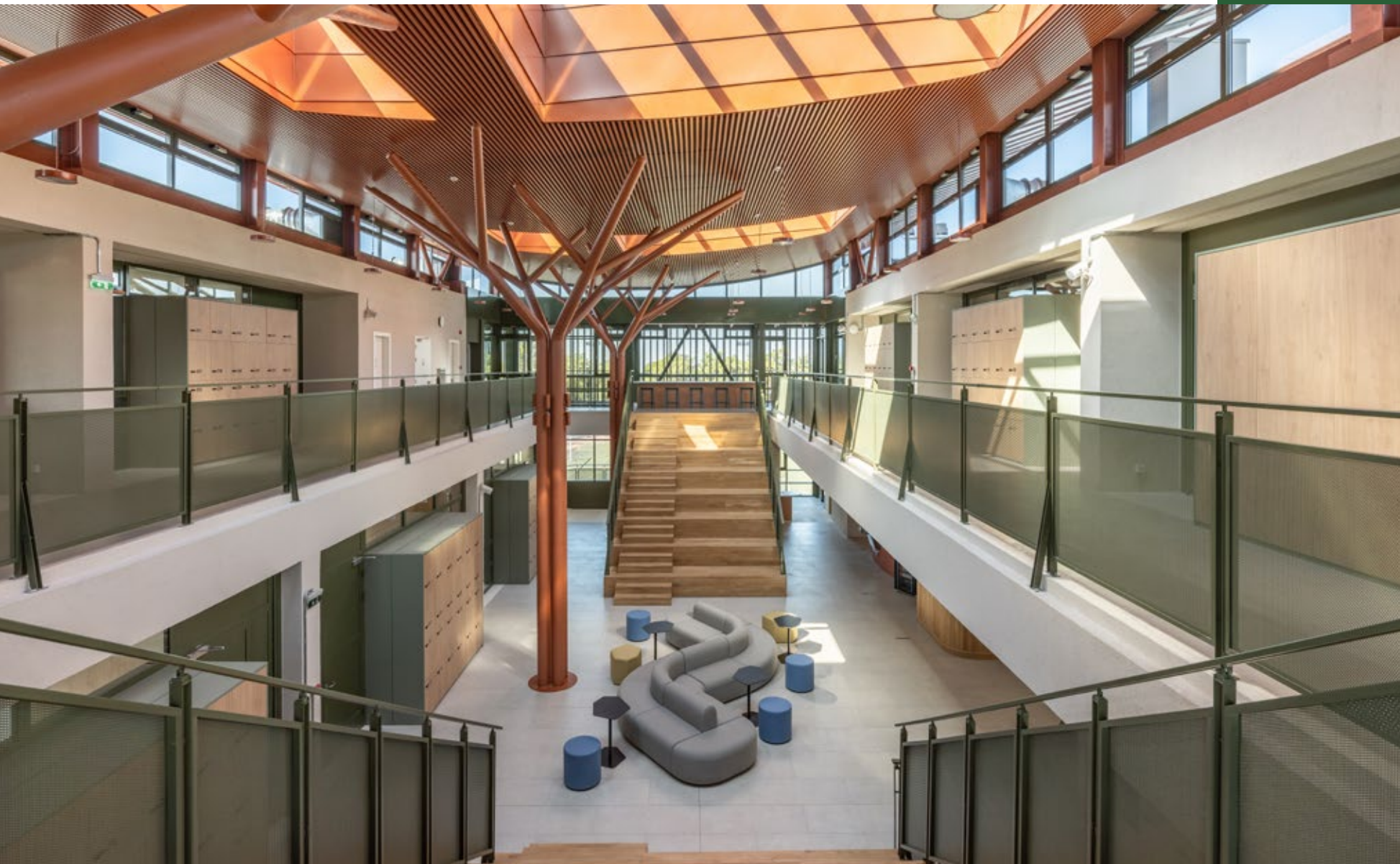
This year is a particularly meaningful one for Pinewood American International School. We are proud to celebrate 75 years as an American school in Greece (1950–2025) and 40 years of continuous accreditation with the Middle States Association (1986–2026). These milestones reflect our history and our enduring commitment to growth. They are also expressions of how excellence is continuously shaped and sustained in practice.

It is within this context that our booklet takes shape. At its heart is the work of our faculty, whose MSA action research exemplifies what it means to sustain excellence in practice. Through thoughtful inquiry, teachers have bridged theory and classroom experience, using research not as an abstract exercise, but as a tool to strengthen relationships, deepen learning, and enhance educational effectiveness for our students.

Together, these projects are united by a central theme: **building relationships through relational learning**. They reflect our belief that it is the nexus of relationships among students, educators, disciplines, and communities that gives learning depth, meaning, and purpose. Indeed, our faculty's research exemplifies that when relationships are intentionally placed at the center, education moves beyond the exchange of information and becomes a transformative, enduring experience for learners.

I invite you to engage with our work as a reflection of who we are and who we continue to become as a learning community.

Warm regards,
Dr. Roxanne Giampapa
Head of School



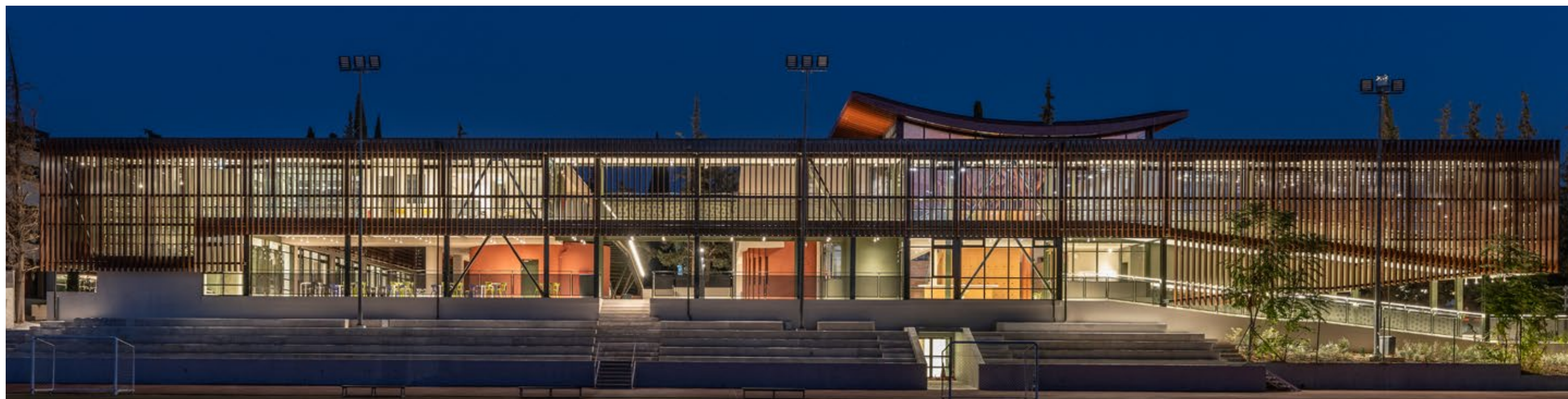
MSA – Inspiring Excellence in Education

At the heart of every truly exceptional school lies a deep commitment to reflection, growth, and community. The Middle States Association (MSA), through its Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS), embodies this commitment and gives it global impact. Founded more than a century ago as a voluntary, peer-based, non-profit educational association, MSA-CESS partners with schools around the world to sustain excellence, strengthen institutional integrity, and nurture meaningful learning environments grounded in shared responsibility.

Accreditation through MSA-CESS is more than a badge of quality; it is a purposeful journey that invites schools into ongoing cycles of self-reflection, external review, and continuous improvement. Guided by rigorous, research-based standards, the process examines every dimension of school life, including mission, teaching and learning, leadership, culture, and community engagement. This holistic approach ensures that daily practice remains aligned with deeply held values and long-term aspirations.

This year marks a significant milestone for Pinewood American International School, as we celebrate 40 years of engagement in the MSA accreditation process, beginning in 1986. Over four decades, Pinewood has chosen to participate in successive accreditation cycles as an expression of its commitment to growth, accountability, and educational excellence. This continuity reflects a long-standing belief that a strong school is one that evolves through reflection, renewal, and a willingness to learn from its own practice.

For Pinewood, accreditation through MSA represents a valued partnership that reflects who we are as a learning community. It affirms our mission to nurture curious, creative, and caring thinkers, while reinforcing our belief that education flourishes where relationships, reflection, and responsibility guide decision-making. Through this enduring commitment, we continue to grow with intention, integrity, and a clear sense of purpose.





Sustaining Excellence – A Framework for Continuous Growth

Excellence is not a moment in time, nor a destination reached and left behind. It is a living commitment that must be nurtured, renewed, and reimagined with intention. Sustaining excellence reflects the understanding that high-quality education is not preserved by tradition alone, **but strengthened through reflection, shared responsibility, and purposeful growth.**

In schools, excellence often appears in visible achievements such as academic results, innovative programs, and successful graduates. Yet its deeper measure lies in the questions we continue to ask, the values that guide our decisions, and the relationships we choose to protect, especially during periods of change. At Pinewood, sustaining excellence has meant **embracing growth while remaining grounded in identity and purpose.**

As the world our students inherit becomes increasingly complex and interconnected, schools must remain agile and thoughtful. They must be anchored in mission while open to transformation. This balance between continuity and progress allows institutions to endure with integrity.

The MSA framework provides structure for this work through intentional self-study, peer review, and strategic planning. It encourages collective reflection and evidence-informed decision-making so that improvement remains thoughtful, inclusive, and sustainable. Through this process, excellence becomes a shared responsibility shaped by leadership, faculty, students, families, and governance working together with intention.

Ultimately, sustaining excellence is an act of care. Care for students and their futures. Care for educators and their professional growth. Care for community, culture, and legacy. With the support of MSA and the commitment of its people, Pinewood continually **renews its promise to educate with purpose, courage, and heart.**



Sustaining Excellence in Action (2023-2030)

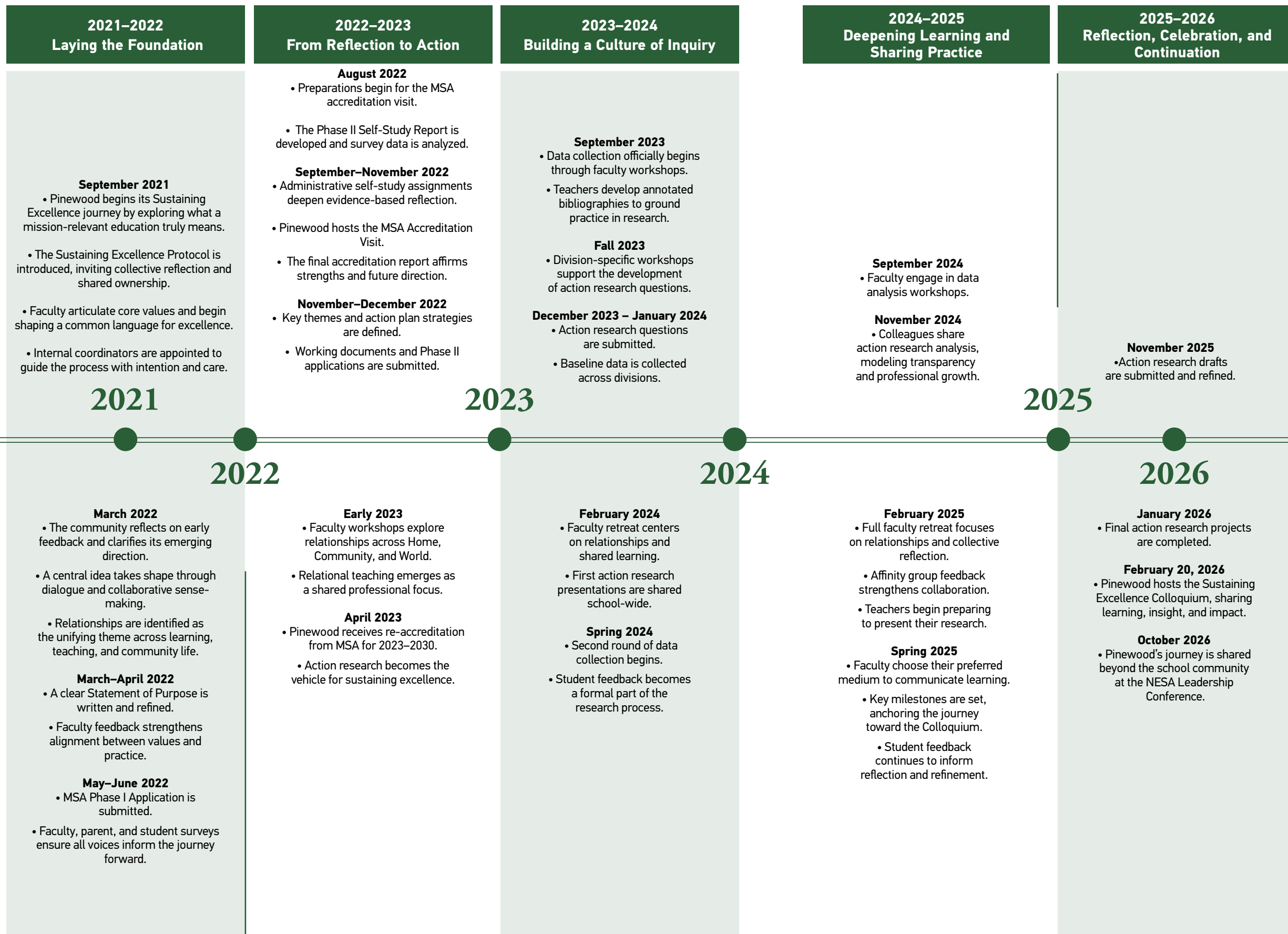
The Pinewood journey since 2021 is a story of intention. It began not with a checklist or a deadline, but with a shared question: what does excellence truly mean for us, and how do we sustain it with integrity?

Rather than treating accreditation as a moment to prepare for, we chose to see it as an opportunity to reflect deeply, listen carefully, and grow together. The Sustaining Excellence process invited faculty, leadership, students, and families into a culture of inquiry grounded in trust and shared purpose.

What followed was a thoughtful progression from values to vision, from reflection to action, and from individual insight to collective learning. At the heart of this journey was a clear realization that relationships are not an outcome of excellence, but its foundation.



TIMELINE



Action Research: Building Relationships to Support Student Learning

Pinewood has embraced the **Sustaining Excellence framework** as an opportunity to deepen practice, strengthen relationships, and ensure that learning remains meaningful, inclusive, and future focused. The action research projects presented in this booklet represent the lived expression of that commitment.

Across Elementary, Middle, and High School, faculty engaged in systematic, evidence-based inquiry grounded in authentic classroom questions. While contexts and disciplines vary, a clear coherence emerges. **Learning flourishes when relationships and student voice are intentionally placed at the center of educational practice.**

In the Elementary School, action research focused on belonging, language development, creativity, and engagement. Studies explored how ELL support, survival vocabulary, creative writing, process-oriented art, and movement-based learning foster confidence, inclusion, and academic growth. Initiatives such as **buddy systems, wellbeing measurement, outdoor learning, sustainability projects, and cross-cultural collaboration** demonstrated how relational structures support emotional safety, empathy, and intercultural understanding alongside learning outcomes.

In the Middle and High School, inquiry centered on **student agency, conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and identity formation.** Teachers examined how storytelling, inquiry-based tasks, explicit modeling of reasoning, differentiation, and structured mentorship strengthen motivation, confidence, and deep learning. Other projects explored wellbeing services, intramurals, student leadership, language learning, artificial intelligence use, and sustainability education, **highlighting the importance of aligning academic rigor with relational support and ethical awareness.**

These action research projects do not offer final answers. They offer insight, learning, and direction, reflecting a school community willing to examine itself honestly and grow together. In this way, they embody Sustaining Excellence as a **shared and ongoing commitment to learning with purpose.**



Learning Through Relationships: Action Research in Action



Projects are organized thematically and listed alphabetically by title within each section.

A. Relational Learning, Belonging & School Culture

At the heart of meaningful learning lies a sense of connection to people, place, and purpose. The action research projects within this theme explore how relationships shape student experience, wellbeing, and motivation across the school community. By intentionally centering belonging, voice, and emotional safety, educators examined how learning environments become spaces where students feel seen, supported, and empowered to grow. Together, these inquiries affirm that strong relationships are not an added layer of schooling, but the foundation upon which engagement, resilience, and academic success are built.



Core idea:

Learning is fundamentally relational; wellbeing and belonging are conditions for academic success.

1. Evaluating the Impact of a Wellbeing Ambassadors Program

Teachers: Anastasia Panidou, Smaragda Spyrou, & Karen Georgacacos

Research Question: What impact does a wellbeing ambassadors program have on empathy?

Focus: Empathy, SEL

What We Did: Used empathy scales and observations.

What We Found: Students showed individual growth and engagement.

Short Description: Through a combination of empathy scales, observation, and stakeholder feedback, this inquiry traced how students engaged with a structured, student-led Wellbeing Ambassadors program. While overall measures of empathy remained relatively stable across age groups and genders, individual patterns of growth and engagement became increasingly visible. Reflection on these findings highlights the strength of experiential, peer-led initiatives in fostering empathy, inclusion, and shared responsibility within the school community.

2. Exploring Students' School Attitudes and Sense of Belonging

Teacher: Marianthi Serafeim

Research Question: How do students experience school culture?

Focus: Belonging, student voice

What We Did: Collected quantitative and qualitative student feedback.

What We Found: Strong relationships and voice improved motivation and wellbeing.

Short Description: Drawing on both quantitative data and student voice, this inquiry sought to understand how learners experience relationships, belonging, and agency within the school community. Patterns emerging from student feedback highlighted the importance of strong teacher–student relationships, engaging learning experiences, and meaningful opportunities for voice. Reflection on these findings suggests that when school practices are responsive and relational, students demonstrate higher motivation, stronger wellbeing, and more positive attitudes toward school and their future pathways.



3. Intramurals and the Development of Emotional Control

Teachers: Konstantinos Kakaroudis & Athina Tsagkaraki

Research Question: How does participation in intramurals contribute to emotional regulation?

Focus: SEL, athletics

What We Did: Observed emotional responses during competitive intramural activities.

What We Found: Students demonstrated increased emotional balance and resilience.

Short Description: Within the context of competitive intramural sports, patterns of emotional response began to emerge through observation of success, challenge, and team interaction. Students experienced strong positive emotions during moments of achievement, while increasingly demonstrating balance and self-control when facing setbacks. Reflection on these responses suggests that structured athletic environments offer valuable spaces for practicing emotional regulation, supporting the development of emotional intelligence and resilience beyond the playing field.



4. Measuring and Supporting Student Wellbeing

Teachers: Linda Kainz, Anastasia Panidou, & Smaragda Spyrou

Research Question: How is wellbeing measured and supported in schools?

Focus: Wellbeing

What We Did: Used surveys and focus groups.

What We Found: Data-informed initiatives strengthened belonging.

Short Description: Systematic collection of wellbeing data through questionnaires, interviews, and collaborative dialogue with teachers and families brought clearer patterns in student experience into focus. Analysis highlighted relationships, language barriers, and academic pressure as key factors shaping wellbeing. Reflection on these insights suggests that intentionally linking evidence to grade-specific initiatives strengthens student voice, emotional safety, belonging, and collective teacher efficacy, laying the foundation for a sustainable whole-school culture of wellbeing.

5. Storytelling in Physics

Teacher: Dr. Maria Karaveli

Research Question: How does storytelling support engagement in physics?

Focus: Engagement, relevance

What We Did: Integrated storytelling and real-world contexts into physics lessons.

What We Found: Storytelling reduced resistance to physics and increased engagement.

Short Description: As physics lessons were intentionally designed around storytelling and real-world scenarios, shifts in student motivation and engagement began to emerge. Observations across lessons showed that embedding abstract concepts within meaningful narratives helped students form stronger connections with both the content and its real-life applications. Reflection on student responses indicated reduced resistance to physics, increased perceived relevance, and deeper engagement, including among learners who initially expressed low interest in the subject.

6. Student Council Participation and School Belonging

Teacher: Helen Dalakas

Research Question: How does participation in the Student Council strengthen belonging?

Focus: Leadership, belonging

What We Did: Engaged students in leadership and service initiatives.

What We Found: Participation strengthened school identity and intrinsic motivation.

Short Description: Participation in leadership, service, and school-wide initiatives through the Student Council revealed noticeable shifts in students' sense of belonging and motivation. Reflection on student experiences showed how opportunities for voice and shared responsibility strengthened emotional connection to the school community. The inquiry suggests that sustained involvement in Student Council supports identity formation, authentic motivation to serve others, and post-pandemic reconnection, contributing to a more unified, engaged, and resilient school culture.

7. Student Perceptions of the Buddy System

Teachers: Isla Venters, Elena Zarakinou, & Fabiola Adami

Research Question: How do students experience support through the buddy system?

Focus: Peer relationships

What We Did: Implemented a cross-age buddy system and collected student feedback.

What We Found: The buddy system promoted empathy, leadership, and smoother transitions.

Short Description: Student feedback gathered through surveys offered insight into how the cross-age buddy system was experienced across the elementary school. Patterns in student responses revealed that buddy partnerships eased transitions, reduced stress, and supported social, emotional, and academic growth for both younger and older students. Reflection on these findings highlights strong student endorsement of the program and underscores its role in nurturing empathy, leadership, intercultural sensitivity, and a caring school culture aligned with Pinewood's values.



B. Language, Identity & Culture

Language learning is deeply intertwined with who students are and how they experience belonging within a community. The inquiries within this theme examine the ways language shapes confidence, cultural connection, and relationships across multilingual learning environments. Through attention to emotion, identity, and meaningful use of language, educators explored practices that support inclusion and authentic engagement. Collectively, these projects highlight language as a living, relational experience that nurtures agency, connection, and a strong sense of self.



Core idea:

Language learning is emotional, cultural, and relational, not merely technical.

1. Creative Writing in Kindergarten: A Pathway to Language Development

Teachers: Anna Maria Matthias & Kathy Lekkas

Research Question: How does creative writing support early language development?

Focus: Language development

What We Did: Integrated creative writing activities into Kindergarten Language Arts.

What We Found: Improved literacy skills for both native and ELL students.

Short Description: Creative writing activities in Kindergarten supported the development of speaking, reading, and writing skills for both native English speakers and English language learners. Drawing, storytelling, and open-ended writing tasks allowed students to express ideas beyond their current language level while building confidence and engagement. Reflection on student work suggests that a scaffolded, multimodal approach to creative writing supports inclusion and helps all learners develop a strong foundation in early literacy.

2. Evaluating the Impact of the BLAST ELL Program

Teachers: Niki Sidiropoulou, Liza Tziatas, Filiana Zafiriadou, & Evi Magnisali

Research Question: How does BLAST participation influence language growth and integration?

Focus: ELL support

What We Did: Analyzed assessments and teacher observations.

What We Found: Longer participation supported stronger language and social outcomes.

Short Description: Patterns emerging from assessments and teacher observations over time clarified the impact of sustained participation in the BLAST after-school program. Students who remained engaged demonstrated growing confidence, stronger classroom participation, and more frequent use of English in social contexts. Reflection on these trends indicates that long-term, structured ELL support plays a significant role in strengthening language development, social integration, and meaningful relationships with peers and teachers.



3. Formative Peer Work in World Languages

Teachers: Vassiliki Bliani, Andromachi Lenou, & Vesna Vidakovic
Research Question: How does peer work affect language learning and school spirit?
Focus: Peer learning
What We Did: Used collaborative tasks and cultural activities.
What We Found: Peer work enhanced motivation and school spirit.
Short Description: The introduction of structured peer collaboration across English, French, and Spanish classrooms revealed noticeable changes in student engagement and participation. Student-led tasks, cultural activities, and peer feedback positioned language learning as a shared social experience rather than an individual task. Reflection on these patterns suggests that formative peer work strengthens motivation, communication, and intercultural awareness, while encouraging greater involvement in whole-school events and reinforcing a shared sense of community alongside language development.

4. Greek Language Certification and Student Identity Formation

Teacher: Eurydice Tzima
Research Question: How does Greek language certification contribute to identity formation?
Focus: Language, culture
What We Did: Prepared students for formal certification exams.
What We Found: Certification strengthened agency and cultural connection.
Short Description: As students prepared for the Ellinomatheia Greek language examinations, patterns of growth in confidence, motivation, and cultural connection became increasingly visible. Reflection on the preparation process revealed that external assessment offered more than linguistic validation, supporting student agency and deeper engagement with Greek culture. The inquiry suggests that formal language certification can strengthen social confidence, belonging, and purpose by providing meaningful academic goals and recognition of achievement.

5. Integrating ELL Support into Physical Education

Teachers: Ioanna Koumpli & Sofia Zoumeka
Research Question: How does ELL support influence participation in Physical Education?
Focus: Student Engagement
What We Did: Integrated ELL strategies into Grade 3 Physical Education.
What We Found: Improved comprehension, confidence, and participation.
Short Description: Integrating ELL strategies into Physical Education lessons revealed shifts in student confidence, language use, and engagement. Embedding action verbs, spatial language, and visual supports within active learning contexts supported understanding of instructions, increased use of English during teamwork, and more confident execution of motor skills. Reflection on classroom observations suggests that movement-based language learning supports inclusion and reduces barriers for beginner English-language learners.

6. Learning Greek as a Host-Country Language

Teacher: Chara Kika
Research Question: How does learning Greek affect belonging, identity, and wellbeing?
Focus: Language, identity
What We Did: Collected student voice data.
What We Found: Greek learning supported inclusion and confidence.
Short Description: Listening closely to student voice revealed how learning Greek unfolds as an emotional and relational experience within an English-dominant school environment. Patterns in motivation, anxiety, peer interaction, and classroom language practices shaped how learners engaged with the language. Reflection on these experiences suggests that Greek language learning can strengthen inclusion, confidence, and belonging when supported by low-anxiety environments and authentic opportunities for meaningful use, ensuring equitable engagement for all students.

7. Learning Greek Mythology to Strengthen Language and Culture

Teachers: Sophia Konstantinidou & Konstantina Lampropoulou
Research Question: How does Greek mythology strengthen linguistic and cultural connection?
Focus: Language, culture
What We Did: Used storytelling and collaborative activities in Greek.
What We Found: Mythology enhanced vocabulary, motivation, and cultural identity.
Short Description: Teaching Greek mythology through the Greek language revealed emerging patterns in student engagement and language use. Classroom observations showed that storytelling, discussion, and collaboration supported richer vocabulary development, stronger communication, and deeper connections to cultural meaning. Reflection on student responses suggests that mythology functions as a powerful bridge between language acquisition and cultural identity, fostering motivation, creativity, and shared learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom.

8. Learning History Through Music

Teachers: Eva Ieropoulos & Dr. Gundega Smite

Research Question: What is the pedagogical impact of music on historical understanding?

Focus: Music, history

What We Did: Integrated songs into history lessons.

What We Found: Music enhanced engagement, retention, and emotional connection.

Short Description: When music was intentionally integrated into history lessons, shifts in student comprehension and emotional engagement began to emerge. Songs functioned as narrative and mnemonic tools, helping learners contextualize historical events and retain key information more effectively. Reflection on student responses suggests that music makes abstract content more accessible and meaningful, fostering curiosity, deeper understanding, and active participation in the study of history.

9. Strengthening Teacher–Student Relationships through Survival Vocabulary

Teacher: Cathy Theodorou

Research Question: How does survival vocabulary support ELL learning?

Focus: ELL, belonging

What We Did: Integrated survival-mode vocabulary into ELL instruction.

What We Found: Improved confidence, relationships, and language development.

Short Description: When survival-mode vocabulary was intentionally integrated alongside traditional ELL instruction, shifts in both student confidence and classroom relationships became increasingly evident. Addressing immediate communicative needs helped create a sense of emotional safety, allowing trust between teachers and learners to deepen. Reflection on student progress indicated that strengthened relationships, combined with targeted vocabulary support, positively influenced speaking and writing development, supporting smoother classroom integration and stronger academic outcomes.



C. Innovative Pedagogies & Student Engagement

Student engagement deepens when learning invites curiosity, creativity, and active participation. The research within this theme explores how innovative pedagogical approaches shape motivation, collaboration, and meaningful involvement in learning. By designing experiences that are experiential, student-centered, and responsive, educators examined how classrooms become spaces of energy, ownership, and shared discovery. Taken together, these explorations affirm that engagement is sustained when learning feels purposeful, dynamic, and connected to students' lived experiences.



Core idea:

Engagement deepens when learning is experiential, creative, and student-centered

1. Improving Students' Confidence in Chemistry Experiments

Teacher: Dr. Clare Squires

Research Question: How do integrated instructions affect student confidence?

Focus: Instructional design

What We Did: Introduced integrated instructions in Grade 10 Chemistry lab activities.

What We Found: Improved clarity, confidence, and engagement.

Short Description: The use of integrated lab instructions in Chemistry lessons revealed shifts in student confidence and engagement during practical activities. Visual cues and simplified language supported clearer understanding of procedures and reduced cognitive overload. Students reported feeling more capable of working independently and navigating experimental tasks with greater ease. Reflection on student feedback suggests that more accessible instructions help students feel confident in the lab and more engaged with experimental learning.

2. Increasing Reading Engagement through a Collection Development Plan

Teacher: Colleen Amick Giapitsoglou

Research Question: Can a structured collection plan increase reading engagement?

Focus: Reading engagement

What We Did: Reviewed and renewed library collections.

What We Found: Updated collections increased motivation and circulation.

Short Description: This action research examines how the systematic review and renewal of the elementary library's Junior Fiction collection influences student reading engagement. By analyzing, curating, and updating resources in collaboration with students, teachers, and librarians, the plan aligns the collection with student interests and curricular needs. The findings indicate increased circulation, stronger student voice in book selection, and improved accessibility, suggesting that a well-managed collection development process can significantly enhance student motivation and engagement with reading.





3. Process vs. Product Art in Early Childhood

Teachers: Fay Castling, Kate Janes, Katerina Karagkiaouri, Tammy Mizas, Ellen Petruzella, & Demetra Proestopoulos

Research Question: How does valuing process over product support creativity?

Focus: Creativity, early years

What We Did: Used workshops, questionnaires, and observations.

What We Found: Process art increased autonomy and engagement.

Short Description: A shift in focus from finished products to the creative process revealed changes in children's confidence and artistic expression. Insights gathered through questionnaires, workshops, and classroom observation helped teachers and parents better understand the developmental value of process-oriented art. Reflection on these experiences suggests that increased awareness and collaboration between school and home foster greater creativity, autonomy, and emotional engagement in early childhood art learning.

4. The Impact of Outdoor Learning on Student Engagement

Teachers: Stavroula Bellou, Madison Harding, & Melanie Tanner

Research Question: How does outdoor learning impact engagement?

Focus: Experiential learning

What We Did: Compared indoor and outdoor lessons.

What We Found: Outdoor learning increased excitement and collaboration.

Short Description: Outdoor learning experiences brought patterns of student engagement, motivation, and collaboration into sharper focus. Survey data and classroom observations revealed higher levels of excitement, teamwork, and peer interaction compared to indoor lessons. Reflection on these differences suggests that integrating outdoor learning into regular practice strengthens relationships and supports deeper, more meaningful engagement with both content and peers.

D. Metacognition, Differentiation & Learning Design

Thoughtful learning design supports both cognitive growth and emotional safety. The inquiries within this theme examine how intentional structures, differentiation, and reflective practices shape student thinking and confidence. By making learning processes visible and responsive to individual needs, educators explored ways to support agency, persistence, and deeper understanding. These studies highlight how carefully designed learning environments allow students to think about their thinking while feeling supported and capable.



Core idea:

Cognitive growth and emotional safety develop together through intentional design.

1. Developing Metacognitive Skills through Cross-Curricular Mathematics

Teacher: Maria Tsavdaridou

Research Question: Can cross-curricular tasks develop metacognition?

Focus: Metacognition

What We Did: Used collaborative problem-solving tasks.

What We Found: Students became more reflective learners.

Short Description: Introducing cross-curricular problem-solving tasks created opportunities to observe how students approached planning, monitoring, and evaluating their thinking in mathematics. Collaborative, authentic problems encouraged learners to move beyond routine procedures and engage more intentionally with their strategies. Reflection on student work revealed a clear shift toward explicit metacognitive thinking, with students demonstrating greater awareness of their reasoning and making stronger connections between mathematical concepts and real-world contexts.

2. Differentiating Spatial Thinking through Graphical Representations

Teacher: Dr. Christos Vonapartis Kosmidis

Research Question: How do spatial skills relate to problem-solving?

Focus: Spatial reasoning

What We Did: Correlated spatial skills with task performance.

What We Found: Mental rotation predicted success.

Short Description: Patterns observed in students' problem-solving revealed how different components of spatial thinking shape success when working with graphical representations. Analysis linking spatial reasoning measures to performance across tasks highlighted mental rotation as a particularly strong predictor in more complex spatial and structural problems. Reflection on these findings suggests that intentionally developing specific spatial skills can expand access to STEM learning and support more confident, effective problem-solving in visually demanding contexts.





3. Differentiation in Mathematics and Student Relationships

Teacher: Dimitris Charalampidis

Research Question: How does differentiation affect relationships in mathematics?

Focus: Differentiation

What We Did: Implemented pacing choice groups.

What We Found: Differentiation improved confidence and relationships.

Short Description: Differentiated mathematics groups with varied pacing revealed important shifts in how students experienced learning and relationships in the classroom. The option to choose between standard and extended pathways reduced stress and supported growing confidence, while strengthening peer interaction and trust with teachers. Reflection on these patterns indicates that thoughtful differentiation enhances students' enjoyment of mathematics and sense of belonging, underscoring the importance of addressing emotional experience alongside academic learning.

4. Enhancing Conceptual Understanding in Design and IoT

Teachers: Christos Foutsitzis & Iordanis Paschalidis

Research Question: How do optional inquiry-based tasks support conceptual understanding?

Focus: Conceptual understanding

What We Did: Introduced optional, inquiry-based tasks in Design and IoT lessons.

What We Found: Improved conceptual understanding, motivation, and performance.

Short Description: Optional inquiry-based tasks in Design and IoT lessons revealed positive shifts in student motivation and conceptual understanding. Providing low-risk opportunities for deeper exploration encouraged students to make connections, test their thinking, and extend learning beyond core assessments. Reflection on student responses suggests that optional conceptual tasks support academic growth while motivating students to challenge themselves and engage more deeply with learning.

5. Structured Mentorship in the MYP Personal Project

Teacher: Evi Adelfopoulou

Research Question: How does structured mentorship impact learning outcomes?

Focus: Mentorship

What We Did: Provided consistent advisor support.

What We Found: Mentorship strengthened agency and project quality.

Short Description: Consistent guidance and regular advisor support within the MYP Personal Project created clear patterns in student learning and project development. Observations across the process showed growth in ATL skills, goal-setting, and reflective practice as expectations became more transparent and support more intentional. Reflection on these outcomes suggests that structured mentorship enhances student confidence, agency, and project quality, while also strengthening collaboration among teachers and contributing to a more cohesive and supportive school culture.

E. Assessment, Reasoning & Critical Thinking

Assessment plays a central role in shaping how students think, reason, and engage with learning. The research within this theme explores assessment practices that move beyond measurement to actively support understanding and reflection. By designing tasks that foreground reasoning, feedback, and transfer of learning, educators examined how assessment can deepen thinking and confidence. These projects reinforce the idea that assessment, when used intentionally, becomes a powerful tool for learning rather than a final judgment.



Core idea:

Assessment is a learning tool, not just a measurement tool.

1. AI Use, Collaboration, and Student Judgment

Teacher: Dr. Jonathan Sudholt

Research Question: How do students understand and use AI in their learning?

Focus: AI literacy

What We Did: Collected anonymous student and teacher feedback on AI use.

What We Found: Increased confidence, collaboration, and self-reported appropriate use.

Short Description: Student and teacher feedback revealed evolving patterns in how AI is used, discussed, and understood within the school community. Over time, students reported greater confidence in using AI appropriately and more openness in discussing its use with peers. Reflection on responses suggests that when expectations, policies, and ethical frameworks are clearly communicated, AI becomes a tool for learning, dialogue, and critical judgment rather than a shortcut, strengthening both academic integrity and collaboration.

2. Explicit Modeling of Reasoning in AP Microeconomics

Teacher: Apostolos Lemonidis

Research Question: How does modeling reasoning affect performance?

Focus: Critical thinking

What We Did: Modeled analytical processes explicitly.

What We Found: Students showed improved reasoning and confidence.

Short Description: Explicitly modelling economic reasoning during AP Microeconomics instruction brought changes in student understanding and performance into focus. Breaking down questions, emphasising key concepts, and addressing common misconceptions helped students grasp not only correct answers, but the reasoning behind them. Reflection on assessment outcomes suggests that structured guidance and repeated practice strengthen analytical thinking, build confidence, and support students in reaching performance levels aligned with university expectations.



3. Integrating MCQs to Strengthen Critical Thinking

Teachers: Social Studies Department (Panos Katsetos, Dr. Lazaros Vasiliadis, Grigoris Charalampidis, & Peter Korbakes)

Research Question: How does MCQ–FRQ integration support critical thinking?

Focus: Assessment design

What We Did: Linked MCQs to FRQs.

What We Found: Students transferred knowledge more effectively.

Short Description: Linking multiple-choice questions intentionally to free-response tasks revealed noticeable shifts in how students approached analytical writing in Social Studies. Using MCQs as formative scaffolds helped learners clarify expectations, organise their thinking, and apply factual knowledge with greater confidence. Reflection on student performance across grades showed a consistent narrowing of the gap between recall and critical analysis, suggesting that integrated MCQ practice strengthens reasoning skills and supports deeper, more purposeful engagement with the discipline.

1. Academic Performance and Disruptive Behavior

Teachers: Effie Choromidou & Ersi Passia

Research Question: How does academic performance relate to disruptive behavior?

Focus: Inclusion

What We Did: Analyzed MAP data and behavior checklists.

What We Found: Highlighted need for holistic interventions.

Short Description: Analysis of classroom behaviour and academic performance data revealed a consistent relationship between disruptive behaviours and lower achievement in Math, Reading, and Writing among students with learning difficulties. Patterns emerging from behaviour checklists and MAP assessment data were particularly evident in Language Arts. Reflection on these findings suggests that disruptive behaviours are often connected to challenges in attention, executive functioning, and emotional regulation, highlighting the need for holistic, relationship-centred interventions that address both learning and behavioural needs.

F. Inclusion, Wellbeing & Student Support

Inclusive education is sustained when students feel supported academically, emotionally, and relationally. The research within this theme explores how coordinated systems of care shape wellbeing, engagement, and learning across the school. Targeted interventions, student services, and responsive support structures were examined to understand how confidence, resilience, and access to learning can be strengthened. These projects emphasize that inclusion is not a single practice, but a shared commitment to meeting students where they are and supporting them to thrive..



Core idea:

Inclusion requires coordinated academic, emotional, and relational support.

2. The Impact of Student Services on Wellbeing

Teachers: Maria-Angeliki Apalodima, Ellie Tsachtani, & Chara Tampakaki

Research Question: How do Student Services affect wellbeing and performance?

Focus: Student support

What We Did: Provided coordinated academic and emotional interventions.

What We Found: Students showed improved confidence and functioning.

School Description: Targeted Student Services interventions brought noticeable changes in students' confidence, wellbeing, and academic functioning into focus. Over time, learning support and psychological services grounded in metacognitive and self-regulation strategies supported improvements in organization, stress management, and task completion. Reflection on these developments indicates that structured, holistic support plays a vital role in fostering resilience, inclusion, and sustained academic progress across both emotional and learning domains.



G. Global Citizenship & Sustainability

Global citizenship develops through connection, collaboration, and shared responsibility. The research within this theme explores how sustainability education becomes meaningful when rooted in relationships and real-world action. Inquiry into cross-cultural learning, environmental awareness, and collective problem-solving highlights the role of education in shaping ethical and engaged global citizens. These studies reflect a commitment to helping students understand their place in the world and their capacity to contribute to a more sustainable future.



Core idea:

Global citizenship is learned through relationships, collaboration, and action.



1. Cross-Cultural Mediation for Relational Learning and Sustainability

Teachers: Dr. Zoi Tsiviltidou, Vicky Roidou, Daniel Ocic Ihrmark, Tharrenos Bratitsis, & Ioanna Ntoumou

Research Question: How does cross-cultural mediation support sustainability learning?

Focus: Sustainability, global citizenship

What We Did: Implemented cross-school inquiry-based projects.

What We Found: Students developed collaboration and sustainable practices.

Short Description: Cross-cultural collaboration within the Global Classroom Project brought relational learning and sustainability education into sharper focus. Through inquiry-based activities aligned with SDG7, students engaged in cooperative experimentation, reflection, and dialogue with peers from another international school. Reflection on student interactions and learning outcomes suggests that relational pedagogies strengthen collaboration, openness to feedback, and sustainable practices, transforming sustainability learning from abstract concepts into shared, responsible action.

2. Environmental Education and Sustainable Lifestyle Awareness

Teacher: Georgia Paliouris

Research Question: How does environmental education influence sustainability awareness?

Focus: Sustainability

What We Did: Integrated ecological footprint analysis.

What We Found: Students gained awareness and reflection.

Short Description: This action research investigates the impact of environmental education on students' awareness of sustainability through the study of ecological and carbon footprints. By integrating data analysis, scientific concepts, and reflection on personal lifestyle choices within Biology lessons, the study examines whether increased knowledge translates into measurable behavioral change. While the findings show limited short-term reduction in students' ecological and carbon footprints, they highlight meaningful gains in awareness, reflection, and relational learning, underscoring the role of education in shaping long-term attitudes toward sustainability and shared responsibility.



Looking Back, Moving Forward

Taken together, these moments tell a powerful story. They reflect a school willing to examine itself honestly, invest in professional growth, and treat learning as a shared responsibility. Through action research, dialogue, and reflection, **Pinewood transformed accreditation into learning and accountability into opportunity.** Teachers became researchers. Students became contributors. Reflection became visible. Excellence became something lived.

The Sustaining Excellence Colloquium represents a meaningful pause, not an endpoint. It allows us to honor the work done, the insights gained, and the relationships strengthened, while also inviting us forward.

As we look ahead, the lessons of this journey endure. Excellence is relational. Growth is intentional. Sustainability is built through shared purpose. With these commitments at our core, we move forward as a reflective, resilient learning community, ready for what comes next.





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