



INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Under the auspices of the Municipality of Ancient Olympia
and Western Region of Greece

2 – 6 May 2025

International Olympic Academy


savvy business



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens





Introduction & Opening

Leading academics, specialists and educators from around the world gathered in Ancient Olympia, from 2 to 6 May 2025, to exchange knowledge and practices in inclusive education, within the framework of the International Summer School on Inclusive Education: Inclusion theory and best practices through a

transdisciplinary context, organized by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) in cooperation with Savvy Business, and under the auspices of the Municipality of Ancient Olympia.

The program officially opened on Friday, May 2, in the presence of the Deputy Mayor of Ancient Olympia, Mr. Sotiris Papailio. In his address, he emphasized the significance of choosing Ancient Olympia as the location for this pioneering initiative:

“This holy place radiates universal values that are deeply connected to education, dialogue, and inclusivity. The Summer School reflects the spirit of Olympia and provides a meaningful opportunity for collaboration.”

For the duration of the five-day Summer School, all activities took place at the **International Olympic Academy**, located near the renowned archaeological site. The Academy’s facilities offered an ideal combination of modern academic spaces, lecture hall and meeting rooms, along with communal areas for collaboration and informal exchange. Its serene environment, surrounded by olive groves and the rich history of Ancient Olympia, provided a unique setting where participants could immerse themselves fully in learning, reflection and cultural experiences. The venue’s blend of academic infrastructure and historical significance created an inspiring backdrop for discussions, workshops and collaborative projects, enhancing both the professional and personal experience of all attendees.



Program Focus & International Community

International Summer School explored inclusive education in the 21st century, focusing on how to:

- Build inclusive classrooms through innovative teaching methodologies.
- Strengthen continuous professional development for teachers in inclusive and special education.
- Adapt society to today's challenges, ensuring accessibility and equal opportunities.
- Design sustainable policies for inclusive environments.

Participants worked under the guidance of academics and mentors from inclusive education, psychology, sociology, and sustainable development, developing innovative proposals for inclusive practices.



The event brought together a diverse learning community of 34 participants from: Kazakhstan | Eswatini | Ireland | United Kingdom | Latvia | Georgia | Greece | Spain.



Speakers, tutors, mentors and organizers joined from the United States, Portugal, Romania, Georgia and Greece, creating a vibrant network of international expertise.

Academic Highlights & Expert Contributions

Summer School combined lectures, workshops, and collaborative activities, structured across three levels:

1. Theoretical & Policy Dimension

- Frameworks and principles of inclusive education.
- Critiques of exclusionary or discriminatory practices.
- Policy approaches for creating sustainable inclusive systems.



2. School & Societal Dimension

- Integration vs. inclusion: shifting perceptions.
- Access and accessibility in education.
- The role of communities and families in supporting inclusive practices.

3. Classroom Dimension

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL): engagement, representation, expression.
- Inclusion of Autistic Children: fostering independence, individualized education plans (IEPs), family involvement.
- Creative Interventions: storytelling, theatre, and art-based activities to build empathy and community.

International Summer School hosted a remarkable lineup of academics and experts whose contributions inspired thoughtful reflection and meaningful dialogue on inclusive education practices worldwide:

- Dr. Ines Alves, Associate Professor in Inclusive Education, University of Glasgow, Scotland
- Dr. Maria Malott, CEO of the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI), USA



- Prof. Anastasia Vlachou, Professor of Inclusive Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
- Prof. Apostolia (Lia) Galani, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
- Prof. Panayiota Karagianni, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH)
- Sofia Karakantza, Theatre Director
- Prof. Angeliki Gena, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
- Dr. Lia Tsermidou, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
- Dr. Areti Stefanaki, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
- Dr. Petros Galanis, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens



This academic structure gave participants not only knowledge, but also practical strategies to apply in their own educational settings.

Cultural Immersion & Experience

Beyond the classroom, the Summer School offered a cultural journey in Ancient Olympia. Participants engaged in unique experiences that deepened their understanding of diversity and inclusion through culture and tradition:



- Greek Dance Night – an evening of movement and celebration of Greek heritage.



- Astronomy Night – stargazing accompanied by mythological storytelling.
- Guided Tour of Ancient Olympia – discovering the birthplace of the Olympic Games, including the museum and archaeological site.
- Seaside Walk & Greek Dinner – a relaxing walk by the seaside, followed by enjoying traditional Greek seafood and local cuisine.



This blend of academic rigor and cultural immersion made the Summer School not only a professional development opportunity, but also a personal and unforgettable experience.



Voices of the Participants



The true measure of success lies in the voices of those who participated. One participant shared:

Sara Castrillo, Spain: “I would like to sincerely thank the organizers and participants. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to learn from all of you, as you are outstanding

professionals. As I mentioned on the first day of the school, in the words of Nelson Mandela: ‘Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.’ The power is in our hands—so let’s move forward together. I cannot wait to return to Spain and to my University, where I will put into practice all the knowledge I have gained here. Thank you once again for this invaluable opportunity”

Gozzal Abdireimova, Kazakhstan: ”I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the International Summer School on Inclusive Education this past May in Ancient Olympia. It was a truly valuable and inspiring experience. The knowledge and ideas I gained have already started to influence my current work, and I am grateful for the chance to learn from such a diverse group of participants and experts. Beyond the academic aspect, the warm and collaborative atmosphere of the Summer School made it a truly memorable experience. The organization was outstanding, and the setting in Ancient Olympia added a unique and inspiring dimension to the program. Thank you once again for your hard work and dedication in making this event such a success. I am very much looking forward to hearing about future Summer Schools and would be delighted to participate again.”



Liga Berzina, Latvia: “I am deeply grateful that this School was so well-balanced. It was not only about how to work more efficiently or learn more, but also about how to step back, take care of ourselves and find balance. Thank you for creating such balance, and thank you to all of you for the chance to learn together. I am especially thankful for the openness to questions like, „How are things in your country? What is your best practice? How do you approach schooling?“ because it was so valuable to share and to learn from one another. I truly hope we will meet again in Latvia, in other countries and continue this journey of learning from each other.”



Zarina Zakharova, Kazakhstan: “I would like to thank you once again for the opportunity to participate in the International Summer School on Inclusive Education in Ancient Olympia. It was an enriching experience that has already had an impact on my work. The lectures, discussions, and collaborative activities provided me with new perspectives on inclusive practices, which I have since begun integrating into my teaching and research. In particular, I found the exchange of ideas among participants from diverse contexts to be invaluable, and I continue to draw on these connections as I develop future projects. The program also inspired me to explore new approaches to teaching diverse students, and I am confident that the insights gained will contribute positively to my ongoing academic and professional activities. I look forward to seeing how the Summer School will continue to grow in the years to come, and I am eager to follow and, if possible, take part in all future initiatives”

Darya Sheven, Kazakhstan: “The summer school was a valuable professional experience that deepened my understanding of inclusive education. The program combined theory with practice, offering both up-to-date research and practical strategies for teaching. The trainers created a supportive atmosphere, and the exchange of ideas with colleagues from different contexts was particularly enriching. I sincerely hope to participate in future editions of this summer school, as it provides not only professional growth but also genuine inspiration for teaching. I would be truly grateful for the opportunity to join it



again and continue developing my knowledge and skills in inclusive education.”

Novuyo Nkomo, Eswatini: “The Summer School's masterfully blended theory with practical presentations created a vibrant learning community that enriched my teaching approach. Thank you so much for following up. Participating in the International Summer School on Inclusive Education in the inspiring setting of Ancient Olympia was an incredible experience. The Summer School has been highly influential. The discussions on universal design for learning and collaborative practices have directly inspired a new framework I am developing for my upcoming research on co-teaching models.

Additionally, the international perspectives shared have enriched the syllabus for a course I will teach this fall, allowing me to incorporate more global case studies on inclusion. The unique combination of expert knowledge, cross-cultural dialogue, and the historic setting of Olympia created a powerful compound for rethinking inclusive education. It was a profoundly impactful experience.”



Joe Corney, The United Kingdom: “Thanks again for running an absolutely fantastic summer school! I learnt and loved it so much! I am currently applying for a role in widening participation for care leavers and care experienced children and young people and am wanting to use some of the activities we engaged in with Sofia, if I get the job. I am also looking to use more creative activities, such as the activity of creating art using materials. The summer school has taught me so much about creative methods and activities to support inclusion (I am a huge advocate for creative methods), and I am so keen to use these further to engage children and young people. I was also not aware of UDL before the summer school and is something I am also keen to learn more about and take forward in a future role. The combination of theories, practices and participation in activities at the summer school made it such a wonderful learning experience. I’m looking to forward to hearing more about next year’s summer school once it has been organised.”



Abdu-Kakhar Arzumetov, Kazakhstan: “Participation in the seminar has been a valuable and productive experience for me. I gained a structured understanding of key concepts and became acquainted with tools that can be effectively applied in professional practice. The atmosphere of interaction with colleagues and experts was open and highly professional, which encouraged knowledge exchange and motivated me for further development. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the organizers for the high-



quality preparation and delivery of the seminar, the relevance of the materials provided, and the opportunity for professional exchange. I am confident that the knowledge I have gained will contribute to increasing the effectiveness of my work and to my further professional growth.”

Such feedback highlights the impact of the program - both professionally and personally - for all those who joined.

Special thanks to the International Olympic Academy, Municipality of Ancient Olympia, Region of Western Greece, as well as sponsors:



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