

Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom

Primary School Newsletter

Spring 2015

Dear Friends,

Spring is here and nature around us is celebrating in a variety of colors and scents. Flowers are in full bloom and everything around us points to renewal. We feel it in the school and in our students as well.



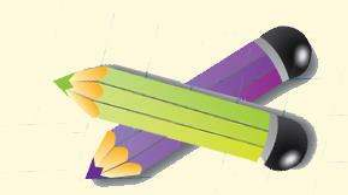
We are already in the process of planning for next year and I am excited to let you know that we have completed registration and there is room for cautious optimism in having reached our goal of enrolling two first grade classes for the next school year. It marks a new direction of growth and renewal.

We are now heading off on Spring vacation where we will celebrate the Passover and Easter holidays. Before we 'take off' we wanted to update you on the events of the last quarter through this newsletter.

I hope you will share in our excitement!

Carmella,

Principal of the Primary School



With a little help from my school: Report Card Day



On January 29th, with the winter vacation behind them and having adjusted to school life again, our students were getting ready to receive their half term report cards. While report card day is not the most comforting day in a child's life, our school and teachers had organized a day of games and crafts to let our pupils celebrate what they have accomplished.

Spreading out on the school lawn, all the pupils were provided with painting materials, cardboard and a little mirror, with which they began handcrafting their own personal folder for their report cards. The first graders, with their homeroom teachers, were also dancing and singing the songs they had learned so far this year.

In the classrooms, cakes and juices made for a celebratory atmosphere and subject-related games were played. Like music teacher Mila, who conducted a music-word game and played on the piano while pairs of students had to match the beats of the melody with the word syllables of images on cards. For everybody who was in the mood for exercise, the schools' gymnasium had opened its doors for all kinds sport activities.

So when the homeroom teachers were handing out the report cards, the anxiety had given way to exuberance and there was enough time and space for each teacher to talk over the report card with each student.

By the end of the day, when our pupils left with their personal folders, they felt proud about their achievements and belonging to our school community. We are too.

It takes a village to raise a cucumber

On Tu B'shvat, the holiday of the trees, and the weeks to follow, WASNS Primary School children participated in several planting activities in and around the school.

Together with teachers Nadwa and Voltaire, the First-Graders planted seedlings from the schools green house. Art teacher Michal engaged the students in yet another 'Recycling Junk Into Art' project, where she used the backsides of bus station ad-posters for children to outline their bodies and paint colorful trees for the 'Tu B' shvat school decoration.



The Fifth and Sixth Graders rolled up their sleeves and plowed a field on the villages hillside, while Voltaire showed and told them about the many local herbs and useful plants.

All classes including the kindergarten engaged in the ancient tradition of pressing grapes into a special kind of syrup called dibs. In old times, that's how fruits like grapes, pomegranates, peaches, dates and carobs were preserved in order to last through the winter. In the case of our students, it was handed out to friends, teachers and families as a tasty Tu B'shvat treat.

After waiting out the sand- wind- and hailstorms of February, spring came out once again with beautiful sunny weather. So teachers Voltaire and Rani took the fourth graders to the plowed field, where they planted seeds of the locally grown Armenian Cucumber (Faqous) with its delicate taste, that adds a unique flavor to Arab dishes.

Getting to know the Arab and Jewish cultures of food, the ancient traditions of agriculture, the crops the region has provided its

inhabitants for hundreds of years, and the old and new techniques of preservation and recycling, is something, we want our pupils to experience early on.

It is this through these experiences, they learn, one needs to share the land in order to enjoy its fruits.





math + dedication = Rani

Rani Mahagneh greets you with a shy, warm smile and once he starts talking about his profession, quickly reveals his expertise and love for math and teaching.

Rani knew from an early age, that he wanted to become a math teacher, and apart from his talents, it was his math teacher, who was his professional role model and motivated him.

His teacher lived close to his family's house and Rani remembers walking home with him on the last day of school in ninth grade, when the teacher asked him, what he wanted to do in the future. Rani replied: "I want to be a teacher like you".

It has been twelve years, since Rani began teaching math at Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom and when he finished his studies in math and computer science the decision to teach in a school like WASNS was a conscious one. He had already been confirmed to teach at another school, when Rani saw an advertisement for a teaching position at WASNS Primary. Although it was only part-time and meant traveling an hour each way from his home in Umm al-Fahm, the idea of teaching in a school where Arabs and Jews learn together was so appealing, that Rani applied and got accepted in Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom. Teaching in a binational and bilingual school changed him, Rani says. Growing up in an Arab town and going to an Arab college, he had gotten to know Jews for the first time, when he was working in a restaurant to pay for his studies. When he began teaching, Rani got to see "the other side" in the egalitarian setting of our community. Seeing Arab and Jewish children play together and discovering their commonalities, quickly made it clear to him that, he made the right choice.

For a long time, Rani was teaching math according to the method of our bilingual approach with two teachers in the class. Him and a Jewish math teacher would explain the learning material together in Arabic and Hebrew, and depending on the subject matter sometimes dividing the class into separate Jewish and Arab groups. Separating the class by nationality always felt to Rani as a missed opportunity of fully putting the idea of teaching all the children together into practice. Last year, Rani finally got the opportunity and took charge over a whole class. Since then he has been teaching the children math in Arabic and Hebrew with great enthusiasm and success.

Today, Rani is almost full-time at the school and has become the kind of teacher that our pupils will remember when being asked about what inspired them to teach others.

WASNS Primary school is known to encourage and invest in their pupils artistic skills and has displayed them in various art events through the years. In mid-February, the school kids, teachers and families came together to work on making the school more of their own community. This was done with the help of artist Benjamin Swatez and his two colleagues Robert Markey and Shira Shvadron, who were our guests for the week.

During that week, Benjamin introduced his community art program that he has already implemented in Goma, Congo, Lira, Uganda, and Bahari, India. Children and teachers from all of the classes took time off their usual schedule to indulge in painting: preparing a mural for the school, creating a beautiful mosaic with fish and birds at the entrance of the school building and working on individual drawings. As part of the program, our pupils also selected their favorite drawings and painted it onto canvases which will be exhibited at the United Nations in New York City.

On the weekend, the families of our students joined the mural project for a joyous Saturday afternoon of art and food, when mothers, fathers, siblings and grandparents came together to paint and write inspirational quotes of peace and coexistence into the artwork on the wall. On their last day, the artists together with our pupils put the finishing touches on the mural, which now greets the students and school visitors with uplifting colors and quotations.

The school paints a mural



Mother Languages Day

February 21st, International Mother Language Day, the Primary School of Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom hosted teachers from five different schools in Israel to introduce them to the bilingual approach of our school, showing what it means to teach in the two mother languages. The event was initiated by the Ministry of Education, which encourages schools in Israel to learn from each other. WASNS initiated the first bilingually Arab and Jewish school in the country and the model has spread to four other schools from the Galille to Beer Sheva. Hence, the International Mother Language Day was a great opportunity to honor the country's two official languages and share our experience of three decades of bilingual education.

The principal Carmella Ferber started the day with a detailed introduction on the different meanings and characteristics of bilingual teaching; the history and structural background of bilingualism in the binational community of Wahat al Salam – Neve Shalom; the effects of introducing a second language to young children; and the insights, assets, difficulties and challenges of bilingualism at our school. The visiting teachers then went to different stations and classes to see and learn about our teaching methods



In second grade they witnessed teacher Lutfiya conducting an Arabic language lesson through a story that the children were eager to retell in Arabic. In the first grade, home room teachers Yasmin and Hadas talked with their students in Arabic and Hebrew about masks and their meanings in different cultures around the globe.

Other classroom visits included topics like the concept of generosity in different societies, science, language learning games and creative writing. Michal, the art teacher demonstrated with her 'Recycling Junk Into Art' project that sometimes not words, but objects others deemed worthless can help you to express yourself and create something new. Finally, in the school's language lab our guest were shown bilingual teaching techniques like child-size models of a grocery store and post-office with Arabic and Hebrew lettering where the children play-out everyday life activities, learning to express themselves in both languages

All of the stations provided the teachers of the other schools with hands on examples of teaching in two languages, but also illustrated the many ways our Palestinian and Jewish teachers incorporate the idea of looking and learning about issues from two or more perspectives within their methods.

It takes a long commitment to succeed

The Primary School's second new addition is the sports teacher Gilad Shaked. Like his fellow new teachers Roy and Ben, he supports the bilingual, egalitarian approach in Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom and wouldn't have it any other way. Gilad knew about WASNS and its ideas since an early age, because his home is Kibbutz Hatzor and he went to Tsafit High School in Kfar Menahem with youngsters from Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom.

He knows some Arabic but finds it hard to teach in both Arabic and Hebrew, especially with the young children whose Hebrew and Arabic aren't at the same level. But Gilad welcomes the challenge. For him, it is important that the children receive the same education and learn to love sport. After his first weeks of teaching sports in WASNS Primary School, he sees no differences between the Jewish and Arab students and points out how kind the children are. Gilad says he can feel equal coexistence at work and thinks, that outside the microcosm of Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom, the problem lies with society teaching children to hate. He believes, that one has to start early in childhood with Arabs and Jews growing up and learning together, as knowing each other's traditions and beliefs can be essential to prevent hatred.

For Gilad there were two reasons for becoming a sports teacher: He loves children and he loves sports. After 11 years of doing martial arts, its philosophy and structure led him to study sports education. Now that he is fresh out of college and has arrived in Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom, he would like the children to explore more games than the ones they already know, like volleyball, gymnastics, maybe tennis?



His method is learning by doing, so when the children ask him about the rules and theory of the sport, he teaches them while they are already playing.

The most important thing that Gilad learned from martial arts and wants to teach his students is one's personal obligation to the sport. In his opinion, if you love a particular sport, you have to learn it all the way. So he tries to teach the children not to take the short cuts, to learn step by step and to realize that becoming really good needs long term commitment.

Wolverine and Elvis chatting on the school lawn

At the beginning of March, with the flowers and plants slowly showing their spring colors, the village of WASNS was presented with another colorful spectacle as the Primary School children were showing off their many creative costumes and disguises at this year's Purim Celebration.

As part of the Purim Program, students had already warmed up to the final celebration in the preceding week, when they dressed according to a special theme of each day. Like on Pajama day when, to the delight of the children, even some of the teachers showed up in their PJs. When Purim came, each class had prepared stations of entertainment and activities.

The first graders participated in another "Recycling Junk Into Art" project and built rattles out of yoghurt cups and rice, as part of Purim tradition to make some noise against evil Haman, the antagonist in the Book of Esther.



The second graders set up a bowling lane and a make-up station for face painting, while the third graders had organized a dart throwing contest.

According to another Purim tradition and the Book of Esther, whose characters are all metaphorically masked, including its heroine, who hides her identity until she puts on her royal garb, the fourth graders built masks and put them on display. They had also prepared a game with a box of sand and hidden coins, that everybody was eager to find.

Our fifth graders were all about music and movement this year as they staged a limbo dance and disco for everybody to participate in.

By far the scariest station was the classroom of the sixth graders, which they had transformed into a dark room with great dedication, lots of spooky accessories and loads of slime



The chief event, of course, was the Purim parade, in which every child got to present their costume in front of the school.

Ninjas, Darth Vaders, superheroes and princesses were definitely high fashion, but the variety of costumes also included a man-eating shark, a Gangster-Elvis and a skeleton, holding a severed head.

Even the most beautiful party must come to an end, and judging from the children's paint-smudged, happy faces, by the time they said their goodbyes to their teachers and trotted to the school buses, spring had been heralded in style.



להיترאות *Auf Wiedersehen!* إلى اللقاء

„I will remember this week for a long time because it was amazing.“

In the beginning of March, when the rest of our students were getting ready for Purim, the sixth grade was preparing for another kind of adventure. After a group of German pupils and teachers visited WASNS Primary School this winter, it was our children's turn to visit them in Düsseldorf, Germany at the Freiherr-vom-Stein-Realschule School.

Homeroom and English teacher Raida and the principal Carmella accompanied our pupils and were as excited as them about what was awaiting our delegation. When they arrived at the airport, they were greeted warmly by the German host families and each of our children was taken to their home for a week.

The next morning began with a lush breakfast, colorful Easter eggs, and lots of chatter as the children of the two delegations were catching up on the latest news since their last encounter in Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom.

The first two days at school focused on sport: Our students mixed with the German pupils as they took part in a basketball competition and joined a swimming lesson. One evening, the two delegations visited a local youth center, where they had a potluck dinner with all the host families. Director and social worker Mustafa invited them to try out the centers many activities, in particular its climbing wall.

On Day 3, the pupils of our Primary School went into several classes, presented school life in Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom, and answered the curious questions of the German students.

Our students also took part in English, physical education and chemistry classes and were invited to eat in the schools cafeteria, something that we don't have here.

Today we learned more about their classrooms and what I liked the most...we learned chemistry!!!"



As the German delegation learned about the regional nature of WASNS, it was time to get a taste of what Düsseldorf has to offer.

One of the German school teachers also works as a zoo guide and our children, together with their German friends, enjoyed a wonderful day at Düsseldorf Zoo with penguins, monkeys and a terrarium with a tropical rain forest in the midst of the harsh German winter weather.

The following day, the cold temperatures made for a authentic display of the regional climate, when our delegation went to a local forest and was explained the

regional nature on site by a forest ranger while their toes were slowly going numb from the cold. Our children forgot about the freezing temperatures in a heart beat, when the ranger showed them real live falcons and each child had the opportunity to let a falcon fly and land on their arm.

As if the day wasn't exciting enough, one of the German mothers had organized a special treat for all the students, host families and teachers to attend that afternoon: A visit to a football match in the Düsseldorf Stadium! Düsseldorf was playing against Bochum and our children, wrapped in the home team's scarves and colors, gleefully took in the suspense of the game.

„First it seemed like something that won't happen and now it is unbelievable that we were there. The week in Germany was an unforgettable trip. That's sure.“

On Sunday, the two delegations joined together one last time for a farewell dinner at a sports club with another, even higher, climbing wall, where teacher Raida also made a successful climb to the top

Our pupils then presented their host families with parting gifts: Olive oil from olives that our pupils had picked themselves.

When everybody said their goodbyes, it was clear, that this was not the least bit of an ending in their cross-cultural partnership but just the beginning, and the idea came up to extend the exchange from a school - to a family-exchange.

When our students returned home and reunited with their families and friends, everybody had their own personal stories to tell and they expressed their joy and gratitude in their trip diaries and thank you letters to their host families:

“I want to thank you for the lovely week I spent with you. You made me so happy during this week in Germany. I had lots of fun and I enjoyed every second of my visit. I felt like I was in my house.“



A Family Picnic

A day after the elections, spirits aren't high among those who put their energy and hopes in a change of the current Israeli political situation. But it was scheduled for quite some time, that the 18th of March would be a day of the Palestinian and Jewish students, families and staff of WASNS Primary School to come together for a big picnic in the forest near our village.

And they came, all of them, with delicious home made food, blankets and games, bringing with them siblings,



relatives and last but not least: lots of energy and good mood.

As they gathered in the forest named after peace activist and WASNS supporter Abie Nathan, of the famous offshore radio station "Voice of Peace", one of the mothers laughed and said, it must seem crazy to have such a good time following the elections.

Seeing the families, children and teachers mingle, chatting, eating and playing together on a sunny afternoon, the world looked like it should.