

واحة السلام Neve Shalom Wahat al-Salam

Class Reports to Friends and Sponsors of the NSWAS Primary School, 2005-2006

Edited from notes of teachers, by Ety Edlund, translated by Deb Reich – 19 July 2006

This was the year that was...



In the last few years, each class has had two teachers, an Arab and a Jew.

The idea was to best serve the needs of children from both peoples. Having both an Arab and a Jewish teacher in the classroom allows every child to express herself or himself in their mother tongue and to receive encouragement and support appropriate to their own culture.

This model also had downsides. Things sometimes tended to “fall between the cracks” and often it wasn't clear who is supposed to take responsibility for what, and when.

During this past school year, we went back to using a model from several years ago: One main teacher, and a co-teacher from the other people who works with her. In this model, the main teacher has the main responsibility and is the address for everyone in the school community who has contact with that class: children,

parents, and administration.

The co-teacher is also an important figure in the classroom. She provides support and is there to help the children with the culture, language, and traditions not their own.

This model demands cooperation, good listening and good teamwork. When the two teachers work well and comfortably together, and are open and listen well to one another, the children quickly pick up on the value of the bi-national encounter.

Evidently the teaching staff was up to the task...

The Third Grade Class

The third grade class this year had fourteen Arab children and six Jewish children. Hila was the main teacher, and Samir her co-teacher. The imbalance between Jewish and Arab kids was bound to be challenging, aside from other issues like disparities in socioeconomic background and learning disabilities, the latter requiring a lot of remediation.

The teachers took it upon themselves to work with the children on the emotional and social level. They focused less on the Jewish-Arab encounter, and more on social integration.



Birthdays were celebrated in class. Each child had time to organize activities on his or her birthday. The teachers led games designed to promote generosity to others and respect for others. The children worked on democratic values and chose their class committees and their representatives to school-wide committees.

We held some interesting events during the year. The kids met with Arab and Jewish authors; they went on a field trip to an olive grove, picked olives, and pickled them. In December, there was an activity with the parents focusing on the light within each of us. This dovetailed nicely with the mission of the teachers to nurture each child's personality.



The teachers also have some ideas for next year. They want to go on working with the children on a social level, emphasizing the importance of mutual encouragement and praise. They would also like to offer mentoring, with children from the older classes mentoring the younger ones and helping them with their studies. They are anticipating a major increase in learning resources – equipment, computer, instructional games – to enable them to help each and every child in the class to improve their academic performance.



It is regrettable that the numerical disparity between Jewish and Arab children may be even wider next year because some of the Jewish parents are contemplating transferring their children out, due to that very imbalance.

Good luck to these great kids!

