

# 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 comfortable 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 Sixth Grade Class**

The sixth-graders began the year with a bad feeling. Most of the Jewish kids from their class had left the school after the end of fifth grade; only two Jewish students remained, along with 21 Arab students. The teachers, Faten and Liora, needed to be extremely alert to what went on in the classroom, so as to shape a learning space and a social space that would enable everyone to feel good there – definitely not an easy task.

Excellent teamwork between the teachers, who were also serving as the social coordinators for the school, radiated some very positive and beneficial energy and the kids certainly took it in.



The class was in charge of two events for the entire school: the Jewish Rosh Hashanah ceremony and the Palestinian Al-Naqba ceremony. Most of the Arab children participated actively in putting together the activity for the Jewish holiday, a very touching display and one that sent an important message – that the school relates to any minority (religious, national, or gender) as equal in every way. The class did a great job on this event.

The ceremony for Al-Naqba was very different because it is intrinsically a uni-national event. While the Arab children worked on this ceremony, the two Jewish six-grade boys helped the fifth-graders organize their (Jewish) Memorial Day ceremony.

That was actually the only separation between Jews and Arabs in this class. They worked together on all their other activities. Their spirit of togetherness was something of a surprise, and rather cheering.



The six-graders participated in a very successful archeological project. They learned what archeology is all about, related it to their lessons in geography and history, and together with guides from the government's Antiquities Department they dug at an actual site. The high point of this project was a day at the dig, to which their parents were invited, and together they uncovered an ancient mosaic at a location just next door to Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam.

In May, the class went on their annual field trip for two days in northern Israel. Getting away from the usual school routine broke through some barriers; the sense of togetherness became more authentic and candid.



By the time they began planning their end-of-year event, the group's cohesion was an established fact.

To our complete surprise, the well-known singer David Broza proposed coming to work with the sixth-grade class to put together a clip to go with a new song he had written. Broza, along with a Palestinian singer, and the kids sang and were filmed at Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam. The numerous rehearsals, the screening of the clip at the end-of-year party, and the fact that such a famous artist had paid them so much attention, enabled these kids to feel important. Their sense of achievement as a class jumped sky-high.



The closing party was extremely successful. Beyond the performances of the kids, what was broadcast to the guests was the tremendous sense of accomplishment: "Look, we did something together, something that was almost impossible..."

On the last day of school, the kids parted in tears. Each one went off to his or her future, a garden of peace in their hearts, sprouting and waiting to bloom.

