



Wahat al-Salam – Neve Shalom

Primary School Newsletter

Winter 2016

Dear Friends,

Children and parents alike love the peaceful and warm binational environment provided by our primary school. They embrace the values it nurtures and the friendships that cross boundaries of race and culture. But creating and maintaining such a framework is tough on many levels - not



least of them financial. If tuition fees go too high, parents struggle to justify the added expense, and less well-off parents will simply be discouraged to send their children to the school. Financial worries and constraints can also put a damper on creativity and affect the morale of the teachers. State support is always grudging, the results of fundraising are inconsistent. So how does one overcome these formidable obstacles? These are challenges that the school principal, and the association as a whole, are trying to overcome, in the ways we address below.

The first semester of the 2016 - 2017 School Year is going very well. Recent national level test results (the Growth & Effectiveness Indices for Schools) have shown that in the 4 subjects measured, the school rose from the 2nd to the 8th percentile in Math, from the 2nd to the 10th percentile in Arabic, from the 2nd to the 6th in Hebrew, and maintained the same good test score in English.

Read on to discover some of the highlights of the year so far. In the meantime, the December - January holiday period is almost upon us, so we send greetings of the season to all who are celebrating, and best wishes to everyone for a bright and happy 2017 !

Carmella Ferber
Principal of the Primary School

The Primary School in 2016 - 2017

The Primary School, like the children who study there, is learning, growing, meeting new challenges, and trying its very best!

How to provide binational, bilingual quality education while keeping the costs of tuition fees low enough to attract diverse socio-economic groups? This is the question with which we have been attempting to address from the very beginning.

One of our responses is growth. On September 1, the new school year opened with 32 Kindergartners and two new 1st grade classes. With an enrolment of 198 children in 8 classes, the school had grown by almost 25% over the previous school year, which in turn was up from the previous year - (46% for the two years).

A bilingual school cannot cope with a significant number of new children in higher grades - and there is also a natural drop off rate as some children will move houses and schools. So the answer is to boost the number of children coming into first grade. With recruitment efforts and word-of-mouth advocacy the demand is there. But how to fund that?

As the school grows, it requires expansion in the number of teaching hours. This year the number jumped from 339 to 416. But only 41% of these are covered by the state. The rest must be funded from private sources (parents fees and donor contributions).

In order to overcome a shortfall and limit pressure on parents and donors, we try to find ways to tweak and raise the state's allocation. This has involved intensive work by the school staff, the community and parents.

The process began several years ago when the community decided to ask the Education Ministry to accept the School as an official state school (rather than a recognized independent school). This was not a step that the school and the community took lightly. After all, we had had that status before, and experienced problems around the issue of "ownership" of the school, its curriculum and future development. In Israel there is no ideal category for a mixed status of Jewish - Arab school in Israel. Schools must be either "Arab" or "Jewish". Yet most of the (few) other bilingual schools in Israel have opted to be state schools: and for good reason: the status guarantees a higher allocation.

The transition back to being a state school proved to be bumpy. We had to deal with slow bureaucracy and funding delays besides internal challenges. Working on the transition and seeking avenues to new state funding took much time and effort during the 2015 - 2016 school year. But now it's in place and the school is functioning as a full state school.

Beyond the official school designation, we have also been struggling to enter several other categories - those of "special school", "extra-regional school" and "experimental school". Our school was the only one in the precinct of our regional council to apply for the latter, for the field of innovation. We will speak more about each of these in a future newsletter. Our design behind these efforts are to respond to our need of providing quality education at an affordable rate for parents, while enhancing the school's prestige as a leader in Jewish - Arab education.



Curriculum Development

One of our current efforts has been to produce a fully documented syllabus for teaching in a bilingual binational school environment. This is a work in progress (and something that we have been working on for many years).

Our intention is to introduce a semi-formal teaching framework for the various cultures, languages and national identities of the people of the region. Eventually, this will help us to spread this curricula to other schools. A focus of the school staff this school year is to build a model for language education, looking at the best ways to integrate the bilingual educational goals into the school's every day life. Finally this year we hope to strengthen the schools music program and build a more formal structure for music and arts education. Our progress in this depends very much on obtaining dedicated funds. However what we have been able to produce so far already goes a long way towards streamlining our teaching methodology in key subjects.

Future Plans

Into the Future we have set out on a path of enlarging the school to include at least 2 and possibly 3 classes at each grade level. We want to develop the school into a junior and senior high school to include grades 7 -12 (see the "student petition" post in the newsletter). This will require having 3 classes in each grade (75 students) with a total of 450 students in the school. The local council supports the idea and is making a formal request to the Ministry of Education to endorse the plan. This growth will require enlarging the school building and developing an educational campus. It is our hope to see this include an international school that integrates a high-school for 150 students from around the world.

In cooperation with the Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom School for Peace, and possibly the Kibbutzim College of Education, we want to develop an educational track to train teachers to work in bilingual, binational multicultural schools. As part of this, we want to be able to also support the schools' graduates, especially those from the village, to study and become educators in bilingual, multi cultural, binational education creating a second generation of teachers that can develop new knowledge and directions.

Exciting times lay ahead for the Primary School, in this year and in the years to come. We cannot get anywhere without the love and support of friends around the world who believe in this form of education as a means to societal change and peacemaking.

By direct support or support through our friends associations around the world, you can be our partner in this educational mission.



Launch of the School Year

As the new school year began, parents, village members, and special guests from Latrun abbey joined in welcoming a new batch of happy first graders.

The first day of the new school year at the primary school was undoubtedly a sweet and special day. Sixth graders gathered to greet and warmly welcome the first graders into the school, with loud cheers and songs. Standing in parallel lines, the sixth graders held the Arabic and Hebrew signs they had created, and applauded as the first graders passed under the school's rainbow arch.

Everyone gathered together and listened to speeches given by school principal Carmella Ferber members of the village council and representatives of the parents' committee. WAS-NS co-founder Anne Le Meignen spoke, sharing her love for the children. Special guests from the monastery at Latrun, abbot Renee and former abbot Paul also welcomed the children. Afterwards some of the parents, especially of the first graders, accompanied the young children to their classes.

New Library



Those who have re-visited the Primary School in recent months will have noticed big improvements to some of our facilities, such as the teachers room and lobby area of the older school building. However, the biggest change, still underway, has been the development of new library facilities. With the help of a generous grant from Britain, together with friends associations around the world, we have completely rebuilt a large part of the old school building to accommodate a new library and computer lab. Currently we are engaged in furnishing and equipping the library, for formal opening in February.

Fire ! And Clean-Up

In late November, a forest fire threatened the village; flying sparks even began a minor fire in the School grounds. The School was closed the following day. When the children were able to return, the pupils and staff worked hard to gather all combustible material like pine needles from the school grounds:



Autumn holidays at the Primary School

October had many holidays and since there were more of these for the Jews than for Palestinians, the Arab children also enjoyed some uninational days.

The month of October was full of many holidays. This year the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah) coincided with the Muslim Hijri New Year, and Yom Kippur (Jewish) followed soon after. For Yom Kippur, students engaged in discussions with their classmates and conducted a variety of activities all related to learning about asking forgiveness and the importance of apologizing. Yom Kippur is often referred to as the Day of Atonement, stressing the need for repentance. In the Hebrew calendar, Sukkot, quickly followed Yom Kippur. The Jewish students were on break until October 25.

During Sukkot, we spoke to some Palestinian students at the Wahat al-Salam - Neve Shalom primary school about how they felt about having classes without their Jewish classmates. Ten year old, Andalus, told me, "I like that we are a school that has Palestinians and Jews together because I want peace." Nada, who is in second grade, said, "I like when Jews and Palestinians are together because I have a lot of Jewish friends. When they are away, I miss them."



Although the Palestinian students did miss many of their peers, the uni-national days were still full of exciting activities. On these days, the Arabic language was emphasized and the majority of the activities were related to autumn. Most mornings, one could hear little voices singing songs. The kids collected autumn leaves and created nature collages. The days were full of baking bread, playing with soap bubbles and learning to make a delicious green tea. The Palestinian students concluded the these "un-inational days" by spending a day in the sun, splashing and playing in the bright blue swimming pool – taking advantage of its last days of being open before it closed for the season.



International Peace Day

On September 21, in honor of the day, the Palestinian and Jewish children engaged in music, art and sports activities.

This year at the primary school, the staff of teachers sat together and decided on fun activities for the students to do in order to celebrate International Peace Day. Students were encouraged to celebrate peace and express themselves through creativity. On September 21, the Palestinian and Jewish children engaged in music activities, joining together to sing peace songs. There was a sports station where children could run for peace and an art station. At the art station, colors abounded as students drew peace pictures and

decorated doves. Some children even took peace photographs and created slogans of peace.

Messages of Peace

The third grade class at the primary school received a very special surprise from an Italian school.

On November 15, 2016, the third grade class at Wahat al-Salam - Neve Shalom primary school received a very special surprise from Italy: a package full of letters and beautiful drawings from children who attend the Nino Pernici primary school, Riva del Garda, province of Trento.

Raida Aiashe-Khatib, the school's English teacher and a member of Wahat al-Salam - Neve Shalom, showed these messages and drawings to the children. The students compared the pictures and, with the help of Raida, translated the kind and thoughtful messages, written in English. The Italian children told how they hold the WAS-NS primary school in their hearts and send warm greetings to all.

One girl in the class exclaimed, "I really love these drawings and I hope we can send them our drawings in return!" Such is indeed the intention. The Primary School students are very grateful about these connections with children around the world.



Learning about Democracy

In the fall, the School's main theme is democracy. Historical examples & practical experience give our kids a head start as responsible junior citizens.

In October and November, the principal theme for homeroom discussions was democracy. This is the time when the school chooses its student council, but there are also a few markers in Israel's calendar that help to bring the subject into clear focus. Among these is the memorial to late Israeli P.M. Itzhak Rabin (assassinated November 5, 1995) and the memorial for the Kafr Qasem massacre of October 29, 1956).

Kafr Qasim

Since a decision of Israel's education board in 2006, the Kafr Qasim massacre has been commemorated in Israeli school's as an object lesson in looking at the bounds of individual moral responsibility in the face of authority. The 1956 massacre took place in the Arab village of Kafr Qasim, a village bordering the Green Line on the Israeli side. The massacre was carried out when members of the Israel Border Police (Mishmar HaGvul), obeyed their commander's order and shot 48 men, women and children as wartime curfew violators, when they returned to the village from working in the fields. With this historical reference as background, teachers asked their students questions related to leadership and authority. For example, the students were asked, "Should we always obey our leaders?"

Rabin Day

The students also considered the example of leaders who had them-

selves died for their beliefs. The anniversary of the Rabin assassination is similarly a date in the Israeli school calendar and is referenced in order to inculcate democratic values. At the WAS-NS school, we sometimes use the opportunity to imagine how a true peace between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians might look.



At an event for the entire school (as well as parents who could arrive) Hezzi Shuster's fourth grade class were in charge of the morning ceremony. They created an event based on an alternative reality in which Rabin and Arafat had lived to see a permanent peace agreement signed and enacted. The students presented a series of imaginary TV news reports based on this optimistic scenario, and made announcements such as they opening of a railway between Gaza and Tel Aviv, allowing children to travel back and forth between the two. Then, in 2022, the FIFA World Cup would take place in Israel and Palestine with the two states busily preparing ten stadiums for the games.

During the ceremony, the fourth, fifth and sixth graders sang two beautiful songs. One of these was "Imagine" by John Lennon, which the children sang in Hebrew, Arabic and English. The singing was accompanied by a graceful dance by a group of the school girls.

The children were so entranced by the optimistic "news reports" that flowed from the podium, that when it came time to admit that these were only, at best, a dress-

rehearsal for a longed for future, some of the younger children actually cried. Nevertheless in Wahat al-Salam - Neve Shalom, we still dare to believe that true peace will some day be possible. Indeed, it may only come if the rising generation can stir their imagination and consider how such a peace might look.



Elections to the Student Council

These hard lessons in democracy preceded the elections for the primary school student council. After a well fought campaign that played out much better than those of the so called "adults" and a scrupulously enacted electronic ballot, the election results arrived on Sunday, November 27. The students from the second grade to the sixth grade participated in the elections. There were one hundred and thirty six votes in total. Itai Agmon, a Jewish boy and Caroline Abu-Riash, an Arab girl, were voted in as the joint chairpersons. Andalus Jaber and Itamar Baruch will both serve as co-chairs. One Jewish student and one Arab student work together in each of these positions. The students elected represent their fellow classmates and act as junior leaders, sitting together and sharing their new ideas and exciting plans. They provide suggestions and help to conduct many important activities. For example, they help to plan the "Upside Down Day", an event where the students act as teachers and the teachers attend primary school classes as pupils.



A student petition

The pupils present the school management with a signed petition to expand the educational system up through 12th grade.

On Tuesday, December 6, the students of the Wahat al-Salam - Neve Shalom primary school collected signatures from fellow classmates for a petition to expand the school education system to include middle school and high school. The students expressed their strong desire to continue learning in the school with their brothers and sisters and Jewish and Arab friends. They later presented their petition to the school management. Although the particular idea for this initiative was their own, the children had been learning about protest as one of the tools of democratic action.

Music Education

Music serves as a bridge between cultures, facilitates language instruction and fosters familiarity and endearment for the cultural identity of the other people. This year we have been working hard to enrich our music education at the school, by bringing in three part time teachers. We are now working with the Education Ministry and our Regional Council to garner state support for a unique oriental - occidental syllabus for both string and wind instruments.

Olive Harvest Day

Families & teachers gathered for the school's annual olive harvest. The harvest took place in the village and this lovely autumn day was full of activities.

After gathering in the school grounds and some words of introduction from the school principal and teachers, everyone walked down the hill to the olive trees in, and adjoining, the plots of the new neighborhood. The parents of the Jewish and Arab students were able to get to know one another better as the olives were joyously picked from the trees.



After some time, when everyone returned to the school grounds. Eido, a parent of one of the primary school students and the Jewish head of the parents' council, gave a talk about harvesting and pressing olives. He discussed the different varieties of olive trees, their respective advantages, and modern versus traditional methods of pressing the fruit. Meanwhile, some of the olives were prepared.

Arabic songs filled the air as three music students from Hebrew University shared their talents with all of the families that were present. Ghalib, one of the musicians, played the *oud* and the students went with their homeroom teachers to share a meal and to learn about *dabke*, the Palestinian folk-dance. Song and dance is very

much associated with the olive harvest in Palestinian culture.

Everyone truly had a wonderful time continuing this very special tradition. Thank you to all of the families who joined and made this a day full of fun.



How to Prepare Olives

Here is a recipe if you ever desire to prepare olives on your own. Primary school teacher, Raida Aiashe-Khatib, provided the recipe below:

After picking the olives, break them a bit by hitting them with a stone or mallet.

Next, place the olives in water.

Change the water daily for three days.

Remove the olives from the water and place them in a separate jar.

Add lemon slices and pepper, to taste.

In a new jar, add fresh water and salt

Stir until the salt dissolves and then add a raw egg.

When the egg begins to float, remove it from the jar.

Take the salty water, pour it back with the olives and close the jar.

Wait 2-3 weeks, and then the olives will be ready to be eaten.

“World Network of Singing Children” at the Primary School

With the help of two special guests from abroad, our third graders came together to sing songs of peace.

On November 24, 2016, the children from the third grade class at the WAS-NS primary school came together and sang songs of peace, directed by Randi Coray, accompanied by Ursula Glaus.



Randi Coray is a music teacher born in Norway and now living in Switzerland. She is the initiator of the “World Network of Singing Children”, a project that has been active for fifteen years. The concept is to build up a worldwide network of children who will sing songs of oneness and peace.



Ms. Coray provides the children with songs and music, while Ms. Glaus helps choreograph the movement of the children. Ms. Coray has helped produce or has received videos of children singing these peace songs in over six coun-

tries so far: Norway, Germany, Croatia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Ireland.

The third graders at Wahat al-Salam - Neve Shalom met for rehearsals for a week prior to performing. On the day of the performance, the children came together and sang the song “Rainbow”, under the school’s rainbow arch. Third grade student, Danielle, shared the lyrics:

*When the sun shines through the rain, the rainbow is born.
Rainbow between earth and heaven.
Rainbow between you and me.
Rainbow between all the nations.
Rainbow colours sound in me.*

Another third grade student, Layth, said he wants to see peace in the whole world and that is why his favorite song was Ms. Coray’s “Peace be within you”.

Space Launch

In early November, Reem's science class began a space project, taking part in a national competition.



The Primary School staff visit the UK

Carmella and Raida Aiashe Khatib were in the UK to meet with supporters, speak on behalf of the Primary School and visit two British Schools.

Between October 17 to 22, School Principal Carmella Ferber and senior teacher and WAS-NS member Raida Aiashe Khatib were in the UK to meet with supporters, speak on behalf of the Primary School and visit two British Schools. They got together with old friends and made some new ones.

For school teachers, meeting counterparts in other countries is always stimulating. Raida speaks with transparent enthusiasm about her visit to the schools and of the warm connections formed there. The first school on the program was the St. Paul’s Steiner School in Islington, where they met the new principal Stephanie Jansen. She had no previous connection with Wahat al-Salam – Neve Shalom, so was mainly interested to learn about it.

The second school on the program, the Gallions Primary School, was one with which previous connections have been made, especially since John Ward, one of the school’s governors, had visited the WAS-NS Primary School and met with Carmella earlier this year. The School’s multiculturalism (its pupils speak more than 50 languages) and social agenda (it emphasizes acceptance of the most disadvantaged pupils) make it a wonderful candidate for stronger connections with our school. After spending two days there, attending classes, concerts and meeting faculty and students, Raida and Carmella were deeply impressed with

what they saw. Gallion's school places an unusual focus on music, which is a subject that we are currently trying to strengthen at the WAS-NS school. Video exchanges and visits by Gallions School teachers to WAS-NS are planned for 2017.

Carmella and Raida had the opportunity to meet with UK supporters of WAS-NS, including members of the Silman Family, whose family trust has this year contributed so generously to developing the school library, the Lyons family, who similarly have a connection with the School going back many years. They also visited people from the Tolkien Trust and the Alan & Babette Sainsbury Charitable Trust, which have also generously contributed to the School.

Travelling to a distant country and finding there an intricate web of friends, supporters and people who are deeply committed to the Primary School and its values, made Carmella and Raida's trip seem like re-connecting with an overseas branch of one's own family. May the links so formed only grow stronger! We look forward to seeing some of these UK friends when they visit in 2017.



Carmella and Raida speaking with Jenny Nemko in a recorded interview that was broadcast live on Facebook.

Stay in touch with the Primary School

On the Web:



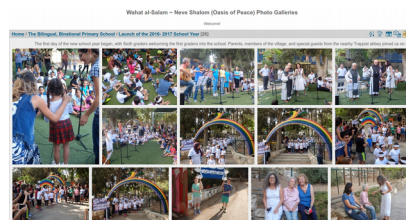
<https://wasns.org/school32->

On Facebook:



<http://facebook.com/oasisofpeace>

Photo Albums:



<http://photos.wasns.org/index.php?/category/primary-school>

Donate to the School !

Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam could not conduct its educational work or continue to develop without the moral and financial support of foundations and individuals from all around the world. In some countries, it may be convenient to donate via one of our friends associations and thereby benefit from tax deductions.

From our website it is possible to donate directly via PayPal:

Donations Page:

<https://wasns.org-direct-donations->

In the US:

<http://oasisofpeace.org>

In the UK:

<http://oasisofpeaceuk.org>

Other Friends Associations:

<http://wasns.org-friends-associations->

