



Dear Friends,

2016 has arrived and we are well into the school year. With the very difficult political situation in the country and the region, I'm happy to let you know that the School and our pupils are thriving. Our new (second) first grade class has added a lot to the School atmosphere and the new teachers that joined us this year are doing well. The support that you have provided for the School has helped us tremendously and will help us to continue to grow. Thank you for being our partners over the years and helping us change the reality we live in.

The holiday season at the School was marked with the celebration of Christmas, Hanukkah and Mawlid al-Nabawi, which celebrating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. It was a holiday celebration that brought the pupils, parents and teachers together in a feeling of unity.

I continue working with the Ministry of Education this year to obtain as much support as possible for our students and the School. With the staff I am working on a five year plan for the School's growth and development. We have moved into the next stage in renovating the new library, developing a more detailed architectural plan and have begun implementing a new curriculum on "culture, community and tradition".

I'll look forward to updating you as we continue to plan for the future and hope I'll have time to do so more often.

From the pupils, staff and me, best wishes for the New Year; may it bring us closer to peace and tolerance and give us the strength to continue our important work.

Best wishes,

Carmella Ferber,
& the staff and pupils of the WASNS Primary School



HANUKKAH, MAWLID AL-NABAWI AND CHRISTMAS

On Wednesday December 23rd, an evening of celebration was held at the Primary School of Wahat al-Salam - Neve Shalom. Parents, teachers and pupils celebrated three of the most important feasts in Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

This social gathering marked the traditional commemoration of the Year of the Elephant, when the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born, the establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabim Revolt against the Seleucid Empire, and the birth of Jesus.

Each class started the celebration in their classroom with their teachers and parents for about an hour.

Parents were invited to take part in the final class performances. Then they all met in the auditorium and presented the final show in front of the whole School for another hour. The parents were proud of their kids and brought lots of food to share.



EXPERIENCING DEMOCRACY FIRST HAND

On November 24th, the pupils of the Primary School experienced their first demonstration of democracy. They organized a peaceful protest in the School, asking for new computers in the library to replace the old ones that are too slow.

The demonstration was initiated by the 4th graders, who were studying democracy in their class. In one of the lessons, their home-teacher Rani decided to make them think about how to make change in society. First, he asked them to play a football game in which he divided the pupils into two teams; one stronger, and one weaker. After the game the pupils started to argue about being divided up in an unfair way. Their teacher developed it into a discussion on how we act when we win and how we act or react when we lose. The discussion then unfolded looking at what can be done when we think something is wrong, such as the imbalance of power in the two teams. The pupils discussed this and it developed into a discussion about how to improve things they want to change. They looked at their School and complained about the school day being too long and the breaks being too short. Anyway they decided to focus on the computers in the School because it was an issue that affected all the pupils. Now... Rani their teacher asked them how they could improve and change the situation.



The process was very serious. First they thought about writing a letter to the principal. One of the pupils raised the idea of having a demonstration, something they often see on television and an important part of democracy. Most of them loved the idea and now they had to decide on the next steps. For a demonstration you need a permit, so they requested one from the principal. Permission was granted and they began to organize. They talked to their friends in the other classes, drew up a petition and started making signs, slogans and songs.



When the day came for the protest, they were all ready. During the break they pulled out their signs, marched to the teachers' room and with speeches and slogans they began their protest. The demonstration was attended by the whole School, except for a small group of "counter protesters"; It was a surprise for many of the teachers who did not know it was going to happen. The principal addressed the group and promised to provide them with the computers by the beginning of the next school year. Our young activists/peace makers were heard and an important lesson in democracy was learned by all.

CREATIVE WRITING SEMINAR WITH ARAB WRITER NUZHA ABU GOSH

How to get kids to read today is always a good question. Lutfiya, who is in charge of the literacy program at the School, knows the secret. Last month she asked the children to write letters to famous authors inviting them to the School. Nuzha Abu Gosh, a famous writer and Palestinian citizen of Israel, answered our pupils' call and decided to come to visit. In her short stories and children books she is reflecting the most important stages in her life, the fond memories of her grandmother's tales, her father's encouraging reactions to her literary talent and the support she found at home.

With Lutfiya and the children excited about the visit, each of the six classes at the school chose two different stories of Nuzha Abu Gosh to read. When the day came for her visit, the teachers with the children read another story of hers and she joined the classes to share her story about reading and writing. But... instead of reading with the children, she decided to have the children write a story and learn how it is done. She wrote a sentence on the board in the class and then, getting ideas and additional sentences from the children, a unique story unfolded, created by our children and the famous author.



GET WITH THE PROGRAM – WE ARE #3 IN THE COUNTRY

The Ministry of Education, recognizing the need for computer programmers, developed a yearlong competition to encourage pupils to learn the essential skill of programming. In November, 1,744 schools competed in this nationwide competition. In the first round, WASNS Primary School came in 3rd of all small schools and 10th of all elementary schools in the country. As a result, it will now move on to the playoffs.

The pupils of the 3rd, 4th, 5th, & 6th grades were organized and began studying with Rani, our math and computer teacher. Learning was in groups so that pupils could learn from each other as they began competing on-line with other schools. After the initial kick off, the pupils and teachers started bringing computers from home, as the present computer lab was not sophisticated enough. In the next program, 5 pupils will be chosen to go to a computer camp sponsored by the Ministry of Education to prepare for the final competition in April.

Stay 'online' for more information as it develops.

OUR RAINBOW IS STILL SHINING!



Wow! What better symbol for our School than a rainbow?

We started the year with lots of new plans. In time for the Spring, our rainbow received a new coat of paint last week. The 'rainbow' became a part of the School in 1995 when "the Purple Lady" (Barbara Meislin) donated it with a play area in memory of her daughter Lori. The book in Hebrew and Arabic, No One Can Steal your Rainbow, by Barbara, accompanied by songs, is available through us or from purpleladybythebay@earthlink.net.

HAGAR SCHOOL IN BE'ER SHEVA & WASNS TEACHERS TOGETHER IN TRAINING

Collaborating with each other and the School for Peace

On the week of February 14, our colleagues, the teachers from the Hagar Association: Jewish-Arab Education for Equality in Be'er Sheva joined us for the second time for a in-service training on education in a bilingual, bicultural primary school setting. Dr. Maram Masarwi, Dean of the Faculty of Education at Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education lectured on "critical pedagogy" as developed by Paulo Freire.

Later in the day, the teachers met in small groups to discuss how to apply this approach in the everyday educational work in our schools. Working with the Hagar School, the teachers gained great benefit from sharing their knowledge and experiences and getting to know each other on the personal level. We will continue holding these training sessions with the Hagar School teachers in the months to come.





AN EVENING WITH STUDENTS', PARENTS', AND TEACHERS' COMMITTEES

On December 15th, the Primary School organized a meeting with the members of five recently elected Committees: **The Students' Committee**, the **Communication Committee**, the **Green Committee**, the **Design Committee** and the **Sport Committee**. The evening began with a warm welcoming speech from Carmella and Reem in front of all the parents and the pupils who sit on the Committees. Then each committee went to a different room for a one hour fruitful discussion where all suggestions were welcome.

The **Students' Committee** was facilitated by the teacher Reem. The committee's main project will be to create a holiday, without religious or political content, simply about peace and the spirit of Wahat al-Salam ~ Neve Shalom. It will be a colorful day (date yet to be decided) during the Spring. Pupils, parents, teachers and guests will come together to celebrate it and representatives of the other bilingual schools will be invited to take part in this unique event, which hopefully will become an annual tradition.

The **Communication Committee** is facilitated by Yali, the photography teacher. Its role is to advertise the school life through various media. As one of its first actions, the pupils decided to create a board in front of the School where they advertise the latest important news about their School.

Michal, a teacher who creates art from recycled materials with her pupils, took responsibility for the **Design Committee**. Participants thought about possible activities to decorate the walls of the School. One pupil proposed to make a big mosaic where the children could incorporate pictures of themselves or of something that they like. Some urgent topics were also part of the agenda, such as the imminent decoration of the Christmas tree.

The **Sport Committee** was facilitated by Gilad, our sport teacher. The discussions focused on how to make the sport classes more effective, with less talking and more practice, as well as on the need to set aside more school hours for sports classes.

Voltaire and Dana oversaw the **Green Committee**. The participants' main concerns were to raise more awareness within the School about issues linked to the environment. One of their ideas is to create a rest area on the adjacent "Israel Trail", at which they will install a green "rocket stove", that hikers can use for cooking. They will also place there information about the WASNS Primary School environmental class, which has built it.

Teachers Day

On December 5th, the pupils of the Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom primary school prepared an unforgettable surprise for their beloved teachers. What a better opportunity than the National Teachers Day to express their appreciation for their teachers! Teachers are always important figures in our childhood and when we grow up, we realize how much they shaped our future. Sometimes we regret not to have thanked them enough for what they did! Our pupils did not forget about it. On this particular day, they welcome their teachers with flowers, poems, songs, letters, food and love. The initiative was launched by the parents' committee so the school personnel were not expecting this surprise at all. The surprise was a complete success and will remain in all the memories, especially in our teachers' mind.

TWO MORE OF OUR NEW TEACHERS



Dana is taking on her new position at the Primary School working with Voltaire, as an animal therapist. She won't be working with pencil and paper but will use the environment as her classroom. Nature and its treasures can be great both for education and for motivating students, especially those who need some special help. Pets and farm animals can help in developing a caring relationship and social skills, and having Dana on staff will help us meet some of the special needs of our students.

Dana, who lives in Lachish, previously worked at a boarding school in Kiriath Gat, where she took care of young children who could not live with their families. Among these were Jewish and Bedouin children, and Dana worked with a young Bedouin girl. *"I was amazed by this precious girl and how she related to the environment. It was different from anything I have seen before."*

Dana's final project in her studies focuses on dialogue between people, and between people and the environment. *"Our emotions are impacted by our culture, our personal perspectives and by stories. My younger brother was killed in Lebanon in 1999, and in his memory I promised myself to make a positive change in the conflict."*

Dana has a BA in Graphic Design and Illustration from Vital, now part of the Shenkar College. In order to become an animal therapist, she studied for three years at the Seminar Ha' Kibbutzim in Tel Aviv. She graduated in 1998, at the crucial moment of the development of the Internet. She has her own studio where she focuses on graphical user interface; which involves working with high-tech companies to make the virtual world simpler.



Yali is a photography teacher, and will teach photography as a visual language to help pupils to express themselves and interpret images in a personal way. "We can express ourselves visually, tell stories and connect them to the identity of each person. Storytelling through images is a great tool to create and define our own identity." Pupils will work with photos, icons, and any kind of images and create their own images using professional cameras. They will focus on communicating with each other, helping the Arab and Jewish pupils to understand the point of view of the other. For Yali, teaching this in a mixed group adds an additional challenge. The groups are often called *"coexistence groups"* but he prefers to call them *"existence groups"*.

He earned his BA in Photography and Art in Hadassah College of Technology and completed a program called Artists for Social Change in Musrara School of Art. In addition, he specialized in photography as a therapeutic tool at Tel Aviv University. Yali has applied his knowledge in many settings, where he worked toward bringing social change. Among other projects, he worked with kids with special needs, giving them more self-confidence through photography, and helping them to overcome their personal issues by taking photos, editing them, and making collages. *"Sometimes we mix it with music to bring about emotional growth among the kids and to empower them"*.

He combines his educational work with activities as an artistic and commercial photographer.

He lives in Karmei Yosef close to Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom so he knew about the Primary School's work. He is always looking for new opportunities to make positive changes in kids' lives so he decided to apply to work here. *"I could not dream of a more appropriate place to give photography classes."*