

Wahat al Salam - Neve Shalom

Primary School Newsletter

Summer 2015

Dear Friends,

it's hard to believe that the summer is here as just yesterday the school year began. It has been an exciting year for me at the Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom Primary School as we have gone through many changes and are getting ready to grow. The big change this year was the recognition by the Ministry of Education which positioned us to reach out and recruit a second 1st grade class which will start in September. This is the beginning of the school's doubling in size over the next 5 years and eventual growth into a junior high school.



With the new first graders beginning, our sixth graders have graduated and although we are sad to see them go, we are happy that they will be carrying out into the society the values and beliefs that the school has instilled in them over the past years. In so many ways it is so normal, yet so unusual, to see Jewish and Arab youth learning together, playing together and living together. This gives us all hope for the future.

I can't finish the year without expressing my thanks to the wonderful and dedicated staff at the school that have worked so hard and accepted me into the WASNS family. The school will continue to grow and the goals for the year to come are to up-grade and modernize our library adding new computers and laptops and a science lab. In the coming year the staff will work on developing a special curriculum on tradition, culture and history. We hope to add more music education next year as well.... another language for all our children.

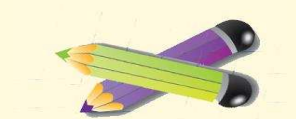
Many thanks to you as well, our friends and supporters from around the world who helped in making this year so successful and have helped us grow. I would like to give a special thanks to Gilda and Graham Zeitlin who have made a special commitment over the coming years to help students who cannot afford the tuition fees.

I look forward to working together with everyone in the years to come making learning and living together a way of life for all of us here in this country and region.

Carmella Ferber

Principal

Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom Primary School



Good Deeds Day

Last year, the children of our school had participated in Good Deeds Day by volunteering to make their school in Wahat al Salam–Neve Shalom even more welcoming by cleaning the grounds and planting herbs, vegetables and flowers around the campus. This year, our pupils and teachers took the idea that every individual can do good and improve the lives of others further, when they set out to help the Bustan Snobar (Pine Tree) Kindergarten in nearby Ramla. The Arab kindergarten where Shada, a resident of WASNS works, cares for 8 children from infancy to six years old, with autism. In a low income city like Ramla, with many students coming from underprivileged communities, keeping up a school like this is a major effort and any outside help is greatly appreciated.

To improve the facilities and provide the children and staff with a more stimulating learning environment, our students planned a project that they carried out over a two week period. As part of the project, WASNS' gardener Eitan installed an irrigation system at the school to water plants and flowers. The students' families collected shoes, clothes, toys, games and tables, and the students selected plants from our primary school's greenhouse to plant in the kindergarten's grounds.

When Good Deeds Day came, all of our 5th grade students, representatives of our student environmental committee, the teachers Voltaire, Hadas, Avital, Michal, Ktz'iaa and NADI youth club director Nadine arrived and began their work. Our pupils began with cleaning up the school's outside area and recycling some of the old sand of the sandboxes and refilling it with new sand.



They painted the outer school wall and installed beautiful mosaics, a handicraft they had learned earlier in the year through an international art project. They put up wind chimes and birdhouses around the school, which they had made from recycled material. With our teachers, our pupils also introduced the staff of Bustan Snobar to a waste/recycling system, so they can use their scarce resources more efficiently in the future.

With a lot of energy and good spirits, our students dug, lifted, painted and planted, but the highlight of their activity was meeting the children. In small groups, the toddlers were brought out and lent a hand to our 5th graders, who were delighted by their little helpers. The outcome of the communal effort was impressive, as the grounds, building and playground now greet its visitors with colorful art, a greener environment and a restored playing area; all of which are so important for early education. The project turned out to be as much a good deed for our pupils as for the children and staff of the kindergarten, as it helped our pupils see how the teamwork of a community and the work of their own hands can make a difference in the lives of others.

Memories in the Living Room

On April 12th, in our first meeting of 'Zikaron Basalon - Memories in the Living Room', WASNS Primary School parents and teachers gathered in the living room of Dafna Loyal to hear her father Werner's story. 'Zikaron Basalon' started in Israel four years ago as a personal way to commemorate the Shoah through inviting family, friends and neighbors to the house of a Holocaust survivor and listen to her/his memories. In our school, we are always interested in sharing each other's narratives and the binational background of our families' and students' lives. Through this series of meetings, the families and teachers of our Jewish and Palestinian students will tell their stories and listen to each other in the intimate atmosphere of a family's home.

Werner Loyal (b. Loeb) is the grandfather of Guy, a 6th grader and Ohad, a 2nd grader in our school. Werner was born in 1926 in Bamberg, Germany and survived the Shoah when he and his sister Erika became part of the 10,000 Jewish children on the Kindertransport to England; a rescue mission that took place during the nine months prior to the outbreak of World War II.

Werner Loyal began his story by explaining the social conditions for Jews in Europe in times of persecution and temporary leniencies in the centuries before the war. He went on describing the quality of Jewish life and their sense of belonging to Germany in the decades leading up to his birth. Then Werner told his own story, his safe and prosperous upbringing in Bamberg in the early 1930's and the family's successful electric supply business. He had just started grammar school, when life as he knew it was taken away with the rapidly growing persecution and discrimination of Jewish citizen by the German government and population.



When the 'Kristallnacht' pogrom took place on November 9, 1938, the family was forced to "sell" their business for a fraction of its actual value and he and his sister were expelled from school as were all Jewish children. Escaping with the Kindertransport to England saved Werner's life, but leaving their parents Sally and Frieda behind in Nazi Germany also marked the separation of the family and the long journey they had to endure before being reunited.

After leaving Germany, most of the children on the Kindertransport never saw their parents again and Werner's grandmother Lina and his father's brother Leo with his wife Gisela were murdered in concentration camps.

While the siblings attended school in Kent, England, Werner's parents, after many efforts, managed to get a visa to Ecuador in 1940. Due to the war however, they had to travel East, on the Trans-Siberian railway to Vladivostok, and then to Japan, Hawaii, California and Mexico, until they reached Ecuador three months later. In 1942, it was Werner's and Erika's chance to travel to their parents destination when they boarded a British freighter which was part of a convoy of 30 ships that were escorted by British warships to Buenos Aires. Werner remembers their convoy getting attacked by German submarines, but luckily their freighter made it to South America. From there, brother and sister traveled to Chile and then to Ecuador. After over four years of being separated, the Loeb family was together again.

Sadly, Werner's father Sally died two years later from a heart attack. Werner suspects his father never recovered from being imprisoned in Dachau in 1938 and all he had to go through in Germany. Werner's family then moved to New York and after serving in the U.S. army, Werner worked with the Israeli delegation to the U.N. assisting in getting the votes for the establishment of the State of Israel. In 1954 Werner started working for the Israeli Foreign Ministry and began his life again in Israel. It was there where he met his wife of almost 60 years, Pamela. Together they have four children and twelve grandchildren, two of which belong to the WASNS Primary School family.



Next on our Zikaron Basalon feature: The story of Siham Karkar/Al-Kalak and her family's expulsion from her home in 1948 which she shared in her son's living room in Wahat al Salam in the company of relatives, community members and primary school families. Siham is the mother of our long time community member and chair of the educational institutions board Peter Al-Kalak and the mother-in-law of WASNS Primary School teacher Yasmin Al-Kalak.

Five years ago, Lutfyia Raneyma arrived as a teacher in Wahat al Salam- Neve Shalom Primary School and every day since, she has been learning new things. She says that she is trying to teach the children the same; how rich the opportunities for learning and teaching are for both students and teachers, when Palestinian and Jewish students learn together.

Before Lutfyia started working at Wahat al Salam – Neve Shalom, she lived in Arrabe, a big Arab town in the northern Galilee. Then she got married, moved to Ramla and went to Achva Academic College to become a primary school teacher. Fresh out of college and pregnant with her first child, she already had our school in mind. After further researching it, she found out that not only were students of Palestinian and Jewish background being taught together, but that the teachers of WASNS were also teaching all their students about the Nakba and Land Day. She was convinced that this was where she wants to be. The conviction was mutual and Lutfyia was accepted as a teacher of Arabic and Culture and began her professional career. When asked about her first impression in WASNS, Lutfyia says, she was very surprised. Although she had learned Hebrew in school, she hardly had heard people around her speak Hebrew and she didn't know about Jewish holidays and culture. In retrospect, she says, WASNS not only opened up the possibility of teaching in an environment of mutual respect for the other's history but also opened new horizons of learning for her.

When Lutfyia talks about her subjects, one can feel that her philosophy of education and our binational teaching approach go hand in hand. Whether it is in Arabic and the challenge for the Jewish children to speak, read and write fluent Arabic; in culture and teaching the kids about the three world religions; ethics and the "Key to the Heart" (A Ministry of Education initiative to teach students how to treat others); or when she is developing pedagogical approaches for commemorations like Nakba Day; Lutfyia always stays true to the idea and her conviction of teaching and reaching all children, together. For her, that means working together closely with Jewish and Palestinian teachers on creative teaching methods for the different age groups and national backgrounds. It also means, strengthening the children's self-esteem by encouraging them as individuals, bringing out their own expert knowledge and helping them teach other. Currently, Lutfyia is letting each child develop a project on their favorite cultural subject and create a power-point presentation for their classmates.



When Lutfyia talks about the Palestinian and Jewish students being together, she also expresses the wish of what she calls 'the outside noises' not influencing what's going on in the classroom. Her hope is rather for her students to carry what they learn in class outside of WASNS Primary School and make a positive impact on society. As for other hopes and dreams as a teacher, Lutfyia can't get enough of learning. This could mean, qualifying herself further and doing her master degree and it definitely means, staying a teacher in Wahat al Salam – Neve Shalom.

Yom HaShoah

How does a school teach about the Holocaust? This is a question our teachers ask themselves each year. At this year's commemoration of the Holocaust, the home room teachers of each grade prepared programs for their pupils in order to teach the Jewish and Arab children about the Shoah, in a way they can understand its impact.

Children's books and personal stories are often a good way to address the Holocaust with children and youngsters. So teacher Hadas read to the children of the kindergarten and her first graders from the book "Chikah, the Dog in the Ghetto" about a Jewish family in Poland which is forced by the Nazis to move to the ghetto, and the little boy Mikhash, who is not allowed to take his beloved dog Chikah with him. However, a non-Jewish friend outside of the Ghetto agrees to look after Chikah, and Mikhash's family luckily survives the Shoah by going into hiding. After the war, Mikhash and Chikah are reunited and Mikhash discovers that his dog Chikah has not forgotten him.

During the day, students in the classes were encouraged to ask questions and share their own thoughts and feelings about the Shoah, and they were included in the school's official ceremony.

Math teacher Rani, who organized the commemoration ceremony, had put a special focus on the young victims of National Socialism. When all the Jewish students and the teachers of our Primary School gathered in the school's gymnasium, their fellow Jewish classmates first held a presentation about the Jewish Children who were murdered by the Nazis and the families who were separated forever. Then, in a moving pantomimic performance, the children re-enacted the selection of Jews in Auschwitz, where German officers sent children, women and elderly directly to their death, while the men were sent to labor camps.

The very emotional ceremony was accompanied with music as the students played songs on the flute and sang. At the end of the ceremony everybody joined in and our children sang the iconic song 'Sh'ma Yisrael' (Hear Israel) by Israeli singer Sarit Hadad:

"When the heart cries, only God hears

The pain rises out of the soul

A man falls down before he sinks down

With a little prayer he cuts the silence"

(Chorus)



Listen up! Our students can write and it matters.

In early June, 38 WASNS students of the 5th and 6th grade and their parents, as well as Palestinian and Jewish students and families from Modi'in Junior High and Rahat Junior High, gathered in the classrooms of our school to participate in the final meeting of the year-long creative writing workshop "Writers Matter: Israeli and Palestinian—Cultural Narrative Building through Writing". Project creators Dr. Robert Vogel from La Salle University (Philadelphia, U.S.A.) and Professor Sami Adwan of the Hebron University with his assistant Mrs. Samar Al-Dina had come to listen to the children's stories, conduct writing sessions with their parents and engage them in collaborative art projects and discussions.

The Writers Matter Program was developed by Professor Vogel ten years ago, to encourage adolescent students to learn and use critical writing skills for expressing their personal stories and perspectives, and to share their narratives, family stories, worries and aspirations with other students of their age. After engaging thousands of pupils in the U.S., the project became international in 2011, when Dr. Sami Adwan, director of the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME), joined in and got Jewish and Palestinian students from eleven schools in Israel and the Palestine on board.

Sami Adwan is a well-known Palestinian researcher, educator and peace advocate, who has been committed to promoting mutual understanding and outreach activities in Israel and Palestine for decades. Together with the late Dan Bar-On, an equally renowned Israeli researcher, Psychologist and co-founder of PRIME, Sami Adwan developed the famous "Side by Side Project". Side by Side is a school textbook written by Israeli and Palestinian teachers showing the historical narratives of the two peoples, literally side-by-side, with a blank space in the middle of each page for the Israeli and Palestinian students to write down their own thoughts. Naturally, with our school's curriculum that includes both historical narratives, the Side by Side textbook is frequently used by WASNS teachers and we are proud to call Sami Adwan our partner in peace.

It is also no surprise that our teachers and students were eager to participate in "Writers Matter" and teacher Raida, who organized the event, as well as teacher Avital conducted the program in their 5th and 6th grade. For one school year, they dedicated a weekly hour in the curriculum for creative writing about the topics Me, My family, My religion, Adolescence, My dream, and My future.



During that hour, the students analyzed each topic and wrote down ideas and sketches, until they were ready to finalize their essays. Most pupils wrote in their mother tongue except for a few who wanted to practice their English.

When it was time to share each other's stories, WASNS Primary School was chosen as a location for the young writers' meeting. When the students, families and teachers of WASNS and the other schools arrived, Sami Adwan, Robert Vogel and Samar Al-Dina divided the students into mixed groups and engaged them in ice breaking activities, so they could get to know each other. During the two-day workshop, the students participated in art/writing activities and performances, ate and played together and - judging by the chatter and smiles- thoroughly enjoyed each other's company.

Then it was time to read their essays and stories to one another and, depending on the decision of each student, in front of their families and teachers. With great interest, respect and a fair amount of nervousness, the student shared their essays and listened, commented and applauded their fellow writers' work.

The program also included engaging the students' families in writing activities. So, at the end of the workshop, everybody joined in a circle and the Palestinian and Jewish parents read and discussed with each other what the experience with their children's writing has been like for them. It was an emotional last gathering that left each participant relieved and hungry for more writers' workshops in the future. And also hungry for food, so they walked together to the WASNS Hotel restaurant and concluded the evening with a delicious dinner.

How do we remember?

Yom HaZikaron, the Memorial Day dedicated to fallen Israeli Soldiers, is commemorated in our community as it is through all of the country. Still, in the binational village of Wahat al Salam – Neve Shalom this observance intensifies the struggle of what it means to live together in coexistence and peace, respecting each other's narratives.

To honor the memory of both nationalities, the teachers of our primary school conducted programs for the Palestinian children, like home room teacher Nadwa who sat with her 1st graders, explaining the day as well as the Nakba and reading the story, "Reem, the Girl from Ein Houdh". Reem is a little girl who sees a dog lying on the street, hurt and weak and hungry, and gets permission from her parents to look after it. Shortly after, Reem discovers a kitten and her dead mother next to it, so she decides to take the kitten home with her. But her parents advise her to keep it at the neighbors since dogs and cats cannot live together in peace. Reem believes they can and convinces her parents to let both of them stay. As it turns out, Reem was right and the dog and cat grow up and live together side by side in peace.



Meanwhile, the Jewish children attended the Yom HaZikaron ceremony, prepared by teacher Avital. At first, Avital talked about the word memory and opened a dialogue with the children on what memory means. Then they connected the idea of memory to the memory of people, especially those who are no longer with us. Our students shared how difficult it is to remember all the time and how memory can be deceptive. They agreed on how hard it is during the year to remember those who are gone and how Memorial Day can be the day to remember these people.

They then moved on to a special someone that they wanted to remember this day; Tom Kitain, son of community members Daniella and Boaz, who died as a young man and soldier during a tragic helicopter accident in 1997. Our students met his father Boaz who shared with them the memories of his son. Together they learned about Tom's life and watched a film about him. Our students concluded the ceremony by playing and singing a song, that Tom had liked very much; "Hanasich Hakatan" (The Little Prince). Using the poetic imagery of Saint-Exupéry's same-titled book, the song depicts a little prince/boy/young man perishing in war:

"I met him in the heart of the desert
How pretty the sunset is to a sad heart
I painted him a tree and a sheep on paper
And he promised me he would return..."



Tom

With the song and Tom on their mind, our children talked about the consequences of war and how to avoid war and violence. Then the ceremony ended and the Jewish and Palestinian students reunited in their classes. In the 1st grade, the Palestinian students opened up their story-telling circle and welcomed their Jewish classmates back in. Together, they drew pictures symbolizing what Wahat al Salam – Neve Shalom and their binational school means for them.

"The world cannot be governed without juggling" -Ben Selden

One of the latest additions to the primary school is Ben Koby, the new Juggling teacher. Juggling you say? Yes, and when you think about it, is there a better place for finding the balance and keeping different objects in constant movement than in WSNAS? Ben says, it's also a form of meditation, because you have to let go of the thought of trying to juggle and let your body do the thinking for you.

Ben is from Jerusalem and has recently returned from traveling around the world. His big smile, when asked about his impressions of working in our Primary School, matches the positive experiences, he has had so far. He identifies with the concept of bilingualism and the ideals of WASNS and is impressed with the children under his care. The WASNS Primary School students, he says, are very mature, think "out of the box" and seem to be interested to work cooperatively instead of just following orders.

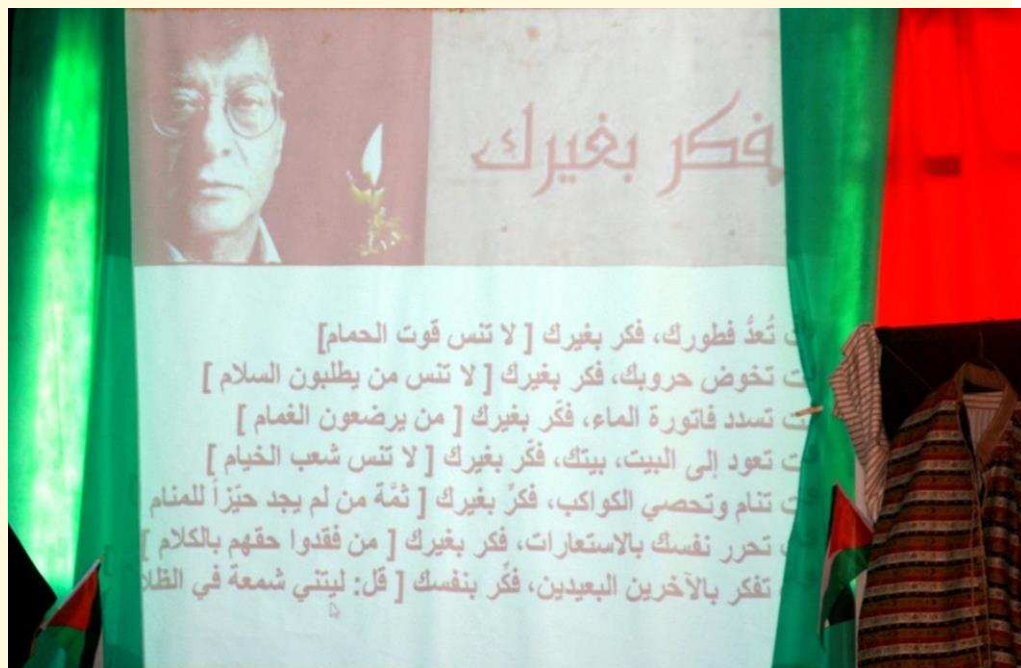
Attending the Nisui (Hebrew for 'Experimental') School in Jerusalem as a boy, Ben is not a stranger to an egalitarian and diversity-focused approach to education. He remembers how he went on regular school trips to Rafah in Gaza for encounters and activities with Palestinian children. Ben also tells me about fond childhood memories of the Sinai. As his best friends were Bedouins, his family went there many times a year. So, in his own words, Ben finds it "amazing" to see the people of Wahat al Salam-Neve Shalom living and learning together and he appreciates the freedom and trust he receives from his colleagues and superiors.



Nakba Day

On Wednesday, May 13th, the students and teachers of Wahat al Salam – Neve Shalom Primary School commemorated the Nakba, honoring the Palestinian day of mourning, identity and national remembrance. To educate our students about the Nakba and the meaning of losing one's home and becoming a refugee, the teachers of WASNS organized a carefully designed program suited for our binational student population and the different age groups. The memorial began with a meeting of all students on the steps of the main school building where teacher Reem talked to our pupils about the day. She asked the Palestinian children to join her above the steps and present the diverse traditional clothes they wore for the occasion.

All students then went back to their classrooms, where each class was taught about the Nakba by their Palestinian teacher. Afterwards, pupils of two grades joined together for a special program. Teachers Nadwa, Hadas and Inas played a song to the 1st and 2nd graders, in which a child wants to take a fish out of the sea. In the song, the fish asks the child not to separate him from his home and tells the child what it means to be born in a place, where your family comes from, where you live, learn, and have your roots. After talking about the story and the importance of Wattan/Moledet (homeland), each child drew a painting with a fish and the home, they envisioned for a life together.



The children of the 3rd and 4th grade, together with teachers Rani and Faten, joined and listened intently, while teachers Lutfiya and Hezi told the story and showed the drawings of the children's book 'Usu and Musu in Kakarusu' about two brothers who have a fight over sitting together on one chair. The story describes the parting of their families and how for generations to come, each side demonizes the other and adds more legends to the conflict, until they finally break down the wall that separates them and see the other is just a human and part of their family.

Teachers Voltaire and Avital showed the 5th and 6th grade children the documentary 'This is my Land' by Tamara Erde. The movie deals with the different approaches to education in Palestinian and Israeli schools and looks inside classrooms in Israel and the occupied West Bank to see how children are taught the history of their nations. The Wahat al Salam- Neve Shalom Primary School is also portrayed, so our students who saw the film realized what it means to learn about both sides of a (hi)story instead of just one.

Nakba Day ended with a memorial ceremony, for which the Palestinian 6th graders with their teachers Reem and Raida had prepared text, pictures and a beautiful stage with traditional artifacts and decorations. With the Palestinian children and teachers from all classes assembled, the Palestinian 6th graders told four personal family stories on how the grandparents and families of students Nour Gherbawy, Adam Elsane'a, Elia Jaber and Intisar Abu Riyash experienced the Nakba.

The commemoration concluded with the former national anthem of Palestine. The children and teachers sang the touching words of the poem "Mawtini" written eighty years ago by the Palestinian poet Ibrahim Touqan:



"My homeland, My homeland, Glory and beauty, Sublimity and splendor, Are in your hills, Are in your hills
Life and deliverance, Pleasure and hope, Are in your air, Are in your Air, Will I see you? Will I see you?..."

30 Years of WASNS Primary School- A Legacy of Bilingual and Binational Education

When you walk on the school grounds of Wahat al Salam – Neve Shalom and you watch the primary school children playing, exploring and calling each other, sometimes it happens that a pleasurable mixture of joy, energy and awe washes over you as you realize how precious the normality of the children's school life is. How can this be possible, you think. The answer lies in the nature of school itself.

A school can only come to life and flourish in the community of children, parents and teachers, on a school ground and in a school house. Moreover, a school like WASNS Primary School has come into existence with the love for children, with an adult determination to give education and independence to the growing child, and with the confidence that school will provide the children with fair and equal learning opportunities as well as with inspiration for their future lives.

When the first Palestinian and Jewish members of our egalitarian village became parents, these basic principles and mutual values brought the binational, bilingual primary school and kindergarten into existence. It took the members enormous efforts to establish a community where Palestinians and Jews could live together in peace and mutual respect. The second generation would already find a learning environment that held those truths of humanity and coexistence to be self-evident. To meet the terms of peaceful co-existence, the kindergarten and the primary school had to be **bilingual** and they had to be **binational** so that both identities and narratives, Palestinian and Jewish, could be incorporated in the educational approaches. Finally, a school house and a school ground were needed for the children and the teachers.

In the year of 1984, making use of recycled building materials, the village was able to construct a small building and there it was: the first Jewish-Palestinian bilingual-binational children's school in the country!

In its beginnings, the school served only a dozen children in the village and the school's founders Abdessalam Najjar and Ety Edlund and other parents took time off their own professions to teach the kids the subjects they knew and to prepare meals for their children during the school day. As the community grew and the binational and bilingual teaching methods developed, the WASNS Primary School took on Palestinian and Jewish teachers from outside the village and opened its doors to children from other Arab and Jewish towns. Today, there are 138 pupils from the 14 towns and villages Abu Ghosh, Ain Rafa, Beit Hashmonai, Gezer, Harel, Lod, Mesilat Zion, Gizo, Karmeil Yosef, Mishmar David, Mevaseret, Lydda, Ramle, and Modi'in.



The Primary School in the early days



Green surroundings on the school ground nowadays

Coming back to the question on what has made WASNS Primary School possible, one has to realize that our school never aspired to be special or even exclusive. Like the village itself, it rather wanted to be a model of coexistence, peace and binational upbringing which could spread and inspire others. In many ways, we have achieved our goal, since families of many communities have trusted our school with their children's education and thus have made the idea of Palestinian and Jewish children learning and growing up together come true. So, at the 30th anniversary of WASNS Primary School we have to thank those parents who made a brave decision and send their children here, sometimes even against the resistance of their own communities or their families. During the 30 years of teaching and learning together, our model has also sparked off four more bilingual Jewish-Palestinian schools from the Galilee to Beer Sheva. So next to our wonderful school children, what better encouragement for a school of peace and co-existence is there than our partner schools across the country?

When you look at the teachers and staff of our primary school- some of them we have portrayed in our newsletters - and listen to their stories, it becomes very clear, that each and every one of them has a personal as well as professional commitment to be here. It is because of our teachers and their involvement for the binational student population, their subjects and the idea of integrated education that our model works. >>

This means, that Palestinian and Jewish teachers work together on educational approaches, share teaching ideas and cope with challenges together. For the specific purposes of bilingual teaching, they have built a language lab to further professionalize early age bilingual education. They develop Arabic learning games to help the Jewish children overcome their challenges in learning the Arabic language. Furthermore, language teachers are constantly enabled to reexamine and reflect on their simultaneous Arabic and Hebrew teaching in the classroom either with two teachers, one Arabic speaking and one Hebrew speaking, or one teacher with both qualifications.



Parents and children fishing letters at the ABC- Party



Singing



the Alef Ba..

and the Alef Bet

In this year alone, our teachers have organized and conducted sensitive pedagogical approaches for Palestinian and Jewish holidays and commemorations. They have collaborated with international partners on art projects and creative writing workshops. They also organized a national science competition, pluralistic religious celebrations, student committee elections, family picnics, an Alphabet Party, environmental projects, student films and exhibitions, a Jewish/Palestinian/German student exchange program, Math Day, Olive Day, International Day of Peace, Good Deeds Day, and we are still talking just about this school year..!

The same is true for the dedicated principals, who we had through the last 30 years and who brought their professional potential and identity, forming the primary school in their legacy and shouldering the responsibility of holding it together and connecting students, parents and teachers. Our current principal, Carmella Ferber, who took over in 2014, has been leading the school with endless energy, optimism and calmness. Carmella strongly believes in the growth of WASNS Primary School. In fact, she and her team have already been able to attract more families and are happy to establish two first classes next school year.

Together with her dedicated staff Carmella already has successfully faced new pedagogical challenges by organizing and taking part in educational workshops which highlighted and conveyed the newest methods of teaching and contemporary pedagogical concepts. To walk further on the path of renewal our school participated in an exchange of teaching concepts with public schools in the country. In this regard, we welcomed the chance to cooperate with the Ministry of Education and its national evaluation standards and stick to our well-defined bi-national model at the same time. Moreover, collaboration and supervision by school psychologists as well as by university professionals for bilingualism were added to the school's agenda. We are proud to have expanded our dual narrative teaching approach and further included parents in our school life by introducing Zikaron Basalon (Memories in the Living Room) for Palestinian and Jewish parents to share the stories of their families with each other.

The school grounds and the school buildings of WASNS Primary School have also grown and flourished over the decades. Thanks to the financial help as well as the physical support of friends, funders, volunteers, the village and its members, WASNS Primary School has a lot of treasures to offer - from playgrounds, our popular school lawn, student made vegetable and flower gardens, our greenhouse, gym, language lab and the beautiful art, generations of pupils have painted, handcrafted and placed throughout the school



WASNS Primary School Children Demanding Peace

Still, a lot needs to be renovated and built, like a new school library for our book-hungry children, a science lab and a cafeteria. With the growing school community we need new school buses for our student population from outside of the village. Last but not least, classrooms need refurbishing and school grounds must be kept. So we do hope that the international support which keeps our primary school going will flow and grow together with us. >>

Through all past conflicts, wars and losses, the people who make this school have never lost hope and have fostered humanity while internationally and inside our own countries many have given up and given way to disappointment. Our strength and unflagging optimism is with the children, who are the genuine reason of the school's existence and who are our everyday joy in Wahat al Salam – Neve Shalom Primary School.

On the 30th year celebration on 29th of May, when former principals and community members Diana and Ety and principal Carmella had invited former and current students, their families, and teachers, a photo exhibition of 30 years of school life awaited them in the village's museum. Together, they watched film presentations and former principals Ety Edlund, Dyana Rizek, Boaz Kitain, Faiz Mansour, Anwar Dawood, current principal Carmella Ferber, and chair of the WASNS educational institutions' board Peter Al-Kalek reflected on the past and present and peeked into the future.



Art in every corner



Current and former WASNS teachers, students and families listening...



WASNS students presenting their science projects on science day



Learning and planting with teacher Voltaire in our green house

Together, they paid tribute to the school's late co-founder Abdessalam Najjar and shared their memories, making everybody reminisce, laugh and sigh about the times gone by.

In the audience, WASNS Primary School's first and second generation and community members listened, many of them holding on their laps and in their arms the third generation of current and future WASNS students. After the ceremony, it was time for mingling and happy reunions between former classmates. The evening concluded - as this school year concludes and the next 30 years will- with a happy note: Can't wait to see you again, my friends



....applauding, reading and...



happily reuniting at the 30 year ceremony