



Mid Year Impact Report

Education that Matters

The Primary School



The Primary School is building a strong, practical foundation for peace through communication.

Their bi-lingual learning environment is the cornerstone of the educational program and the results are in! In a recent study, NSWAS students scored up to fifty points higher (on a scale of 100) than students learning Arabic in Israeli high schools. “This unique concept of the bilingual Arabic-Hebrew school of Neve Shalom seems to have a major effect on the acquisition process”, said Dr. Alon Fragman and Dr. Aura Mor-Sommerfeld in their soon to be published study.

Through The School for Peace and in partnership with teachers from the Hagar School, the Primary School teachers have access to continued training from experts in the field of education.

Utilizing their connections the education community, the Primary School cultivated two special writing programs. Working on collaborative storytelling, every class attended a seminar led by a guest author. The 5th and 6th graders worked on a special creative writing project designed by university professors. Focusing on building a cultural narrative, the program culminated with a writing workshop that included parents and students from other schools. Creating opportunities for conversation in Hebrew and Arabic is a powerful tool for building trust and relationships between peers and generating a transformative dialogue.



In addition to their linguistic accomplishments, the students entered a computer programming competition sponsored by The Ministry of Education and ranked 3rd among small schools and 10th nationwide. This spring, five students will be chosen to attend a computer camp and prepare for a final competition.



Spring celebrations for Jews and Palestinians fall on different dates and carry different meanings for each group. The students at the Primary School solved this problem by creating their own holiday. Mark your calendar; May 7th is now officially “Peace Holiday”. Like a rainbow, Peace Holiday makes color and joy out of a storm. Even as the jets flew overhead toward Gaza, Palestinians and Jews sat together in fellowship and shared food, friendship and hope.

School for Peace



As a leader among human rights and peace organizations, the School For Peace builds on-the-ground programs dedicated to developing change agents, people with the capacity to move from studying problems to engaging in solutions.

Two 16-month programs have begun recently: **Planners, Architects & Engineers** and **Young Politicians**

Read comments from participants in the first Planner, Architects & Engineers course that ended January 2016:

"The course allowed me to break out of the dry bubble of urban planning... I realized the way to impact through planning... gradually challenge planning rules until the wheels of this system move." (Jewish architect)

This course [introduced me to] a world that I did not specialize in. In order to achieve something, more needs to be done, and I got several tips on how to look at planning... in the district planning committee, and how to discuss and present. We should insist and not stop. We need to continue and not stop." (Palestinian civil engineer)

In March, the change agents course for **Israeli and Palestinian up-and-coming politicians** opened, conducted jointly with the INMAA (Ramallah) organization. Forty participants from Israel and the Palestinian Authority came together to participate in leadership training that advances peace.

At **Wadi Atir**, **environmental change agents** engaged in an ambitious educational eco-social tourism farm project, combining traditional Bedouin farming methods with modern technology and sustainability approaches, where by-products of one activity are utilized to assist with another activity, minimizing waste. The farm project has been recognized among the top three new projects globally at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.



Israel's seven mixed cities, where Jews and Arabs live in close proximity but rarely mix, present special challenges especially in times of tension. The course **Leadership and Activism in Mixed Arab and Jewish Cities** is book-ended with 3-day workshops in Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam and includes study tours in the field. Collaborating in the program are equal numbers of Jews and Arabs from Ramla, Lod, Beer-

sheba, Haifa, Acre, Jaffa and Nazareth. The leadership and activism course focuses are building a sense of shared security and joint ownership of public spaces in mixed Arab and Jewish cities.

Transcending the scope of their projects, we are seeing the graduates of our change agents' programs exercise their influence and become serious advocates for equality and mutual respect in their individual workplaces.

Preparing Teachers and Students to Walk in Each Other's Shoes:



As part of the change agents program, the SFP's **Teaching the Literature of the Other** course guides Israeli Palestinian and Jewish teachers in strategies for teaching Arabic literature to Jewish Israelis and Hebrew literature to Palestinian Israelis. When students study Arabic and Jewish literature in high school, the 'other' is humanized in their eyes, enabling them to begin to understand and accept each other's viewpoints and experiences.

University Courses: For many citizens of Israel, university is the first place where Jews and Palestinians meet. This makes universities an important setting to begin to bridge the differences and create bonds

between the two peoples. Students discover common concerns as they become more familiar with the larger world and face new issues of living together. Each year the SFP provides accredited academic courses in Israeli universities. "The Arab-Jewish Conflict in the Mirror of Theory and Practice" is taught at Tel Aviv University (beginning 25 years ago), Ben Gurion University, Arava Institute for Environmental Studies and now at Azrieli College of Engineering in Jerusalem. Azrieli College of Engineering is an important venue for this type of course because the school enrolls both Palestinians from East Jerusalem and religious Jews from the settlements.

"The conflict influences our life every day, and I decided that if it changes my life I have to take a part in changing it, because there are others that are suffering more than me. I have to do something to change things for them."

Youth Encounters

The School for Peace began its work over 30 years ago by organizing and hosting youth encounters. Most recently, the SFP held a 3-day residential encounter for 61 11th-graders from Givat Brener School (outside of Rehovot) and Nazareth High School. The students directly addressed the conflict and engaged with it seriously. They discuss the always difficult yet important subjects of rights and responsibilities (army service) as well as hot topics such as violence and terrorism. Simulating future agreements and learning how to live together generate new ways of thinking for each participant.



"This experience was different than anything I have experienced in my every-day life. I arrived with a lot of stigmas, like Arabs don't pay taxes and are against the Jews. I was exposed to the ideas and beliefs of the other and their views on the situation. I admit you broke my stereotypes. I now understand that the situation that I thought was complicated is really complex."

Facilitator Training

More trained facilitators are always needed to work with groups in conflict. The SFP's newest 120-hour facilitators training course included participants who were mental health professionals; staff from Shatil; NGO directors and employees; and principals from Hand in Hand and Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam's Primary School. Experiential workshops, seminars and practical experience through peer facilitation provide the first steps in becoming facilitators for conflict-transformation.

Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center and Peace Museum



The Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center (PSCC) at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (NSWAS) is a place for silent reflection and meditation, a vibrant community center and a gathering place for prayer; it is where NSWAS can share our foundational values of equality, justice and reconciliation with the general public.

The annual Massa/Massar program continued at the PSCC

this year with a group of 30 Jewish, Muslim and Christian teenagers. Their four-day journey of discovery was filled with lively discussion as they visited many cultural and religious sites. The youth leadership program culminated at NSWAS so the participants could experience first hand the power, beauty and possibility of cultural and religious cooperation. Not only did they celebrate each other's rich cultural heritage, they are creating new traditions filled with hope for a future where cultural diversity enriches their lives.



The PSCC also hosted a Spring Renewal celebration. Eighty Jews, Christians and Muslims, representing local organizations, shared their faiths through food, prayers, songs and fellowship. This inter-faith gathering was an opportunity to actively participate in one another's religion.



When we share in religion and share our religion, those connections of faith that move us, and touch our souls become our connection to the people who bear witness to our faith. By affirming each other's faith, we strengthen our own.

Events such as these held at the PSCC will soon be augmented

through a Peace Museum installation still in the planning stages. The **Forest of the Righteous** will be located by the PSCC as a tribute to individuals from around the world whose extraordinary acts of selflessness preserved lives threatened by man-made atrocities. This exhibit will be an inspirational reminder to those who struggle to seek peace and justice in the face of often overwhelming pressure and danger to never give up hope. The **Forest of the Righteous** honors those who have paved the way, and whose path we have chosen to follow.