

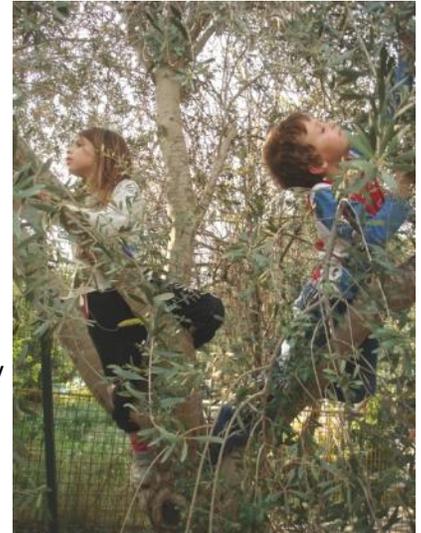


## Mid Year Report

### The Primary School

#### Growing Together

The Primary School's principal, Carmella Ferber, held 'Get to Know Us' meetings at some of the students' villages, answering questions and explaining the Primary School's bilingual, binational, multicultural approach to the communities. Growing interest in the Primary School's framework resulted in an increased number of applications for the 2015 – 2016 school year and a plan to add another first-grade class, each year for the next six years, effectively doubling the size of the school. This year has seen the revitalization of the Language Laboratory, increasing conversational second (and third) language acquisition through integrating dramatic play and updated technologies. Plans are in place for both a redesigned and accessible playground, integrated with the school's extraordinary surrounding natural environment and a state-of-the-art Library that will reflect the school's goals of increased resource integration, access, and utility across grade levels.



The greenhouse environmental education program received a boost from the now-completed major renovation of the facilities and the introduction of a multi-grade program of plant science, ecology and environmental studies.

#### Cross-cultural Journey

In an effort to continue expanding the children's horizons and cross-cultural relationships, the Primary School has developed a relationship with the Freiherr-vom-Stein-Realschule bilingual primary school in Dusseldorf, Germany. Both schools have been working together on class projects and communicate with each other on a regular basis. After the group of German pupils and teachers visited the Primary School this past winter, it was the Primary School's turn to visit them in Dusseldorf, Germany. At the beginning of March, homeroom and English teacher Raida and the principal Carmella accompanied our pupils on the cross-cultural and educational trip. This memorable experience for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade class nurtured the relationships between the two classes, as well as between both schools; there is already talk of expanding this class exchange to a family exchange. Having a strong multicultural foundation built on fostering mutual respect, and having confidence in their school-supported third-language (English) conversational skills meant that the Primary School students became ambassadors, reaching beyond boundaries and borders.

## Language Research

Soon to be published, Dr. Alon Fragman and Dr. Aura Mor-Sommerfeld have recently completed their first round of research on the Primary School bilingual educational model. The research set out to test the Arabic language proficiency of Hebrew-speakers in the Primary School, grades 2-4. The results show that the Primary School students scored as much as 50 points higher (on a scale of 100) than Israeli high school students studying Arabic. The Fragman, Mor-Sommerfeld study shows that in all four of their tests, children at the NSWAS School whose primary language is Hebrew, scored consistently and significantly better than other native Hebrew speakers learning Arabic in 7<sup>th</sup>– 10<sup>th</sup> grades. Most remarkable was the fact that NSWAS students were able to correctly identify the pronunciation of particular letters (difficult ones which do not exist in Hebrew), with 70% and above accuracy. Native Hebrew speakers learning Arabic in 7<sup>th</sup>– 10<sup>th</sup> grades, including those who had been studying Arabic for four years, had only 20-25% accuracy.



*“The exposure to both Arabic and Hebrew already begins in kindergarten through elementary school, in a well-organized systematic bilingual program conducted by teachers who are familiar with second language pedagogy. This unique concept of the bilingual Arabic-Hebrew school of Neve Shalom seems to have a major effect on the acquisition process,”* say Fragman and Mor-Sommerfeld.

## Good Deeds Day



Every year, the Primary School participates in Good Deeds Day, a day where the students and teachers focus on helping and improving the lives of others. This year, the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students along with the help of their teachers, the Village biologist and gardener, representatives of the student environmental committee, and the NADI Director, carried out a project over the two weeks leading up to Good Deeds Day. The project set out to help the Bustan Snobar (Pine Tree) Kindergarten, an Arab kindergarten that takes

care of 8 autistic children. On Good Deeds Day, everyone came together to clean up the school, paint the outer wall, place birdhouses created by PS students from recycled materials, install beautiful mosaics and wind chimes, plant flowers and other plants the 5<sup>th</sup> graders selected from the PS Greenhouse, and set up an irrigation system. The students even introduced a new waste-recycling system to the Bustan Snobar Kindergarten to better manage their scarce resources. The highlight of the day was receiving help from the kindergarteners as they came out in small groups to lend a hand. The project turned out to be as much a good deed for our pupils as for the children and staff of the kindergarten, as our pupils saw how teamwork and work with their own hands had made a difference in the lives of others.

## Nakba and Yom HaZikaron



To honor the memory of both nationalities, the teachers of our Primary School conducted programs for both the Palestinian and Jewish children. Discussions around what it means to live together in coexistence and peace and respecting each other's narratives, the memory of people, and understanding the impact of the conflict led to the children coming together and drawing pictures symbolizing what living together in peace meant to them.

### “Writers Matter”

In early June, 38 fifth and sixth-grade students and families from Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, along with Palestinian and Jewish students and families from Modi'in Junior High and Rahat Junior High, gathered at the NSWAS Primary School to participate in the grand finale of a year-long creative writing workshop called, “Writers Matter: Building Israeli and Palestinian Cultural Narrative through Writing.”

The “Writers Matter” Program was developed by Dr. Robert Vogel of La Salle University, in collaboration with Dr. Sami Adwan of Hebron University, and the Director of the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East. The program encourages students to learn and use critical writing skills for expressing personal stories and perspectives, and to share their narratives, family stories, worries, and aspirations with other students of their age.



NSWAS Primary School teachers and students from the fifth and sixth grades eagerly participated in “Writers Matter.” For the entire school year, they set aside time each week for creative writing exercises on the topics, “Me, my family, my religion, my adolescence, my dream, and my future.”

During their weekly “Writers Matter” time, 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 came time to share each other's stories, students were divided into mixed groups. During the two-day workshop, the students participated in art and writing activities and performances, ate and played together, and read their essays and stories to one another.

The program also engaged the students' families in writing activities. 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 had been like for them. It was an emotional final gathering, leaving each participant hungry for more writers' workshops in the future.

## A Celebration: Three Decades of Learning at the Primary School at NSWAS

A few weeks ago, the village hosted an emotional and beautiful event to mark 30 years since the opening of the village Primary School. Parents and children celebrated in the schoolyard to honor this tremendous effort: the first of its kind school that is both binational and bilingual. Also present was Ety Edlund who, along with Abdessalam Najjar, was one of the two co-founders of the Primary School; they were the first to put Arabs and Jews in the same classroom.

Back then there wasn't a set plan—just two brave teachers and the village residents, made up of several families who decided to start the journey together. They believed in their inherent goodness, being good neighbors, speaking two languages, equality, and not being afraid to talk about anything. They simply knew they would figure it out ... every problem has a solution, and for those who intend to teach about how to achieve peace there are no shortcuts—they simply need to live together.

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## Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center

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The outreach programs at the Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center continue to grow and touch the lives of Jews, Muslims, and Christians, of all ages, from Israel and Palestine.

On March 12<sup>th</sup>, the PSCC welcomed over 150 Jews and Palestinians from all over Israel, East Jerusalem and Bethlehem, to a seminar on exploring the competencies that can grow out of conflict areas. Led by world renowned spiritual teacher Thomas Hübl, the discussions revolved around how individuals and groups can cultivate these competencies to change the playing field and provide excellent crisis resolution to areas in need.



Among the participants was psychologist Ahmed Tawahina from Gaza. Mr. Tawahina works with individuals and groups in trauma within the Gaza Strip. It was his first visit to the Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center and he expressed his interest in returning and finding ways of working together in the future.

### Programs currently being featured:

Breaking Down Borders: Interfaith learning and peace building program for Jewish, Muslim, and Christian 15-17 year old

Boundary Crossing: Sacred text study groups of Muslims, Christians and Jews

Celebrations and teaching for all holidays and holy days: SHAVUOT, EASTER, PASSOVER, at which the village members played music and sang, told stories over a meal and enjoyed each other's company.



Story continued on next page

Currently being planned is the community-wide sunset Iftar for breaking the fast observed through Ramadan.

Massa/Masar: A six-day program for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders from Jewish and Arab high schools who will explore issues of religion, identity and Jewish-Arab relations, through dialogues, workshops, a four-day day team-building hiking trip visiting religious and historical sites, and participation in meetings with local community and religious leaders. The program increases each individual's sense of responsibility for promoting social justice and equality and acquiring the skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue as they enter young adulthood.

The newly developed Museum and Art Gallery will be featuring artists from both sides with new exhibits every month. In addition to the art-exhibits, there will also be historical exhibits with documented personal stories, folklore, Nakba, Holocaust, and homeland history. Summer 2015 programs will bring Jewish and Palestinian artists and art students together for multi-day residencies, creating public art as well as opportunities for conversation with visitors to the village.

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## School for Peace

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The School for Peace is excited to announce Harb Amara as the newest member of the team. Harb Amara comes to the School for Peace as their new Program Director. Mr. Amara is no stranger to social change; he has worked with the School for Peace and USAID in the past and is also the head of Community Services and Prevention of Violence in the Family in Nazareth.

“We want to continue to identify potential ways of leading social progress. We know we cannot hold back what happens around us. What we can do is continue seeking solutions and finding partners, seeking what is common to all, joining with other actors who want people to be happier in their lives,” says Mr. Amara.

Harb Amara joins the team during a very pivotal time as the School for Peace continues to grow its influence through new courses at universities and colleges throughout the country. The SFP recently presented on a panel that was titled “Pluralism in Higher Education,” held at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute Conference focusing on advancing higher education in the Arab community. As a result of the conference, the Open University and Azrieli College turned to the SFP to organize courses with their students. Due to the successful nature of past courses and programs, there are plans for renewing the graduate forums in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Nazareth to support graduate-run initiatives.

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## Literature Teachers

After the successful completion of the first Literature Teachers course, the School for Peace, in collaboration with Tawasul, began its second course of 20 participants in January and its third course in May. Each course consists of seven intensive full-day meetings between Palestinian and Jewish teachers learning to teach the literature of the “other.”



## Paving a New Future:

The School for Peace opened the new year with the start of a City Planners, Engineers and Architects course for 30 Arab and Jewish professionals. The initial meeting was over 3 days starting at the Village with Professor Oren Yiftachel and moving over to the Arab Center for Alternative Planning in Elaboon with guest lecturer and member of the Knesset, Dr. Hanna Swaid. The course will take place over this year with participants meeting once a month to learn about the issues that arise during construction, planning and development and their relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The participants of the course will also take part in multiple dialogues, educational trips, and developing and implementing their own projects. A primary goal is the development of an engaged, interactive and long-term network of Palestinian (Christian and Muslim) and Jewish Planners.

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## NADI

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Newly appointed Coordinator of the Nadi, Nadine Nashef grew up in Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam and, after graduating from Bezalel College of Art, has committed to returning to the village to strengthen the work of the Nadi. Following Nadine’s example, four high-school volunteers, Noam, Bissan, Diyar, and Ramez have been assisting, holding regular meetings to plan and implement new activities for all Nadi members.

With the goal of encouraging youth from outside the village to participate in future Nadi activities, the students of the Nadi have partnered with the Jewish and Palestinian youth camp organized by the Forum for Bereaved Families. Together, they took a trip to Hava and Adam Farm, a small eco-farm. The participants were divided into groups, they made ecological bricks, medicinal pastes, and organic soaps. Interaction with youth from outside of the village and inviting them to take part in the future Nadi activities is a way to introduce living with equality and mutual respect—core values of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam—to a wider audience.

In April, the Nadi held a Youth Leaders Course for students in high school, designed to provide participants with the tools and skills to serve as youth counsellors for children both within and beyond the village. Facilitated by experts in youth leadership, the workshops, discussions and intensive 4-day training seminar outside the village have prepared the graduates of the course for their volunteer positions at the 2015 Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam Palestinian Summer Camp, as well as for future outreach and service activities at the Nadi.