

# **The Oasis of Peace School Neve Shalom ~ Wahat al-Salam**



**Annual Report for 2003 - 2004**

# Facts about the School



## *An Encounter of Peace in Practice*

- The Oasis of Peace bi-national school has operated since 1984 as a Jewish-Palestinian bilingual school with equal participation of Jews and Palestinians at both student and staff levels.
- The school is the educational home of about 250 students, their parents and families and the staff. The students come from 28 towns and villages in the vicinity of NS/WAS.
- The school is recognized by the Israeli Ministry of Education as an official school with a status that enables enrollment from several municipal districts.
- The social, multicultural and bilingual encounter in the school, offers an opportunity for deep acquaintance with the language, culture and traditions of both our peoples and our three religions.
- Being part of the school enables the children and staff an on-going cooperative experience, in which each one gets to know her/his own identity while accepting the other as equal.
- Our educational approach is based on the right of every human being to live and be educated in an environment of full respect, freedom and equality.
- The school is a learning community, which offers each of its members the rare opportunity for deep dialogue, even in these troubled times.
- By contributing to the school you become our partner in working towards social change and promoting Peace.

## A unique educational home

The Oasis of Peace School is situated in Neve Shalom ~ Wahat al-Salam Village, which was and remains Israel's only intentionally formed Jewish-Arab village. The School was established in 1984 as a unique educational framework for Arab and Jewish students. In 1996, it was recognized as an official school under Israel's education ministry. Today it serves as an extra-regional school (meaning that it accepts children outside of our regional council). The pupils come from about 28 communities, between Jerusalem in the East and Lod in the West. The School attempts to keep a numerical balance between the Arab and Jewish students and similarly between the binational teaching staff.

The educational work of the school is based on the example of Neve Shalom ~ Wahat al-Salam as a place where Jews and Arabs live together in equality, mutual respect and cooperation. The binational and multicultural learning environment of the school inculcates a spirit of fellowship and peace among the students so that the grand vision of a peaceful and equitable society becomes their everyday reality.

Both Hebrew and Arabic are taught in all age levels, starting from the first grade on. The children learn the national culture and history of the two peoples. They also learn about Christian, Muslim and Jewish traditions and festivals. Since Arabs and Jews have differing and often irreconcilable narratives relating to their culture and history, the pupils are made aware of these separate narratives. They learn that both sides have suffered pain, that justice cannot be one-dimensional, and that in a binational environment we always need to take our neighbors into account.

We strive to manifest our educational ideals in the daily life of the School, its organizational structure and the educational content. The School provides an on-going opportunity for the children and the staff to experience cooperation on a daily basis. They learn to recognize and deepen their individual identities, while learning to perceive each other as equals. The pupils' families are also exposed to this process, which gives them a wider, more creative view on the encounter between our two peoples. We can actually see how this process causes parents and new staff members to expand their ability to understand the other people and adopt new ways of looking at the conflict.

We search constantly for new tools to help further our educational aims. We give special emphasis to learning Hebrew and Arabic as *first* languages while studying English as a foreign language. The School's **Golder-Goodwin Language Center** offers the children a lively and enjoyable learning experience, which helps them to acquire these languages through a variety of methods and tools.

In unique lessons called "culture, tradition and society", we learn about the holidays and national events of both our nations and relate to the many facets of our identity.

On the individual level, we try to develop each child's natural capacity and talent. Art, music, drama and communications lessons constitute a very important part of our educational work. In these lessons the children are encouraged to express themselves using the language of creativity in a way that enriches the human connection between them while respecting their differences.

During the 2003 – 2004 school year we placed much effort in organizing in-service training sessions for our teaching staff, because we know how much the school's success depends on their abilities and enthusiasm. With the help of supporters and foundations we have managed to arrange Arabic studies for the Jewish teachers, workshops dealing with multi-cultural education, and courses in mediation for children, teachers and parents.

The Oasis of Peace school has served as a model and a source of inspiration for other educational initiatives in Israel. It is our hope that it will continue to inspire others in Israel and abroad. We are always happy to lend our assistance to such efforts.

## Data for the school year 2003-2004

**Location:** The Jewish-Arab community of Neve Shalom ~ Wahat Al-Salam.

**Status:** Official extra-regional primary school,  
Jerusalem district, Mateh Yehuda Regional Council.

**Number of School Students:** 238

**Number of Pre-School Students:** 46

**Number of Junior-High Students:** 16

**Total in the Educational System:** 300 children.

**Number of Classes:** 3 pre-school classes: nursery, young kindergarten,  
kindergarten.

12 primary school classes: grades 1st through 6th.  
1 junior high class: 7th grade.

**Languages:** Hebrew and Arabic as first languages, English as a second  
language.

**Weekly study days:** Sunday through Thursday, 8 AM till 3 PM.  
A choice of extra-curricular lessons on Fridays.

**Staff (including part-time positions):**

Primary school principals: Maya Karni and Fa'iz Mansour  
Junior high principals: Ety Edlund and Anwar Da'oud  
24 Jewish and Arab teachers.  
9 teachers and workers in the pre-school ages.  
5 administration workers.

**The geographical distribution of students:** Regional Councils of Mateh  
Yehuda, Gezer, Yoav, and the municipalities of Ramle, Lod, Abu-Ghosh,  
Mevaseret Tsion and Jerusalem.

**Board of Directors:** 2 parents, 3 community members, 1 teacher, 1 pre-school  
teacher, 2 academic professionals and the 2 co-principals.

**Parents' Committee:** 2 representatives (a Jew and an Arab) from each age  
group.

**:Address Information**

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## Educational Aims of the School

- To offer space and tools that will help the children to build a confident identity on the personal, national and cultural levels.
- To assist the children in choosing the values of equality, respect of the other and pluralism.
- To empower the Arabic language and its status in the school so that both languages – the Hebrew and the Arabic – are used freely by the children.
- To develop the capacity and willingness of the children to connect to others and to consider the differences between them as a source of enrichment.
- To promote the ability of the children to deal with a conflicting reality through dialogue and consideration of the needs of the others.
- To nurture the children's many faculties and their willingness and ability to express themselves, their feelings and their opinions.
- To assist the students in acquiring knowledge and skills that are needed in order to realize their ambitions and promote their societies in the modern world.
- To create a peaceful and supportive atmosphere where the children can learn, work, create and express themselves.



## Emphases and special efforts during the 2003-2004 school-year

<b>Aims</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Target group</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Promoting the status of the Arabic Language	Improving the level of Arabic among the Jewish teachers.  Managing staff meetings bilingually.	Teachers and students	Intensive Arabic course for the Jewish teachers.  Teaching Arabic to the Jewish students while using only Arabic.  Adding one weekly hour of Arabic to all students.
Empowering the staff	Strengthening the self-confidence and the vision of the staff members.	Teachers.	In-service learning sessions focused on multi-cultural education in theories and practices.
Continuing the school to higher education levels.	Establishing the first bi-national bilingual 7 <sup>th</sup> grade.	Staff, students and parents	Creating the ideas and putting them into practice in the newly formed 7 <sup>th</sup> grade.
Learning more about non-violent ways to handle conflicts.	Teaching mediation, arbitration and conflict management skills to staff, students, parents.	Staff, students and parents	Workshops in mediation processes - theory and practice - to each of the target groups.
Participation of the students in the dialogue about educational aims and values.	Giving responsibilities to the students in decision-making and its implementation.	Students	In each class students are chosen to be responsible for Environment, Social activities, Special events, etc.
Deepening the participation of the communities in the educational process.	Developing a joint set of values and beliefs of the school together with the larger community.	Parents, Students and teachers.	Joint workshops.  Forming an active parents' committee.
Learning and developing ways of working together for the staff and management.	Develop the vision of the school and ways to apply it on a day-to-day basis.  Delegating responsibilities to the staff members.	Staff and management	Regular staff meetings and discussions to clarify our joint values.  Personal attention to the needs of the teachers.  Distributing responsibilities and specific roles to the teachers.

# Creating a successful Jewish – Arab encounter

The Arab-Jewish encounter is the heart and essence of our school.

In the **daily encounter**, the children of the two peoples have the opportunity to draw closer to their own world and to the world of the others. Through this encounter they learn and understand that the reality outside is not necessarily the only one there is, and that it is possible to do things differently.

**Our educational approach** emphasizes our equality as human beings and our right to live respectfully on this land whatever our nationality. When we accept ourselves as we are we can accept the others as they are.

Our journey is long and we all learn and change through our educational work.

**Bi-national encounter:** Enables to meet the narrative of the other and to understand that mine is not the only existing story. We encourage each one, in accordance with his/her age to ask: "How do I perceive and treat the other side?" We wish to develop in ourselves and in our students the ability to change perceptions and stay open to who they are and to the identity of the other side.

In our school we treat the national days in a complex, sensitive and supportive way. We allow both national groups the necessary space to concentrate on their national events while staying open to listen and learn about the experiences of the other group.

**Bilingual school:** The language is a very basic element of expression on the personal, cultural and national levels. We are very careful to have all texts - on notice boards, in letters and in assignments - in both Arabic and Hebrew so as to express both our worlds.

The starting point of our languages is very different. The Arab minority in Israel is very influenced by the dominant Hebrew language. The children and their families need the Hebrew in order to integrate into the dominant society and they are exposed to it wherever they go. On the other hand, for the Jews, Arabic is still a foreign language, not so useful and certainly not a necessity.

The equality between the two languages is a very central issue for us. We invest a lot of efforts towards our aim that the Jewish teachers and students will become bilingual and use the Arabic freely in speech, reading and writing.

**Culture and tradition:** The holidays are an important aspect of identity, because they are connected to our senses, our memories and our world values. In the school we expand this experience by learning together the stories, symbols, values and costumes of each holiday. The children learn more about their own holidays when they present them to their friends, who belong to other faiths and traditions.

When we deal with our different traditions we are sensitive to the fact that Judaism is both a religion and a nationality, and as such is a unifying factor for the Jews. On the other hand, for the Palestinians, the religious affiliation divides between Muslims and Christians. While dealing with these differences and divisions, we try to emphasize the common traditions of the Palestinians as a group and the connections between all of our religions.

**Communication through the arts.** The language of art speaks from and unto the hearts and thus can serve as a bridge between us. The encounter through the various artistic tools is more open and free of tensions. Among the arts that are taught and used in our school are music of East and West, drama, the visual arts, video and communication.

Our educational work is over-shadowed constantly by the conflict, the occupation, the struggles and the sad events in our area. In addition, our unique school is not popular and its special needs do not receive the support they deserve from the State establishment. In this complex situation we grope our way trying to help the children and light their path. While reality sometimes seems insoluble and at a dead end, we try to learn and to teach about cultivating inner peace within ourselves and others.

## Basic and special subjects at the School

<b>Technical</b>	<b>Art and sport</b>	<b>Languages</b>	<b>Culture</b>	<b>Self-expression</b>
Computers	Music	1st language	Literature	Self-expression
Math	Drama	2 <sup>nd</sup> language	Current events	Creative writing
Nature	Fine art	English	Jewish tradition	Students' workshops
Science	Swimming		Palestinian tradition	Personal subject
Mathematical thinking	Sport		History	
	Media		Scripture	

## Themes of the personal subjects in each age group

<b>First grade:</b> Me and my family	<b>Fourth grade:</b> Friendship
<b>Second grade:</b> Domestic animals	<b>Fifth grade:</b> My environment
<b>Third grade:</b> Folklore, stories and legends	<b>Sixth grade:</b> Family history

## Students responsibilities and committees:

### **Student council:**

Responsible for social activities in the school

### **Peace makers committee:**

Dealing and solving conflicts among students

### **Sports committee:**

Organizing sports games and events

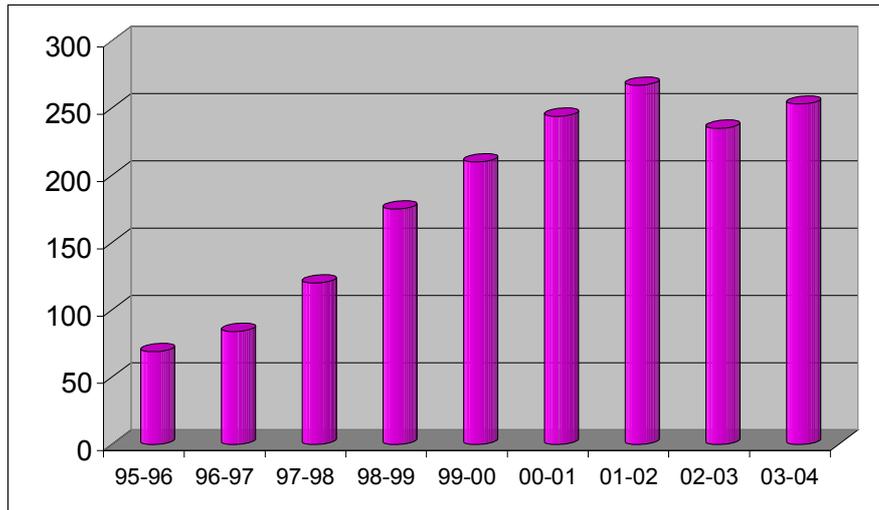
## The Jewish – Arab Encounter

Ongoing encounter	The language of the arts	Holidays and traditions
Bi-national encounter	The educational approach	The individual in the group
Multiple faculties	Multi-culturalism	Bilingualism

## NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN GRADES 1-7

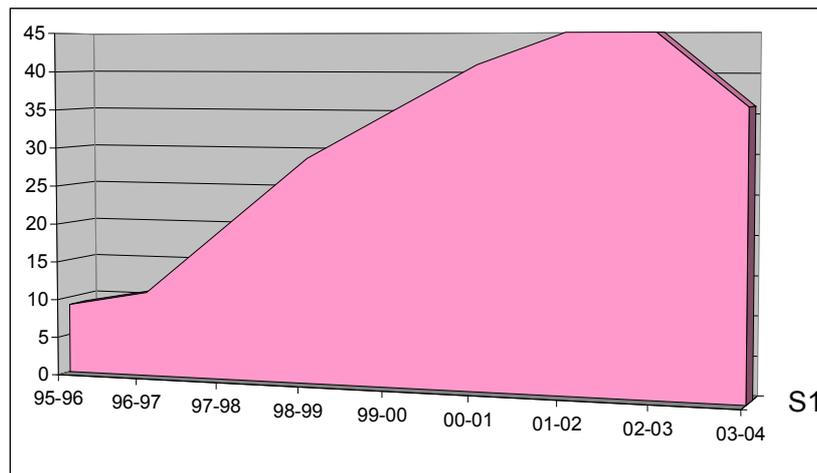
**Year students**

95-96	69
96-97	84
97-98	120
98-99	175
99-00	210
00-01	244
01-02	267
02-03	235
03-04	253

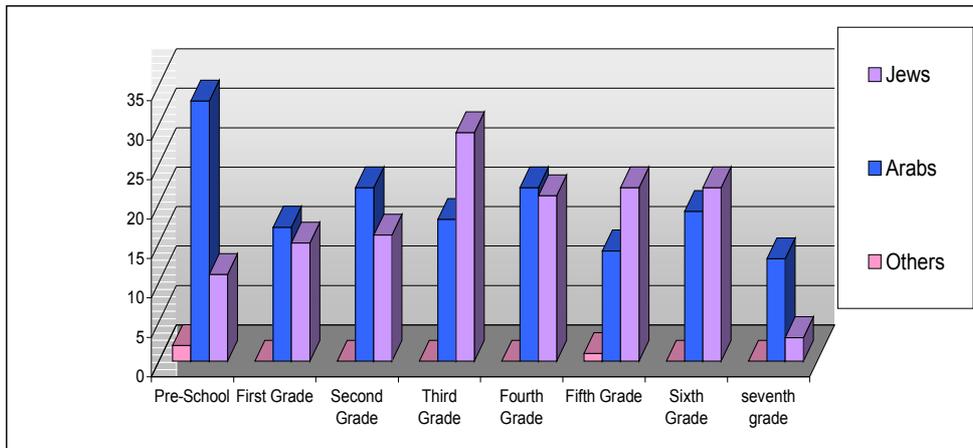


## AVERAGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN EACH GRADE LEVEL

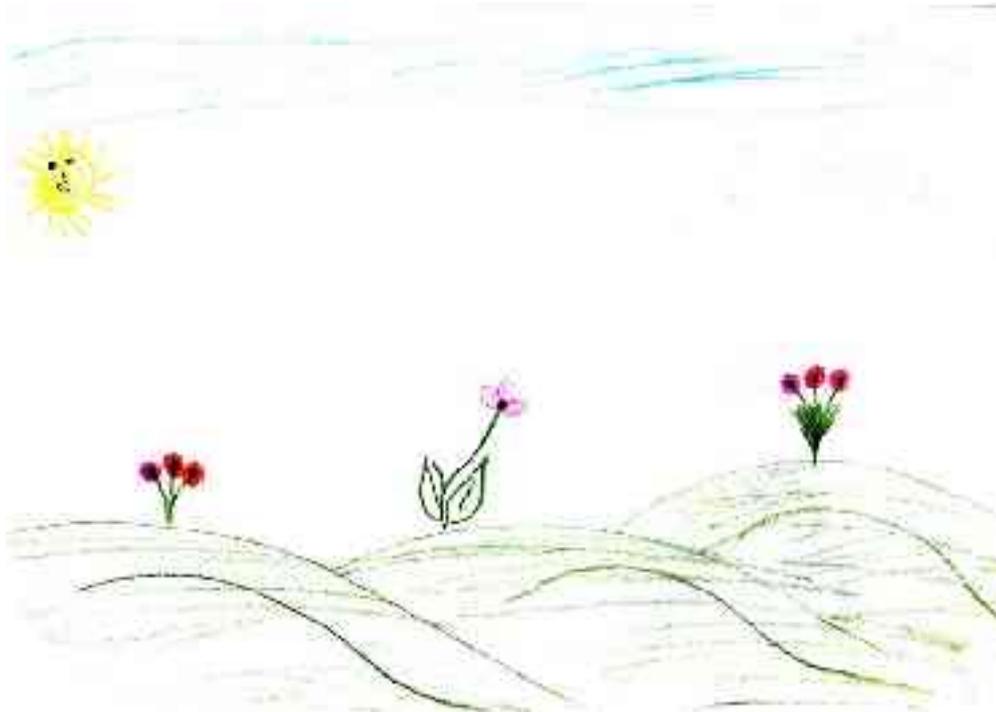
Year	Students
95-96	9
96-97	11
97-98	20
98-99	29
99-00	35
00-01	41
01-02	45
02-03	45
03-04	36



## The Students According to Groups



Grade Level	Jews	Arabs	Others	Total
Pre-School	11	33	2	46
First Grade	15	17	0	32
Second Grade	16	22	0	38
Third Grade	29	18	0	47
Fourth Grade	21	22	0	43
Fifth Grade	22	14	1	37
Sixth Grade	22	19	0	41
seventh grade	3	13	0	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>300</b>



WE WISH TO THANK OUR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS:

THE INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS' ASSOCIATIONS OF NS/WAS AND THEIR  
LOCAL DONORS AND SUPPORTING FUNDS

ARIGATOU FOUNDATION, JAPAN

**B E ארניקה A**

HANNS SEIDEL FOUNDATION, GERMANY

LATROUN MONESTARY, ISRAEL

RICH FOUNDATION, ISRAEL

RISSHO-KOSEI-KAI FUND FOR PEACE, JAPAN

SAVE THE CHILDREN FOUNDATION, USA

SONIA FUND, ISRAEL