

“Ahalan wa-sahalan” and “Shalom,” echoed throughout the hallways along with the pitter-patter of first-graders’ footsteps; smiles and hugs were exchanged between children after a long summer vacation, handshakes between parents, and the occasional child clinging to parent, or as sometimes happens, parent clinging to child. The giggles of kindergartners could also be heard as the smell of arts and crafts markers filled the air.

These sights and sounds of the Hagar Association’s first day of classes on Tuesday, September 1, 2009 revealed the excitement of teachers, parents, and children for the learning, activities, and fun which lay ahead. Our bilingual co-existence educational institute in Beer Sheva welcomed 65 Arab and Jewish children to pre-k, kindergarten, and first-grade. Unique to the Israeli Negev, the Hagar Association runs an educational institute and a community outreach program emphasizing mutual appreciation, respect, and dialogue between Arabs and Jews.



Shakked & Hannan

Shakked, a veteran kindergartner, was eager to return to Hagar’s school for the third year. She loves to sing, to dance, and to play make-believe with her classmates, especially with her friend, Hannan. Shakked’s mother, Shachar, remembered her own childhood, playing with children of Bedouin shepherds who lived nearby. “Then, we used body language to communicate because our schools did not formally teach us Arabic. Now, through Hagar, our children will be friends with their Arab and Bedouin neighbors, speaking Hebrew and Arabic as they play together, both in and out of the classroom.”

Adan and Muayad, six-year-old twins of Anwar and Amal, were full of energy as they walked through the gates of their school’s new building. Muayad loves to play with computers; Adan is excited for the new experiential classroom which complements the first grade’s room. Corners of our experiential classroom are dedicated to learning centers: language and literacy, educational playground, and make-believe (creativity and role-playing). Anwar noted the parents’ joy as they watched their children talking and laughing together.



Muayad & Adan

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the establishment of Hagar’s first grade speaks to the achievements of our Association. Principal Suha Ibrahim and Executive Director Uli Kornberg reported that the school year opened with great success, hearing from parents that children returned home, talking nonstop about their day. With help from Hagar’s friends and supporters, we are able to expand the bilingual community of Beer Sheva, creating a spring-board for social change between Arabs and Jews and making our vision of co-existence a reality.



HAGAR’S STATS FOR 2009-2010

1st grade: 24 students (17 are returning)

Kindergarten: 19 students

Pre-K: 22 students

Total: 65 students (32 Jews & 33 Arabs)

6 full-time teachers, 3 assistant teachers,
1 substitute teacher, & a school principal