



Hagar: Bilingual Jewish-Arab Education for Equality

Interim Activity Report as of September 2007

Hagar has successfully achieved the major goals it set for the initiation of the 2007/2008 school year. Below is a brief report outlining what has been accomplished as of September 2007.

Infrastructure:



Beer-Sheva mayor and deputy at the school year opening event.

Currently, this structure is capable of housing our community activities in its adjacent yard. Future plans include enhancement of our current structure while planning our permanent home, which will house a K-12 school. Equipment for preschool and kindergarten has been provided by the Beer-Sheva Municipality and augmented by generous grants. A major on-going project is the construction of a bi-lingual library of children's books and activities to be used by students and teachers.

A suitable structure for housing Hagar preschools (with the potential capacity of housing grades 1 & 2) has been leased. This structure has been renovated to comply with current standards regarding preschool structures in Israel. Furthermore this structure is continuously being re-organized to enable the execution of Hagar's educational objectives. Teachers, parents and children

have decorated the compound, thus conveying a sense of shared ownership.

Registration:

We have successfully met our goal of recruiting an equal number of Arab and Jewish students, and almost all available spaces in the preschool and kindergarten are occupied. We have started the school year with:

Kindergarten: 26 children (12 Jewish, 14 Arab), ages 4-5.

Preschool: 22 children (10 Jewish, 12 Arab), ages 3-4.

Special emphasis has been put on hosting a diverse mixture of children and families, thus Hagar is representative of the general Beer-Sheva and Negev population. While Hagar's main goal is



Handicrafts prepared by school children for Ramadan and Sukkot.



overcoming the Jewish-Arab divide, it also aims to help overcome other divisions in Israeli society, not least of which is the mitigation of economic disparities. In order to avoid exclusion due to financial hardship, a scholarship program has been implemented. Scholarships are awarded according to defined criteria and approved by a committee headed by an external social worker. Further attempts are being made to fill all available spaces, and recruitment for next year's first grade is about to begin.

Staff:

Suha Ibrahim – School Principle. Suha holds an MA in educational administration and policy and a BA in Arab literature from The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She has several years of experience in leading formal and informal educational initiatives. Her last job was as director of the Jewish-Arab educational program at the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem.



Hanita and Rada, teachers of the 5 year old group, welcoming the children and getting acquainted.

Hanita Haddad - Kindergarten teacher.

Hanita holds a BEd (Bachelors in Education) with a specialization in preschool education and child development from "Seminar Hakibutzim." She is currently completing her MA in education at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Her MA thesis deals with multiculturalism among Israeli youth.

Rada El-Ubra – Kindergarten teacher. Rada holds a BEd from Kay College in Beer-Sheva. She has several years of experience as a preschool teacher in Rahat. For the past 2 years she has been acting as instructor and mentor of recently graduated teachers.

Shachar Yaniv – Preschool teacher. Shachar holds a BA in Hebrew Literature and Education from Ben-Gurion University. She completed her teaching training at Kay College in Beer-Sheva and has previous teaching experience in a kibbutz school and the multicultural school Meitarim in Beer-Sheva.

Najla Abdelhadi – Preschool teacher. Najla holds a BEd from Gordon College. She is from Arara in the Galilee and has been teaching and heading preschools for several years.

Teaching Assistants – Three teaching assistants are employed by Hagar, all of whom are an integral part of the team. Since we believe that anyone who participates in the Hagar project should be involved in and aware of its unique mission and circumstances, our assistants undergo special training with the entire staff.



Yifat Hillel: Project Coordinator. Yifat is a graduate of the Mandell program for educational leadership and holds an MA in sociology. Yifat has experience working with NGO's and has successfully led Hagar to this point.

Anwar Elhjooj: Project Coordinator. Anwar is a native of Lakia and holds a law degree. He, along with Yifat Hillel, coordinated the establishment of Hagar schools. Anwar will be involved in heading the establishment of Hagar's educational center.

Pedagogy:

Our entire staff attended a preliminary seminar hosted by "Hand-in-Hand" this past August. Further guidance will be provided by pedagogical instructors and linguistic experts in order to help the staff create an atmosphere that encourages curiosity and thoughtfulness. Language is approached as a unique and complex phenomenon, which has social, cultural, cognitive and emotional implications. Since the children as well as the teachers are in a completely new surroundings, the first month at school was dedicated to accommodating the children; less emphasis was given to ensuring symmetry between Hebrew and Arabic so as to avoid frustration and antagonism. Once children feel secure and settled, further efforts will be applied to ensure a symmetrical bi-lingual environment.

Community:

We have initiated our community outreach with an opening event on our school grounds; this event was open to the entire Beer Sheva public. Further plans are being made for both community outreach programs and the strengthening of our own community. We have concluded the month of Ramadan with a festive event, including joint activities for children and parents. A course in



Parents and Children participating in community activity.

spoken Arabic is to begin in November, which is geared towards Jewish parents and other members of the community. The goal of this course is to promote parent and family participation in their children's bilingual education.