

THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF BAT-CHEN

בת-חן שחק ז"ל



תעמולה להצאת
(ע"ר)

FINAL REPORT PREPARED FOR THE CRT CHILDREN BUILDING PEACE PROJECT ISRAEL

This project, entitled, "Children Building Peace" was based on meetings between Jewish Israeli students from Hadar Hasharon Elementary School from the Tel Mond area and Arab Israeli students from the El Najach school in the nearby town of Tira. The two schools are only FOUR kilometers from each other and both are located in Israel. The project participants were in the sixth grade. There were 20 participants from each school—a total of 40 sixth-graders. Four sessions were planned for this project. In between each session, a uni-cultural meeting was also planned in order to encourage sharing of feelings and reactions as well as preparing for the next meeting and to reflect on the recent session and to receive feedback.

The central premise for the project was that it is important that children from the same area should get to know each other and learn about each other's culture. It is our hope that this familiarity will help lesson development of stereotypes and fear of the other. By emphasizing the importance of taking care of our shared neighborhood, we began our project by hiking from one school to the other (4 kilometers) while stopping and learning about the trees and geography as well as the history and ecology of our shared land. This took place on October 30. Professional guides who prepared for this multi-cultural mission led the outing.

The first session, after completing our hike and having refreshments together, was spent learning and practicing juggling. Informal play-time and sport activities were part of the schedule and proved to be an important ice-breaker.

The second session was to take place in Tira on November 20. However, this session was cancelled due to the military activity at that time, "Pillar of Dust". This mini-war in Gaza included rocket attacks on central Israel and led to considerable anxiety. It was deemed unwise to hold this session at that specific time. This is something typical of how we are extremely influenced by these sensitive and volatile political and military situations in our region.

Due to heavy scheduling of the two schools as well as different vacation times (Moslem/Christian/Jewish winter holidays), we couldn't find an alternative date to make-up the second session, thus the project included three sessions instead of the planned four sessions.

The third session took place in Hadar Hasharon School on December 18. The session was divided into four parts:

1. The children learned about "Poles for Peace" and watched a presentation about the concept and the program including pictures of the poles from all over the world.
2. The children painted, decorated and signed their "Pole for Peace" both in Hebrew and Arabic.
3. The children planted in the vicinity of the Pole seasonal bushes and flowers. They learned about planting and caring for these young bushes and flowers. In addition, the plantings were all "butterfly magnets" and this was also explained to the participants. This fit beautifully with the idea of furthering and caring for our common environment. The children also prepared small signs with the names of each plant.
4. Play time/sport time—time was set aside in the schedule for soccer play and other motor activities.

The fourth and final session took place in Tira at the EINajach School on January 15. This farewell session had several similar components used at the previous session in Hadar Hasharon and was divided into five segments:

1. Ice-breaking activities
2. Planting and sign preparation
3. Sport and play time together
4. Poles for Peace and accompanying sign describing the project were put in place
5. Finale—parting messages from the project participants and messages from the school principal and the parents' committee

PARTNERSHIPS FORMED AS A RESULT OF THIS PROJECT

So many groups of people from various ages and background had the chance to meet and get to know each other. These groups included: parents from both schools, teaching staff, principals, school counselor, the children and other volunteers from our Association. In addition, it is worth noting that the local municipality of Hadar Hasharon contributed all of the lovely plants and bushes to be planted for the "butterfly magnets" in both schools.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

We were adamant that the signs describing the project would be placed in a sturdy manner and where they would be seen. Hopefully, the other school children as well as their families would see the signs, take interest in the project and the ideas behind it.

HOW THE MONEY RECEIVED FROM CRT WAS SPENT

With the generosity of CRT, this project was made possible. The funds were used as follows:

1. Transportation from the schools
2. The Poles for Peace
3. Art supplies
4. The writing on each side of each pole in Hebrew, Arabic and English, "MAY PEACE PREVAIL ON EARTH"
5. Signs describing the project for each school
6. Refreshments

7. Juggling instructor
8. Tour guides

CHANGES OR OBSTACLES

The only change made in the project was as described above due to the military movement in the Gaza Strip before the second scheduled session.

During the final session, the regular school schedule overlapped with the project's schedule and all of the children were at recess at the same time. The school children who were not involved with the project did they receive any preparation or explanation in advance. They were surprised to see "strangers" in their play-yard and were not quite sure how to react and deal with the situation. We have learned from this that it is important to plan the time schedule in such a way that this will not happen in the future.

A FEW MORE COMMENTS

This project was a pleasure. It truly was "win-win." Several educators from other area schools have shown keen interest in the project and have requested to be included in the future. We are willing partners!!

FEEDBACK FROM THE CHILDREN—A FEW EXAMPLES received from the children during the month of February at the uni-cultural meeting:

"I see this as an experience and opportunity to get to know Israeli Arabs."

"I take with me new friends, I learned about a different religion and not to be afraid of it and that Arabs are not so different from me...we have a lot in common."

"We have a lot in common even though we have a different religion. We can still be good friends."

"You should judge others by their religion, language or how they look. You have to know them."

THE PHOTOS.....

It was hard to choose photos. There are so many. Each one tells a story. Many hint friendship and fun. Dialog. Action. Walking. Doing. Being. They are self-explanatory.







