Quarterly Report to the Hand in Hand Executive Committee and the AFHIH Board, October 2020

(The report relates to the period from June to September 2020)

Main developments at the start of the school year

* We are in the process of opening a new bilingual preschool in Kafr Kassem, where children from Kafr Kassem and neighboring Rosh Ha’ayin will be brought together. Unfortunately, Kafr Kassem was declared a “red city” at the start of the school year; therefore, we were unable to start the preschool of time. Happily, due to the passion and energy of a core group of parents from both localities that pushed the idea ahead in the past year, along with stewarding and close assistance from the Association, the core group of sixteen families that has been waiting for the preschool to open lost no members even though the school year did not begin in Kafr Kassem. The families held joint community activity instead of the preschool’s regular activity as long as it remained possible.
* Our school in Beit Berl finally received certification of its “recognized and official” status. We still have to go through a procedural process but we expect the school to clear this hurdle successfully. What this very pleasing news means in essence is that the Ministry of Education has recognized an additional bilingual school, a matter that has considerable budgetary and organizational implications.
* The municipal authorities involved are beginning to learn, understand, and appreciate the bilingual model and its importance for the town. On this basis, we are entering into various kinds of partnerships with the municipalities of Tel Aviv-Yafo and Nof Hagalil. We launched a stewarding program for mixed schools (Jews and Arabs) in Jaffa that do not belong to the Hand in Hand system. In conjunction with the Municipality of Tel Aviv-Yafo, these preschools are receiving multicultural instructional and language lessons from Hand in Hand instructors. A similar program was launched in Nof Hagalil, where a mixed preschool will receive stewarding and multicultural and bilingual guidance from Hand in Hand instructors.
* Due to the new preschool at Kafr Kassem and the growth of the existing schools, we will cross the mark of 2,000 pupils in all Hand in Hand institutions in the coming school year, along with the addition of more than 300 pupils in supplemental settings of support and stewarding.

In additional aspects of development and growth this year, we will complete a syllabus for teaching Arabic as a second language in grades 1–6 and another syllabus for a preschool multicultural curriculum on festivals; efforts by our post-primary development team to assure the growth of bilingual post-primary schools in addition to the one existing in Jerusalem; progress toward creating a written model for the establishment of a bilingual community; ongoing community work based on our accrued experience and knowledge; and continued cooperation with the teacher-training program at the Hebrew University, embodied in a course on bilingual and multicultural education that we have been offering at our school in Jerusalem.

* Our Communities Division will continue this year, as before, to organize activities that comply with the Ministry of Health’s guidelines on limiting large gatherings during the coronavirus era. Where necessary, it will find creative ways of generating fraternity and community partnership even when mass events are not allowed to take place. The division will also continue to develop our alumni program (a forum that comprises more than sixty people). And, of course, the online series *Mishmish*, created by alumni and produced by the Association, will continue for another season full of surprises (all episodes of Season 1 of *Mishmish* may be viewed by pressing the link: \_\_\_\_.)

**We have three new principals in our schools:**

* Joheineh Dakhwar Salim, principal of the primary school in Jerusalem;
* Yuval Oz, principal of preschools and the school at Beit Berl;
* Joheineh Safi, replacing Iris Giller-Klein for the coming year (Iris is going on sabbatical) as principal of the primary school in Haifa.

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| **Name of institution** | **Enrollment (N)** |
| **Jerusalem** | **686** |
| Preschools | 125 |
| Primary | 318 |
| Junior high | 130 |
| Senior high | 113 |
| **Galilee (primary only)** | **297** |
| Bridge on the Wadi | 223 |
| Preschools | 34 |
| Primary | 189 |
| **Haifa** | **232** |
| Preschools | 103 |
| Primary | 128 |
| **Jaffa** | **536** |
| Preschools | 174 |
| Primary | 362 |
| **Beit Berl** | **117** |
| Preschools | 34 |
| Primary | 74 |
| **Kafr Kassem (preschool only)** | **17** |
| **Total in all Hand in Hand institutions** | **2,111** |

A. Coping with the coronavirus crisis

Israel exited the first lockdown in the course of June and started the school year in September as usual apart from several “red cities.” On September 17, however, the government decided to impose an additional general lockdown, again shutting down the education system nationwide.

* **Schools:** All Hand in Hand education institutions opened on September 1, 2020, as did the education system at large, with the exception of the preschool in Kafr Kassem because Kafr Kassem had become a “red city.” When the lockdown began and the education system switched to distance learning, the Hand in Hand institutions did the same. This is still, of course, a limited format of scholastic activity; we are doing our best to maintain a semblance of routine studies even under these circumstances, with strong emphasis on staying in touch with the pupils in both the scholastic and the emotional senses. The coronavirus crisis and the paralysis that it is causing in the system are holding back the inauguration of our program in Nof Hagalil.
* **Communities:** Giventhe reality of social isolation and the need to shelter at home, our community activity has gone online and includes panel discussions on various topics, encounters and dialogue sessions with members of the Knesset and other interesting personalities, language lessons, courses through the Madrasa program, showing films followed by discussions, cooking lessons, and bilingual yoga, to name only a few. Some of these programs will continue online on a partial footing even after the crisis ends. In addition, members of the communities themselves, with support from the Communities team, initiated and activated a support fund for families in Hand in Hand communities who are struggling to make ends meet at this time. The principal of the fund was raised by crowdsourcing among members of our communities around the country. We are building community activity of this year on the assumption that restrictions on mass social events will remain in effect.
* **Economic impact:** Our institutions, like many others, have been taking a beating due to this crisis. Although savings on some expenses (due to the cessation of studies) helped to mitigate the economic harm somewhat, we still had to cut back by placing some Association staff on unpaid leave (allowing them to qualify for state unemployment benefits) and downsizing others’ posts. We resumed normal operations in June but, unfortunately, we had to place staff on unpaid leave when the second lockdown began. In the next few weeks, we will decide how to continue coping with the situation on the basis of developments. One of the major uncertainties at the present writing is the ability to decide about, and to implement, parent payments after the Ministry of Education has placed limits on this practice and the system is functioning on such an incomplete basis.
* **Fundraising:** Since early summer, we have been working systematically to stay in touch with our active donors—an individualized effort vis-à-vis each donor that will continue in the coming year. We are also developing creative alternatives to donor visits to our schools and personal encounters via visits to the United States, which have ceased to be an option for the time being due to the coronavirus crisis.

B. Schools and municipalities

Galilee (302 pupils, grades 1–6)

* For the first time in history of the school, enrollment has broken through the 300 barrier and an eleventh class was opened (until now, the school at 9-10 classes).
* At the beginning of September, the fifth-graders moved to buildings at Kibbutz Ashbel, where the school is located, in order to facilitate “pod” teaching.
* As part of the development of project-based learning at this school, an area in the building called Maker Space was dedicated at the beginning of the school year. The venue features decayed technological instrumentation such as 3D printers, laser cutting instruments, and additional aids that help students perform programming and technology tasks.

Haifa (230 pupils, preschools and grades 1–5)

* The principal, Iris Giller-Klein, went on sabbatical this year and Joheineh Safi, who oversaw the dialogue team until now, has taken her place this year. Joheineh brings to the job many years of experience at Hand in Hand and other venues of informal education and cooperative social action.
* Enrollment has grown this year from 80 to 130 due to strong focus on expanding existing classes and enrolling new pupils in first grade.
* At the preschools, we have successfully established a “coronavirus routine” in between interruptions of studies. The teachers are making supreme efforts to maintain the routine even when some of them had to go into isolation for short periods of time.

Bridge on the Wadi (235 pupils, preschools and grades 1–6)

* Over the summer, much effort was invested in improving the school’s visibility: play facilities for young children were installed, much of the school building was for aesthetic enhancement, and a community garden was set up.
* The school administration is spearheading a pedagogical overhaul with support from Iris Giller-Klein, principal of the primary school in Haifa who is on partial sabbatical; the process will continue in the years to come. It is our aim and belief that the process will give the quality of education at the school a meaningful improvement and, as a result, boost its enrollment.

Jaffa (520 pupils, preschools and grades 1–5)

* After nine years of growth at our school in Jaffa, it’s the first time that we began a school year with a full slate of classes—from prekindergarten (ages 3–4) to sixth grade.
* Sharon and Sigalit are beginning their second and third years (respectively) in Jaffa—the former as principal of the school and the latter as principal of the preschools. Their collaboration is reflected in many ways, including an ongoing dialogue about pupils who finish kindergarten and advance to first grade, organizing joint festival events for the preschools and the school, and so on.
* The current school year began with downscaled staffs at the schools, after we tightened the preschools’ working model in order to be more frugal without impairing the quality of education. Activity at eight multicultural schools in Jaffa that do not belong to the Hand in Hand system: we launched a preschool stewarding program and, as part of our cooperation with the Municipality of Tel Aviv-Yafo, these preschools will receive guidance in multiculturalism and language lessons from Hand in Hand instructors.

Jerusalem (686 pupils, preschools and grades 1–12)

* Joheineh Salim Dashwar was chosen to replace Rane Sha’ar as principal of the primary school. Rane had held the post for the past two years.
* After two difficult years at the school, we are confident that Joheineh’s assumption of the post will improve the pedagogical situation at the school and relations with the parents committee, restoring its stature as a leading bilingual and multicultural education institution that promotes values of democracy and active citizenship, as it had for many years.
* The high school in Jerusalem—since the beginning of the school year, twenty-seven teachers have gone into isolation after one teacher was found to have been infected with the coronavirus. Many pupils have also gone into isolation and some have contracted the virus, although probably not from the infected teacher but from away from school. The school continues to maintain a full schedule of distance studies and holds cultural events once a week to break up the routine and offer enrichment.

Beit Berl (117 pupils, preschools and grades 1–3)

* **Yuval Oz** took over from Yael Sadeh as principal of the school. He amassed much experience as a principal at democratic schools and, in his most recent post, grew a school from first grade to full primary. He is following Yael’s lead in matters related to the humanistic educational approach and, like her, believes in the importance of bilingual and multicultural education and personal mentoring.
* The school finally received certification as a “recognized and official” institution. There is still a procedural process that we have to clear but we believe the school will pass it successfully. The gist of this very happy news is that the Ministry of Education has recognized another bilingual school, a matter that has considerable budgetary and organizational implications.

Kafr Kassem–Rosh Ha’ayin (17 pupils)

* We are going through the process of opening a bilingual preschool that will receive children from these neighboring localities. Unfortunately, Kafr Kassem was declared a “red city” when the school year began, making it impossible to inaugurate the preschool on time. Happily, due to the enthusiasm and energy of parents in both localities who promoted the idea in the past year, along with stewarding and close assistance from the Association, the sixteen-family core group that is waiting for the preschool to open retained all of its members even though the school year in Kafr Kassem did not begin on time. As long as they could, the families held community activity in lieu of the preschool’s regular activity.

Nof Hagalil (onset of activity planned for September 2020)

* In March, we held an excellent meeting with mayor and the director general of the Municipality of Nof Hagalil. It was agreed that we would start to get involved in a mixed preschool in this town— Jews and Arabs attending jointly—in the current school year by having Hand in Hand instructors provide multicultural and bilingual instructional guidance. The program has been stalled by the coronavirus crisis; we hope that it will begin once the preschools open up.

C. Pedagogical activity

* **Pedagogical guidance:** During the second lockdown, as in the first, the education system has been shut down and our team of instructors is continuing to provide the teaching teams with daily support in coping with the challenges of distance learning. We are investing serious thought and meaningful and focused stewardship in attempting to maintain effective small-group learning in order to respond to variance among the pupils in different ways.
* **Development of pedagogical materials:** The team of instructors is helping to put together online lessons and tailored assignments that respond to the uniqueness of these schools in multicultural and bilingual contexts, amid the reality of an education system that is willing to respond to each group separately irrespective of its bilingual and multicultural nature. In addition, we are about to finish writing a curriculum for Arabic as a second language for grades 1–4; it will help the teams going forward, specifically as long as distance learning is necessary.
* The preschool instructional team is continuing to progress toward completing a program on festivals for preschoolers, to be distributed in both languages; the Hand in Hand teaching teams are already using parts of it.
* The team of instructors and the principals are taking action to improve social relations among pupils in view of the current state of affairs. In conjunction with both the principals and the instructors, detailed practices are being introduced that will take social activity to a higher level, with emphasis on strengthening relations between Palestinian and Jewish pupils in the shadow of the lockdown.
* **Encouraging pupils’ initiatives and activities:** The team of instructors wishes to encourage creative initiatives and ideas that pupils themselves devise as active partners in the learning process—producing a school-level newspaper, social activities on Zoom, making video films, and research, study, involvement in, and sharing of various contents with other pupils.
* Principals’ forum: Nadia Kanaani and Danny Elazar held in-person meetings with the principals before the lockdown to hear from them about the challenges they were facing in opening the school year under the cloud of the coronavirus and the restrictions and to see together what they and their schools need. One of the main goals of the forum this year is to relate to issues and dilemmas that the principals express as they cope with the current situation; another is to make sure that the forum will be a comfortable place for sharing, consultation, brainstorming, peer learning, and ongoing support.

D. Community and alumni activity

* **Opening a preschool in Kafr Kassem:** When the new preschool in Kafr Kassem was opened, a new community comprised of sixteen families in Rosh Ha’ayin and Kafr Kassem came into being as well. In the second half of August, we held three getting-acquainted sessions with the families and followed the meetings on September 1 with the inauguration of preschool and community activities. The latter event took place in the Rosh Ha’ayin forest because Kafr Kassem was under lockdown and its education system was not functioning, In September, we managed to hold three weekly community encounters for the families until the nationwide lockdown began. We are waiting for the lockdown to end in order to reinstate the activity insofar as the Ministry of Health guidelines permit.
* **Producing a written Hand in Hand community model:** We began to write the community model in July. After eight years of community work, we feel that we have amassed enough experience, success, and insights and created enough grounded community activity and structures to be able to articulate a systematic model for the establishment, management, and growing of a bilingual community. The writing of this document, led by Shuli Dichter, will continue until late December and will include talks with members of the community, partners, and Association staff who are involved in the community endeavor.
* **Forum of alumni:** In early September, we held a seminar with the leading group of fifteen members of the Hand in Hand alumni forum. They spent two days discussing their vision and goals and split into three working teams for action in the forum’s main tasks this year.

e. Community activities that the Division is organizing for the current lockdown

* **Series of encounters patterned after TED lectures:** 45-minute Zoom encounters in which the public is invited to meet representatives of the various Hand in Hand communities. The community representatives describe the path they took to their shared community and answer questions from the public.
* **In-service activity on activism for members of Hand in Hand communities:** eight encounters in all, including enrichment activity and practical workshops for 5–8 representatives of each community who have potential of becoming agents of change, initiative, influence, and change of reality.
* **Series of events patterned after “political parlor talks” for members of the communities:** Zoom sessions that focus on discourse over hot current topics that are not necessarily related to Jewish–Arab relations, exposing participants to issues/struggles that surround us and may offer learning opportunities.
* **Ongoing activity of the relief fund:** During the first lockdown, a fund for economic and food relief was established for members of the Hand in Hand communities; it continues to be active now, during the current lockdown. A support platform for businesses and services owned by members of Hand in Hand communities is also under construction; it will be called HANDINHAND MADE.

E. Media activity

* **June 20:** On the Hebrew/Arabic Facebook pages of the Association and the Hand in Hand high school in Jerusalem, a *campaign* several weeks long is launched on the occasion of the high school’s tenth-anniversary festivities. It is comprised of dozens of alumni profiles, Jews and Arabs, who report on their doings in life, where they went to university, the careers that they developed, and how the school helped to shape them as socially aware adults;
* **July 28:** Kuds Ayoub, a ninth-grader at our school in Jerusalem, wins the *short story prize*for youth organized by the Arabic Culture Association in Haifa! Her story, chosen from more than 100 stories submitted by Arab youth countrywide, is published on the Palestinian-Israeli news site “Arab 48.”
* **August 19**: *A new episode in the* Mishmish *online series*,created by alumni of theHand in Hand schools, appears on the Association’s Facebook page and has received 60,000 views. It deals with Israeli and Palestinian culture in Haifa and northern Israel and is eight minutes long. It also appears in “Ha-zira,” the bilingual section of the *Ha’aretz* web site. To watch all episodes of *Mishmish,* press the link: \_\_\_\_.
* **August 26**: A series of articles titled “The Language Barrier,” which looks into why so few Jews in Israel speak Arabic, is published on the Israeli television channel Kan. *In its first episode, two Jewish students from our school in Haifa* are interviewed as examples of how few Jews speak Arabic, how important this is, and how much it contributes to Jewish–Arab relations in Israel.

F. Fundraising

(See appendix at the end of this report)

In June, the AFHIH board resolved to set up a committee that would help the fundraising efforts during this complex time: a joint committee comprised of representatives of the AFHIH board and the Israeli executive committee. The panel met with members of the Association’s fundraising division in June and again in late September. In between, the fundraising division carried out a study and comparison with other organizations in Israel as to their fundraising conduct at this time. The committee is an important and welcome step that may further Hand in Hand’s fundraising abilities considerably and make it more likely that the annual fundraising targets will be met during and after the coronavirus crisis. The committee will also take up the question of fundraising in Israel.

G. Staff and administration

Finance

* The Executive Committee approved the Hand in Hand budget for 2020/21 (attached).
* The Executive Committee approved the Hand in Hand financial statements for 2019 (attached).

Hiring and internal turnover

* **Leah Beinhacker** replaced Rivka Bardah, who had worked for the Association for around a decade, as director of resource development and strategy.
* **Nadia Kanaani** replaced Inas Dib, who had worked for the Association for more than a decade, as director of the Education Division.
* **Iris Giller-Klein** applied for asabbatical from her post as the principal of our school in Haifa. She has gone on a semi-sabbatical and will steward the pedagogical overhaul of the Bridge on the Wadi school this year. Joheineh Safi was appointed to replace her.
* **Yuval Oz** was hired as principal of the preschools and primary school at Beit Berl, replacing Yael Sadeh, who had held this post for the past two years and has reverted to her previous position as pedagogical instructor. She will join the team that is stewarding the preschool in Nof Hagalil.
* **Asher Kleinhaus** completed his stint as superintendent of post-primary schools for the Association; we are searching for his successor.
* **Two preschool teachers and two aides** were hired and trained for the new preschool in Kafr Kassem; now we are recruiting a community organizer.
* **The downsizing of staff at the preschools in Jaffa,** in accordance with the new organizational and budgetary model, has been completed. As the process was implemented, human sensitivity was safeguarded and those winding up their service at the preschools were offered alternative employment as best as possible, in coordination with the Ma’an labor organization.
* By order of the Jerusalem Education Authority on terminating the employment of staff members at the Jerusalem preschools and primary school via the Lavie Association, we transferred these fourteen staff members (seven teachers, five aides, one preschool teacher, and a housefather) to Hand in Hand. An agreement was drawn up between Lavie and the Association and between the Association and Ma’an and the new workers’ terms of employment were specified.
* **In all,** forty-eight people were recruited and hired (twenty-nine teachers, six preschool teachers, nine aides, two housefathers, and two principals) in all Association schools during the report period.
* **In addition,** internal mobility arrangements and changes in job definitions were made for eleven staff members.

The coronavirus crisis

* While our schools were operative (essentially, between the first lockdown and the current one), we contended with the absence of educational staff members due to isolation or confirmed cases of COVID-19, including time-limited moratoria on educational activity in certain grades and schools due to active cases.
* On September 17, the government imposed a general lockdown that included all schools. The Association board resolved to take several measures, all in coordination and cooperation with the Ma’an labor organization: fifty-one employees were placed on unpaid leave as of September 21 and effective until a return to normality is announced. These workers received personal counseling from the administrators of our schools and the Association’s human-resources and wage department on how to work with government offices in order to receive unemployment benefits. Furthermore, they were offered personal loans in order to weather the interval from the cessation of their work until their unemployment benefits would kick in.
* On October 11, the Association board will assess the situation and, insofar as the lockdown will continue, will consider lowering staff members’ wages / downscaling their posts.
* The process of planning the personnel budget for the current school year lasted until the school year began and continued thereafter as coronavirus-induced constraints led to many and frequent changes in the Ministry of Education budget. Uncertainty about the Ministry of Education budgets also caused the size of the posts of most of the Association’s teachers, veteran and newly hired alike, to be redefined.

General remarks

* We are continuing to develop and assimilate wage-control procedures together with the administrative staff and the payroll accountants, including monthly comparisons of attendance reports and budget targets.
* An intake booklet for new hires has been written, bringing together the conditions, rights, and obligations of employment, the procedure on preventing sexual harassment, and the Association’s rules of behavior and comportment. Once it is approved by all relevant players at the Association, it will be issued to new staff on a regular basis.

H. Looking ahead—main upcoming topics

* Constructing an economic model for the coronavirus era on the basis of the approved budget—November.
* After successfully replacing the principal of our primary school in Jerusalem—rehabilitating the school and assuring its growth, on the basis of:
* work with the new principal on a new pedagogical and budgetary model;
* election of a new parents committee for the primary and post-primary schools, including contending with representatives of the previous committee who oppose the change;
* creating a community leadership for the Jerusalem campus.
* Continued progress in creating the new organizational and educational model and assimilating it in the schools.
* Continued progress in establishing additional post-primary schools at Hand in Hand.