



# What is Hand in Hand?

Building a Shared Society through  
Integrated Schools and Communities  
One Child, One Community at a Time

## Mission and History

The Hand in Hand (HIH) mission is to create vibrant and inclusive shared society in Israel through a network of integrated bilingual schools and organized community activities bringing together Jewish and Arab citizens. Founded in 1998 with two classes of 1st graders in Jerusalem and in the Galilee, Hand in Hand now operates a growing network of schools, and has developed a proven model of bilingual integrated education and community impact. We are now located in 6 locations, with more than 1,560 Jewish and Arab students in our schools and more than 9,000 parents and adults participating in our community activities. Our waiting lists continue to grow and we have constant demand to open new locations. Over the next ten years, Hand in Hand aims to create a network of 10-15 integrated bilingual schools, supported and enhanced by organized community activities, altogether involving more than 20,000 Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens, thus setting the basis for a genuine shared society in Israel.

## Need For Bilingual Schools & Shared Communities

Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel (comprising 80% and 20% of the population respectively) live separately from each other in many aspects of daily life. This separation starts in the education system in Israel, which is tracked according to language (Hebrew and Arabic) and religious observance (Jewish religious and secular). While this reflects the major population groups in Israel and in many ways intends to respect communal differences, it also perpetuates communal divisions. The resulting lack of interaction between the groups increases stereotyping, fear and misunderstanding.

Hand in Hand believes that the day-to-day living experience of its students, teachers, parents and others who participate in its schools and community activities creates mutual respect, recognition and understanding in our otherwise divided society. Each Hand in Hand school and community influences its local surroundings, providing a robust example of the viability of civic equality and inclusiveness for Israeli society.

## Bilingual Integrated Schools

Hand in Hand's bilingual integrated schools are located in Jerusalem, the Galilee, Wadi Ara, Haifa, Jaffa and Kfar Saba. In addition to creating a culture of academic excellence, the daily practices and pedagogical methods that we employ advance the values of multiculturalism and inclusion. These practices include:

- Bilingual classroom and school environments reinforce a shared educational experience and teach respect for each other's language and identities.
- Highly trained Jewish and Arab co-teachers lead classes together – setting personal examples of partnership while facilitating critical thinking and transformative dialogue.
- The multicultural curriculum teaches the music, art, holidays and historical narratives of both Jewish and Arab citizens.
- Hand in Hand's religious heritage studies and shared calendar includes Judaism, Islam and Christianity – drawing on the shared values and traditions of all three religions.
- Civic studies and voluntarism equip students with the awareness, tools and drive to become active citizens.



## Shared Communities

The entire burden of social change cannot rest on the shoulders of children alone. As such, we have established flourishing adult communities around each of our schools that live, learn and celebrate together throughout the year. Communities engage in a wide variety of activities that increase social ties and address underlying tensions including:

- Dialogue groups and language study;
- Family activities and excursions;
- Joint holiday celebrations;
- Film, art and musical events.

These visibly integrated shared communities set a public example that shared society is a real, viable and scalable reality.

## Looking Forward

Hand in Hand offers a genuine and viable alternative. It works, and it's growing. Our unprecedented success is made possible thanks to our devoted partners from around the world. We cannot succeed alone.

We invite everyone who shares our vision to join us in building a vibrant future of mutual understanding, acceptance and equality for all of Israel's citizens.

For more information please contact us at: [info@handinhand.org.il](mailto:info@handinhand.org.il)

Please visit our website: [www.handinhandk12.org](http://www.handinhandk12.org)

