Hand in Hand Awarded BMW Group First Prize for Intercultural Learning

Since 1997, the BMW Group has awarded prizes for both theory and practice in the field of international learning. This year, hundreds of organizations and papers from 26 countries on five continents were submitted to a 10-person international jury chaired by Petra Hölscher (State Institute for School Assessment and Educational Research / Munich, ISB). There were two individuals awarded prizes for their research. A first, second, and third prize was awarded in the field of practice. Hand in Hand won the first prize in this field and Amin Khalaf attended the official award ceremony at the BMW Research and Innovation Centre in Munich on March 29, 2006.

The following quote from the BMW newsletter explaining the prize could have come from Hand in Hand's statement of purpose. “Over the past nine years in which the BMW Group has been running its Award for Intercultural Learning, we have come to realize that the root cause of the fear and hostility directed at that which is perceived to be foreign often lies in lack of knowledge. Or formulated in positive terms: In many practical projects, we have seen that curiosity, open-mindedness and respect for foreign cultures can result in a peaceful process of learning with and about one another, where the foreign element is no longer perceived as a threat but as an enrichment to one's own personal existence. But international understanding cannot be achieved by official proclamations alone - the process always starts and ends with the personal wish to get to know another cultural universe, without having to abandon one's own identity.”

Their newsletter continues with the reason for awarding first prize to the Hand in Hand Schools.

"The winners of the 1st prize in the Practice category have set themselves an especially demanding objective, not least in view of its potential historical significance. Through their project Learning together, Living together: A Pioneer Model for integrated Arab-Jewish Schools in Israel -Hand in Hand - the Centre for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel wishes to break down the wall of isolation that has separated the Jewish majority and the Arab minority for generations and, by teaching mixed groups of children in both Hebrew and Arabic, build a new foundation for the next generation to live as partners, without prejudice and imbued with respect for each other's different customs, religious beliefs and traditional languages. The innovative concept for junior and nursery schools is meanwhile being implemented in three schools attended by over 670 children. The jury expressed its admiration of the peacemaking nature of this project in a very difficult social context, with positive effects that extend to the children's families and friends.”

This is not the first prize awarded to Hand in Hand. In March, the Ben Gurion University granted the Wadi A'ra Hand in Hand School the Berlson Prize for Understanding Between Jews and Arabs in memory of Yitzchak Rabin at an impressive ceremony at the university. A prize of 20,000 NIS was given to the school by the university. The following are some of the national and international awards that Hand in Hand has won over the last few years.

2006 Berlson Prize for Understanding Between Jews and Arabs in memory of Yitzchak Rabin - Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Department of Middle East Studies at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev to the Wadi Ara Hand in Hand School

2006 BMW Group First Prize for Practice - Intercultural Learning

2005 Peace Prize of the German Israel Friendship Association awarded at the opening of the Reichstag on May 11, 2005 to the Jerusalem Hand in Hand School

2005 Grand Rabin Henry Cohen Peace Prize

2004 Grand Rabin Henry Cohen Peace Prize

2002 Association of Israeli Teachers to the Galilee Hand in Hand School
2002 Berlson Prize for Understanding Between Jews and Arabs in memory of Yitzchak Rabin - Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences - Department of Middle East Studies at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev to the Galilee Hand in Hand School