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MYERS-JDC-BROOKDALE INSTITUTE
THE ENGELBERG CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Youth Renewal Fund

**Opportunities for NGO Involvement in
the Education of Disadvantaged Children
and Youth in Israel:**
Future Directions for Youth Renewal Fund

Miriam Cohen-Navot ♦ Dganit Levi ♦ Shimi Gilad

This Study was Commissioned by Youth Renewal Fund

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Jerusalem

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Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute
Engelberg Center for Children and Youth
P.O.Box 3886
Jerusalem 91037

Tel: 02 655 7400
Fax: 02 561 2391

Internet site: www.jdc.org.il/brookdale

Preface

The report provides a broad over-view of current trends in the education of disadvantaged students in Israel, issues regarding NGO involvement, in general - and YRF programs, in particular - and information regarding the effectiveness of intervention strategies.

This study was initiated by YRF in order to support the organization's strategic planning process.

The information will also be valuable for other organizations working in education in Israel.

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank the many professionals from YRF and other NGOs in Israel, from the formal educational system and from the universities who shared their knowledge and provided the information compiled in this report. We also gratefully acknowledge the ongoing support and professional input provided throughout the course of this project by Karen Berman and Galit Toledano of YRF and Talal Dolev of Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute. We thank Larry Rifkin who edited this report.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Goals of the Study

Through a strategic planning process, YRF seeks to better understand:

- ◆ The implications potential education reform can have on YRF operations
- ◆ The role YRF can play in a changing Israeli education environment
- ◆ The optimal ways YRF can continue to be effective in providing education opportunities where needed.

We will therefore provide input for YRF leadership discussions regarding a number of key issues, especially:

- ◆ Which role should YRF take?
- ◆ For which children?
- ◆ And through which programs?

There are five main types of input that are relevant to these discussions:

- ◆ Information about the needs of the target population and the extent to which they are currently being met – or un-met?
- ◆ Information about the existing public education system and non-profit sector involvement in the education field: What changes are expected to occur in this environment in the near future?
- ◆ Information about YRF and similar organizations operating alongside it.
- ◆ Knowledge about the types of intervention and implementation strategies that are most effective. Or, to put it simply: “What works?”
- ◆ Values and priorities of the organization – the most important and critical ingredients in any organizational strategic planning process.

1.2 Study Methods

Data were collected in 2005-06. The report is based on a number of information sources:

1. *In-depth interviews with YRF program staff and partners at the municipal and school levels:* 11 interviews were conducted with head YRF staff, and with professionals involved in program operation in two cities, including program coordinators, school principals, teachers and the professionals responsible for education at the municipal level.
2. *Compilation of existing information:* Statistical data and findings from research, including studies undertaken by the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute regarding current gaps in the Israeli education system, the needs of disadvantaged students and the operation of the education system.
3. *Literature review:* The professional literature regarding effective education practices and interventions with disadvantaged children and youth was surveyed, with special focus on meta-analyses that summarize large numbers of studies on a given issue.
4. *In-depth interviews regarding the education system, especially non-profit sector involvement, were conducted with:*

- a. the managers of other key and national organizations currently providing education services to disadvantaged children and youth (13 interviews)
- b. senior professionals at the Ministry of Education and at the local authority level (14 interviews)
- c. experts in non-profit education interventions for disadvantaged children and youth (5 interviews)

The purpose of the interviews was to learn about the current role of the non-profit sector in education, and about the likely trends for future development of the Israeli education system.

5. *Collection of supplementary data regarding non-profit organizations:* Information was also collected from other existing sources, including reports and Internet sites of the various providing organization, and data from the Israeli Center for Third Sector Research (ICTR).

2. Current Trends in the Education of Disadvantaged Children and Youth in Israel

2.1 Diversity in Israeli Society

The challenge of the education system is to provide high-quality public education for *all* Israeli children, despite their often diverse backgrounds.

In Israel, minority populations are quite substantial:

- ◆ 10.8 % of the children and youth were born abroad or born in Israel to immigrant parents (Ben Aryeh et al., 2005). Immigrant families face the daunting task of raising children while struggling to learn a new language and understand institutions (such as schools) in the new culture.
- ◆ We estimate that about 10% of the children and youth grow up in ultra-Orthodox Jewish families, which live by strict rules in many areas, as mandated by their religious beliefs. The ultra-Orthodox prefer not to mix with other Jewish children and maintain a separate school system.
- ◆ One fourth of Israeli children and youth are Arab (Ben Aryeh et al., 2005).¹ They have a separate language and religious, cultural and national identity. There are separate schools for Arab children within the general school system.

Significant socio-economic gaps are a major source of concern for Israeli society: Varying levels of income, occupational status and education are strongly related to one's origin, religion or place of residence (Zuzovsky, 2000). Thus, if a child is born into an Arab or poor family, or lives in a development town far from the center of Israel, he is more likely to suffer from poverty and low occupational status than if he had been brought up in a more affluent community. While many researchers understand that education *alone* cannot be "the 'great equalizer' with the ability to

¹ This does not include Palestinians living in the Palestinian Authority beyond the "green line."

eradicate social gaps" (Gazit and Yair, 2003, pp. 7), there nevertheless remain high expectations from the education system as a key vehicle for upward mobility in Israeli society (Cohen-Navot et al., 2003).

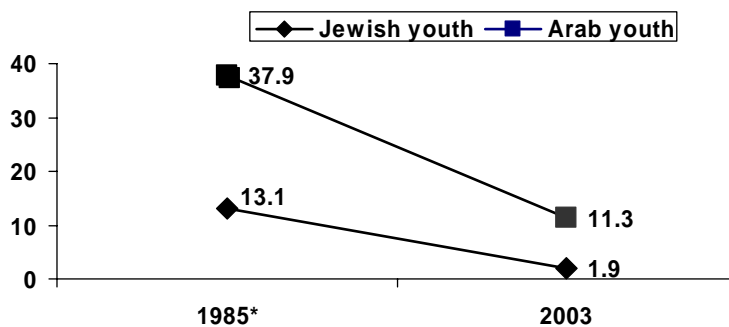
2.2 The Israeli Education System: Basic Facts

- ♦ The education system in Israel is primarily a **public system**. Most schools are directly run by the government and local authorities, and there are also schools funded by the government but run by private organizations (for example, church schools attended by Arab children). The ultra-Orthodox schools are run independently, but generally also with funding from the government.
- ♦ Within the public system, there are **separate streams** for different populations: public schools, public religious schools, Arab schools and Druze schools.
- ♦ Education is **compulsory** from kindergarten to age 16.
- ♦ Education is free through 12th grade. Legislation has been passed to provide free pre-school education from age 3, but implementation is gradual due to budgetary constraints.

2.3 Education Gaps of Disadvantaged Children and Youth

The key indicators of education outcomes for any group or society are its enrollment rates and levels of scholastic achievement. In Israel, virtually all children from age 5 through 13 are enrolled in school. Currently, only 1.9% of Jewish youth aged 14-17 are not enrolled in school (CBS, 2004), representing a dramatic decrease over the last 20 years (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Youth Aged 14-17 Who are Not Enrolled in School, by Sector, 1985-2003 (in percentages)



* In 1985, students at vocational schools were counted as dropouts.

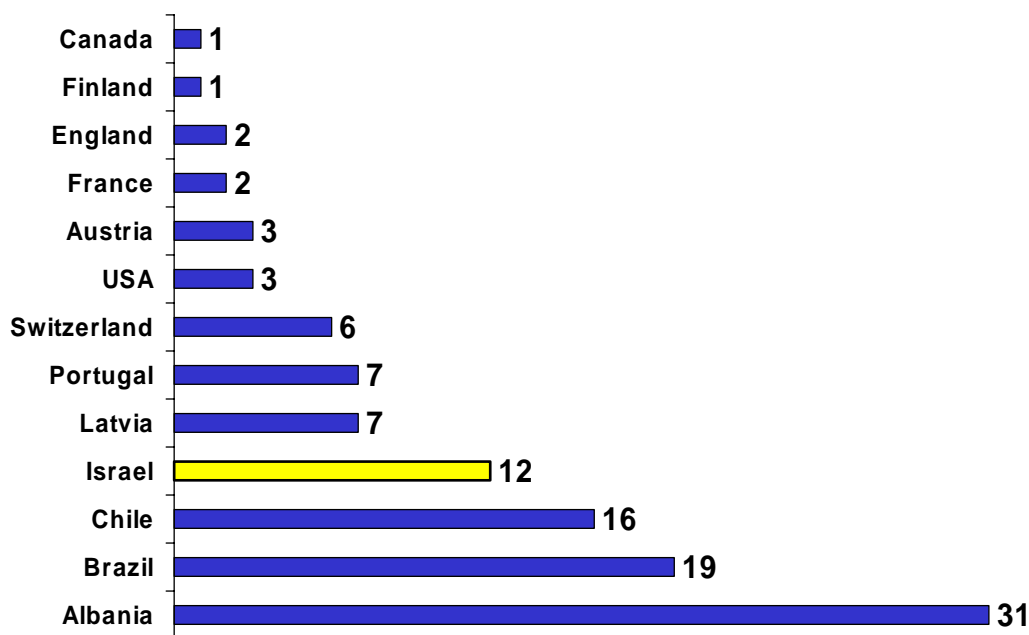
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004

The rate of Arab youth not enrolled in school is six times higher than the rate of Jewish youth – 11.3%. Contrary to popular opinion, Arab youth who drop out of school usually do so because of the negative experiences they encounter at school, and only rarely because they would prefer to enter the job market (Abu-Asbah et al., 2003; Cohen-Navot and Awadiyeh, forthcoming). There

are also severe gaps in the rate of pre-school enrollment: 81% of all Jewish 3-year-olds are enrolled in pre-school, as compared to only 68% of all Arab 3-year-olds; the rates for 4-year-olds are 92% and 76%, respectively (Ben Aryeh et al., 2005).

While overall enrollment rates are high, indications of academic achievement, as measured by scores on international tests, are low. The last set of scores on the OECD PISA tests of literacy among 15-year-olds shows Israeli students as being far behind their counterparts in Western Europe (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of Students Failing on PISA Tests in Reading Literacy



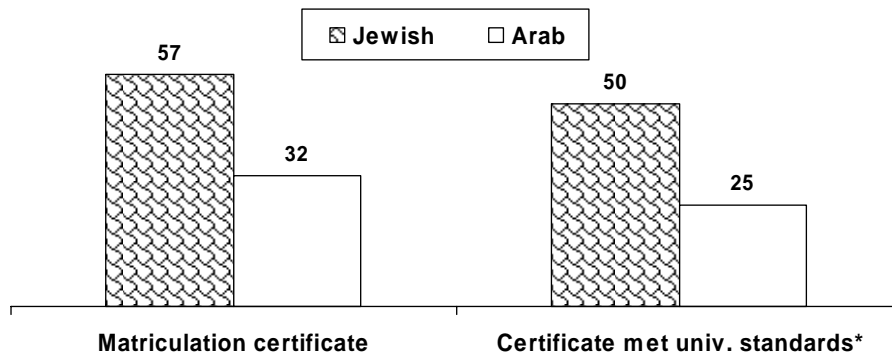
* Scores beneath level 1.

Source: OECD/UNESCO 2003

The matriculation exams are a set of tests that Israeli students take at the end of high school. Success on these tests is the main indication of scholastic achievement at the high school level. In 2005, 43% of all Jewish youth and 68% of Arab youth were ineligible for matriculation certificates. Not all certificates show achievement levels that meet university entry requirements.

Figure 3 shows that regarding both eligibility for matriculation certificates and the attainment of certificates enabling entry to a university, there are very large gaps between Jewish and Arab youth.

Figure 3: Eligibility for Matriculation Certificates, by Sector (in percentages)*



* Achievements high enough to meet university entrance requirements.

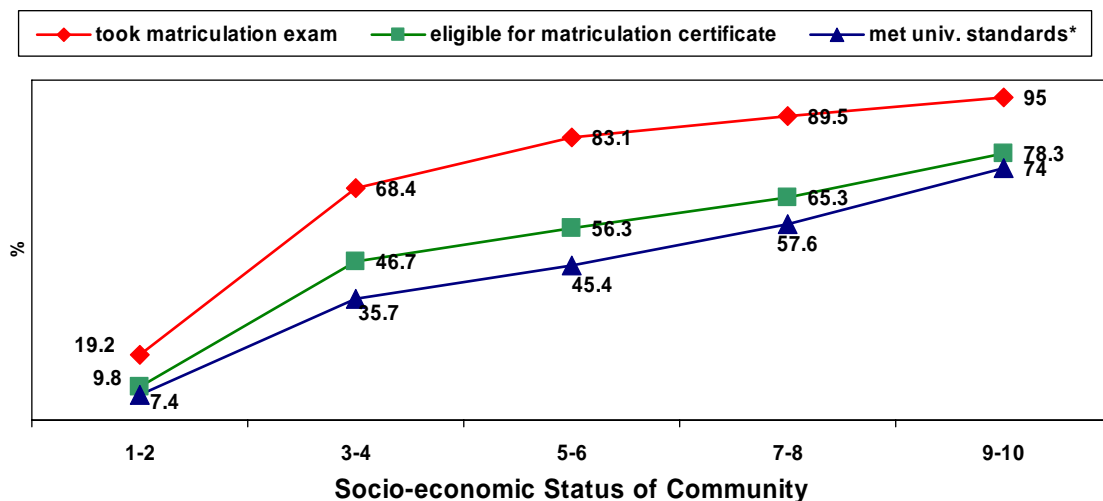
** Not including ultra-Orthodox

Source: Ministry of Education, 2005

Data also show significant gaps in education outcomes among students living in communities of varying socio-economic status (see Figure 4). Note that in the poorest communities (levels 1 and 2 on the Central Bureau of Statistics scale of community socio-economic status), less than 20% of the students even take the exams, and in other poor communities (levels 3 and 4), less than 70% of the students take the exams.

The three indicators of matriculation achievement – taking the test, attaining a matriculation certificate and achieving scores that are high enough to meet university entrance requirements – all indicate that students who reside in poor communities perform far worse at school than do students residing in wealthier communities. Thus, the same socio-economic gaps that trouble society as a whole are strongly reflected by learning achievements.

Figure 4: Matriculation Outcomes among Jewish Youth*, by SES of Community



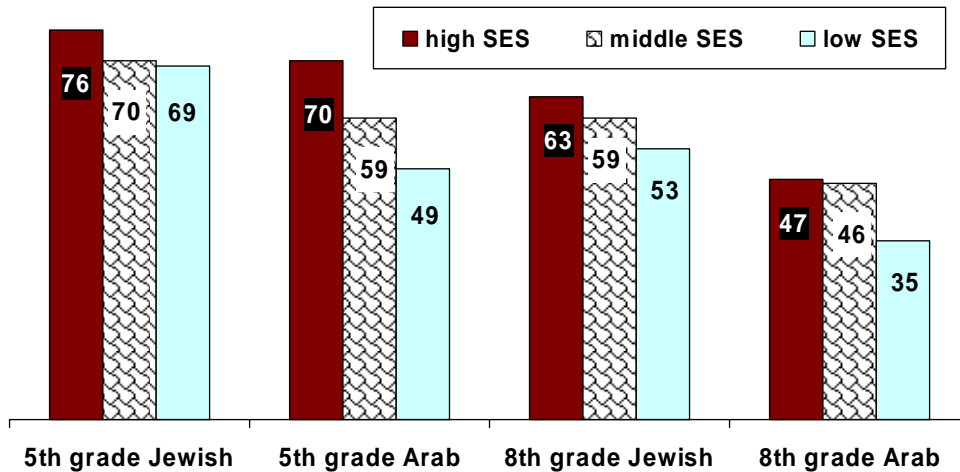
* Percentage calculated among entire age group, including dropouts.

**The matriculation certificate indicates achievements high enough to meet university entrance requirements.

Source: CBS, 2004

Figure 5 presents data from the "Meitzav" standardized tests administered by the Ministry of Education each year to 5th and 8th grade students at half of all Israeli schools. Again, we see significant gaps between the academic levels of Jewish and Arab children and among children from families of high, medium and low socio-economic status.

Figure 5: "Meitzav" Math Scores by Socio-economic Status, Sector and Grade Level



Source: Ministry of Education, 2004

Causes of the achievement gaps (see Cohen-Navot et al., 2001; Knesset Committee on Dropouts and School Disengagement, 2002): Over the years, there have been varying levels of funding in different communities: Schools in wealthier communities can mobilize additional funding in many ways – mainly through municipal participation and payment by parents. There are differences in the quality of the teachers (especially in the periphery, as compared to large cities), differences in school infrastructure (labs, facilities, school buildings, etc.), and differences in the level and quality of community services for high-risk children. Paradoxically, the cities with the largest numbers of youth at risk have the weakest services because they lack the money to finance them.

- ♦ School staffs often lack knowledge about how to meet the needs of all students, especially those with behavior problems or learning difficulties. Emotional problems among children are often related to crises at home, and school staffs are largely unfamiliar with ways to respond. Again, these problems are more severe in the poorer schools in the poorer communities (which have the fewest resources).
- ♦ Families from poor or marginal minorities lack the resources to help their children effectively navigate and cope with the education system. Parents who have never been in Israeli schools, such as immigrants from non-Western countries do not know the “script” regarding what is expected. More and more, schools expect children to continue learning at home with their parents, yet these parents may encounter serious difficulty in helping their children with homework. Furthermore, they often feel alienated from the school and believe that neither they nor their children are really welcome there.

- ♦ Immigrant children have to cope with school tasks in a language they do not yet know. Immigrant families also have additional problems – many parents work long hours trying to "eke out" a living and are often unavailable for their children. The dual challenge of adjusting both to adolescence and a new country throws many families into great turmoil.
- ♦ In general, Israel's Arab population is especially poor, and Arab adults have lower levels of education than do Jewish adults. Moreover, Arab schools have suffered from inadequate funding: Over the years, the Ministry of Education consistently has allocated lower levels of funding to Arab schools, and additional funding to help disadvantaged groups has also been allocated inequitably. In addition, Arab schools have unique problems: They need to teach an extra language – Hebrew - and to cope with the difference between written and spoken Arabic. They also lack competent manpower for principal and teacher positions. What's more, rapid social change among Israeli Arabs is stressful, as are issues of national identity.

2.4 Initiatives and Reforms

Since the early 1990s, education policy has stressed full enrollment through 12th grade and universal matriculation. The strategies adopted have included dropout prevention programs and financial incentives to school principals; special funds to make classes for underachieving high school students smaller; and special help for new immigrants, especially for learning Hebrew. In addition, there has been an increase in professional support staff at schools (psychologists and guidance counselors) that can provide special help for children with school adjustment difficulties. These steps have significantly reduced the extent of dropouts and, to a limited degree, raised the percentage of youth who are eligible for matriculation certificates. However, they have also left many problems and issues unresolved, as we saw at the start of this chapter.

Since 2000, a number of new initiatives and reforms have been introduced. For the last five years, *Meitzav* standardized tests have been administered to 5th and 8th graders. This year, 2nd graders were tested as well. The Meitzav tests also include questionnaires for students on school atmosphere, and questionnaires for teachers and principals on teaching methods and school management. The Meitzav data enable the education system to assess the level of education at the elementary and junior high school levels. They also enable it to see where it should focus more attention, and where its efforts have been successful.

Budgetary reforms have also been implemented to improve funding allocation in the primary schools. The *Shoshani* reform determined funding on the basis of the number of students, the families' socio-economic status and the region in the country. The more recent *Strauss* Committee method first allocates the basic funding required by each class, and then distributes remaining funds entirely on the basis of socio-economic indicators. The socio-economic status of a school's student population is known to be the best predictor of the level of education needs. By giving more funds to schools with disadvantaged populations, the aim is to improve the quality of education and thereby close the gaps documented by the national statistics.

Reforms have also granted more autonomy to school principals in resource utilization and encouraged more rational planning processes. Previously, schools were budgeted from a number of different sources within the Ministry of Education, with much targeting of funds to specific populations or programs. The *Shoshani* reform granted principals a comprehensive budget for the school, which they can then apply at their discretion on the basis of school needs and priorities. At the same time, more monitoring has been imposed and data have been collected from the schools to ensure that extra funds are utilized for weak students who require reinforcement.

The *Dovrat National Task Force* received widespread publicity. Its main recommendations include the following:

- ◆ Per capita funding on the basis of socio-economic status in all schools. The extra funds accrued at schools with disadvantaged populations are to be used to provide more remedial help and to enable co-teaching so that teachers can work with small groups of students.
- ◆ Greater autonomy for school principals
- ◆ Re-organization of the learning framework: longer school days for students and teachers - until three or four o'clock - and transition to a five-day week
- ◆ Upgrading of principal training and salaries
- ◆ Upgrading of teacher training and salaries, and an increase in weekly workloads
- ◆ Additional measurement in order to enhance accountability mechanisms

During the 2005-06 school year, recommendations regarding a longer school day and five-day week were implemented on a pilot basis, which also included the allocation of additional funds to enable co-teaching in the 1st and 2nd grades, as well as additional inputs. Other recommendations also received support, especially from within the Ministry of Education, and are being implemented gradually or on a pilot basis. For example, the *RAMA* authority for assessment and evaluation in education was established. However, because of objections from various groups, it seems that as a block its recommendations will not be implemented.

The *YOCHAI* program for extended school days (41 hours per week) was legislated in 1998 and has been implemented on a gradual basis over the years. To date, the program has been implemented in more than 500 pre-schools and more than 500 elementary schools in communities with low socio-economic status. Implementation is expected to continue and expand to additional schools. Evaluation research concluded that the program has potential for promoting school improvement, although less than half of the schools in the study used the program effectively (Gordon et al ,2001). In addition, beginning in the 2007-08 school year the *OFEK* reform in the elementary and junior high schools is gradually being implemented as a result of a new agreement with the teachers union: teachers are working longer days in order to be able to provide more individual attention, especially for low-achievers.

2.5 NGOs ("third sector") in Israel

Non-profit non-governmental organizations (NGOs), created by concerned citizens in order to promote public objectives for the benefit of the community, also make an important contribution to education in Israel. They are considered "third sector" in the sense that they are neither government nor for-profit. This chapter will focus on these organizations and look at their role in educational programming for children and youth from disadvantaged and minority groups.

"Third sector" non-profit organizations (hereinafter "NGOs") are organizations that meet each of the following six conditions (Salamon and Anheier, 1992):

1. They are formal organizations
2. They are not part of the state
3. They do not distribute profits
4. They have independent decision making mechanisms
5. They have a philanthropic or voluntary component
6. They are open organizations that can be joined or left at will.

Research regarding all areas of the third sector in Israel – education, welfare, health, etc. – has documented the significant role that these organizations have played. Well before the establishment of the state in 1948 non-profit organizations provided important public services to the community. NGO activity in mobilizing resources and providing services has continued to this day. Since the 1980s, there has been an especially sharp increase in the number and scope of civil organizations in Israel (Galnoor, 2003; Limor, 2004).

Expenditures for all Israeli NGOs in 1997 totaled approximately NIS 53 billion, or 14.3% of the GNP (Galnoor, 2003). In 1995, non-profit organizations employed 44% of all full-time positions in health (including the the Health Plans which provide medical services to all Israeli citizens), 35% of all positions in education (including the institutions of higher education and independent school systems), and 30% of all positions in culture, recreation, religion and welfare (CBS, 1997). This represents a very sizeable part of the economy. In international terms, Israel ranked 4th out of 22 countries regarding the part of the economy accounted for by the NGOs – higher than both the United States and Great Britain, which also have significant NGOs (Source: ICTR Database of the Israeli Center for Third Sector Research).

Activities of NGOs are frequently funded at least in part by the government. For some, donations from individuals and foundations are key sources of funding. Non-profit organizations frequently work in collaboration with other bodies, with services often being provided through "matching" agreements in which the non-profit organization, the local municipality and, perhaps, another party (for example, the national government) all contribute pre-determined proportions of the program's budget.

A key issue is the lack of clear government policy regarding the role of the NGOs and the government's relationship with it. Limor writes that "third sector organizations are variously

viewed as continuing, complementing, or opposing government activity” (page 17). The Committee of Government Policy Towards the Third Sector in Israel, chaired by Itzhak Galnoor (2003), delivered recommendations calling for government recognition of the special features of NGOs; clear, transparent policy; regulation of funding and equitable criteria in the allocation of public funding; full disclosure of information from government; and support of training programs.

2.6 NGO Involvement in Education Programs for Disadvantaged Children and Youth

Unfortunately, there is very little research or systematic data regarding NGO activity in the specific area of interest to this report, e.g., supplemental education for disadvantaged students. Thus, much of the information presented in this chapter is based on interviews with senior management at key non-profit organizations in Israel, senior professionals from the education system, and experts in this field and on the database of the Israel Center for Third Sector Research (ICTR).

The ICTR database includes information about the number of organizations that work in education. The ICTR's information is provided by public agencies (such as the Registrar of Non-profit Organizations), and not by the non-profit organizations themselves; thus, the scope and depth of the information is limited. In reviewing data about activity in education, we focused on supplemental programs and excluded the data about institutions of higher education and the independent school system of the ultra-orthodox). According to this criterion, the ICTR data demonstrates that there are currently some 760 non-profit organizations in Israel that are involved in education. They include three types of organization: those that provide supplementary education (such as study centers, after-school lessons and enrichment programs); those that are affiliated with schools (usually providing tutoring for weak students, curricula development and instruction for teachers); and those that provide social services for children and youth (such as enrichment and care for children at risk). The vast majority of the organizations (approximately 90%) focus on providing services; 10% focus on funding, and a few engage in advocacy.

Note that many, and probably most, of these organizations operate locally on a small scale. We assess that there are about 15 organizations providing services on a national scale.

It is widely agreed that parallel to the general trend of expansion of NGOs, there has also been an increase in the extent of NGO programs and organizations in education. These organizations are very much involved in work with disadvantaged children and youth. As with NGOs in general, funding is based on grants or contracts from the government (or local authorities), private donations or collaborations with other non-profit organizations. Sometimes there are student payments. Schools sometimes contribute to program resources by allocating manpower to the project – for example, by requesting a teacher to work several hours a week as the project coordinator, or by arranging for teachers to have the time to participate in training sessions.

Contributions of NGOs to Education

NGO involvement in education is greatly valued on the basis of the following key contributions (see also Berger et al., 2004; Katz et al., 2006; Galnoor et al., 2003; Gidron et al., 2003; and Gidron et al., 2006).

- ◆ *Mobilization of additional funds and services:* By raising funds from individuals and foundations, NPOs enable the education system to provide more extensive and enriched services. In many instances, additional resources by non-profit organizations relieve the burden on the public education system (Beeger et al., 2004).
- ◆ *Provision of additional services:* Non-profit organizations can target special groups of students that they desire to serve. They can also provide services more intensively than the regular system, and can provide services to which the system does not assign a high priority. In addition, they can provide services when the system does not (during after-school hours and summer vacations, and during post-secondary schooling).
- ◆ *Providing opportunities for flexible operation:* For the government, a key contribution of non-profit organizations is their ability to operate with relative flexibility, unburdened by many of the constraints imposed by bureaucracy and labor agreements. For this reason, the government may prefer to fund services through non-profit organizations rather than provide them itself.
- ◆ *Contributing additional expert knowledge:* Many non-profit organizations enjoy considerable prestige. The numerous experts working in education through non-profit organizations present valuable opportunities for the upgrading of schools and learning.
- ◆ *Opportunities for innovation and system-wide learning:* Non-profit organizations that work to develop interventions and practice knowledge provide opportunities for creativity and innovation that are often unavailable to the main body of professionals working within the regular system. To the extent that innovations and new knowledge are disseminated on a large scale, opportunities for contributing to the system as a whole may materialize. These organizations often operate limited projects as pilots for development purposes. Many important new ideas for more effective practice have originated in non-profit organizational activity, where there are opportunities to innovate and take risks to a greater extent than is generally possible in the regular education system.
- ◆ *Lobbying:* Finally, non-profit organizations may amplify the voice of special populations, some of them marginal or forgotten by policy makers. According to some experts, lobbying for underprivileged groups should be the *main* contribution of these organizations and accountability mechanisms.

Issues in the Utilization of NGO Programs in Education

Problems in the utilization of non-profit programs were also raised by the experts and professionals from the non-profit organizations and various levels of government who were interviewed. Effective implementation of non-profit organization programs requires the resolution of a number of issues:

At the policy level: Many of the issues related to NGO activity in general are relevant to the specific field of education. In particular, the lack of clear policy on the part of the government regarding work with the NGOs in general also affects the work in education for the disadvantaged. The expansion of non-profit organization programs was not accompanied by systematic planning or monitoring.

Main concerns include:

- ◆ There may be a general lack of rationality in the distribution of the resources: that some schools may have many programs, while others have few; that some children may be receiving services that they do not need, while other children may need services that are unavailable.
- ◆ Of special concern to the government is that some programs are in contrast to objectives or principles of government policy. Even when programs complement policy, NGO involvement may alter the *priorities* of the public system.
- ◆ From the perspective of those involved with funding and operating non-profit organizations, there is concern that reliance on government funding may cause programs to be too greatly affected by existing public policy and bureaucratic constraints.
- ◆ Decisions by policy makers regarding which programs to fund or support are often made on the basis of scanty, if any, information.
- ◆ Finally, programs may be of poor quality.

As in the case of the NGOs in Israel in general, coherent government policy about what should be the role of the NGOs in education could encourage NGOs activity that integrates the special concerns of the non-profit organizations with key policies and priorities at the national level. Meaningful dialogue between the government and non-profit organizations can leverage government resources for non-profit organization programs and facilitate entry to schools, as well as to help ensure that supplemental programming meets key needs and can contribute to optimal distribution of NGO resources among different populations and communities.

In the effort to ensure quality programming, a Ministry of Education committee will soon deliver recommendations for licensing organizations as a prerequisite for school interventions. A recent development has been the establishment at the Ministry of Education of the RAMA unit for the promotion of assessment, quality assurance and evaluation within the education system.

For their part, non-profit organizations can act to improve accountability. Some have commissioned evaluation studies by external organizations, both to provide information on program quality and to improve the services they provide. Another important mechanism is ongoing monitoring and data collection about the program and results for participants.

At the school level: Schools need to be active in choosing the programs that best meet their needs in accordance with priorities. Professionals from all levels of the public education system agree that programs are perceived as additional resources and, as such, are seldom refused. As programs almost always demand some attention and effort on the part of the school, their implementation is at the expense of other activity. Moreover, schools are often burdened by multiple programs. Shild et al. (1998) found that schools in one city were typically implementing 11 different programs simultaneously. Sometimes, the principles of the programs contradict each other. At the practical level, schools experience difficulty in implementing multiple changes at the same time.

The reliance on donors and special commitments by the government may cause funding to be short-term and unstable. However, many interventions require extensive multi-year resource investments to be fully effective. When non-profit organization programs end, student and school needs may remain unmet if programs or mechanisms are not in place to continue to provide necessary services. When programs are intended to be short-term, "phasing out" by the non-profit organization needs to be planned well in advance of the final exit. Ongoing coordination with the public system can enable continuity in the provision of services.

In order for a supplementary education program to operate effectively, there needs to be ongoing and meaningful coordination between program and school staff regarding the needs of the students at the individual level, and the services provided to them. This, of course, requires investments of time and attention on the part of the organizations and the schools.

2.7 Summary

This chapter described the significant achievement gaps in the Israeli education system and identified their causes as stemming to a large extent from the large socio-economic gaps and social and cultural heterogeneity of Israeli society. Minimizing these gaps is a major challenge for the Israeli education system. Recently, the public education system has begun a number of initiatives in an attempt to improve education for the disadvantaged, which include more monitoring, funding reform and extending the schoolday.

Many non-profit organizations are also contributing significantly to the education of the disadvantaged, mainly by funding and providing services to specially targeted groups with special needs, through flexible program operation, through the dissemination of expert knowledge and innovation and system-wide learning. Effective implementation of non-profit organization programs requires meaningful dialogue and collaboration with the public system at the policy and school levels and ongoing monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

3. YRF and Other Comparable Organizations

In this chapter we will focus specifically on YRF and similar non-profit organizations that form the organizational environment in which it functions.

3.1 YRF Programs

The Youth Renewal Fund (YRF) is a non-profit organization first established in the United States in 1989. In 1997 the Israeli organization was also established. The mission of YRF is to create and implement education programs for disadvantaged children and youth in Israel.

On the following pages we will briefly discuss YRF programs. The information is based on interviews with YRF management and with professionals in two cities where YRF operates (see introduction). This by no means represents a thorough assessment.

Respondents indicated that a major incentive for the program was that cuts in the education system have caused growing utilization of “grey market” education services by more affluent students, leaving those who cannot pay behind. For many children who cannot afford such services, YRF fills this need. As one school principal said:

"(The children) do not have private lessons or after-school classes – I see YRF as a tool for providing equal opportunities."

There are currently 18 projects implemented in 13 Jewish communities throughout Israel. Each year they serve approximately 11,500 children and youth. YRF mainly works directly with children, at schools, and at a special facility for training English teachers.

The target population of YRF is students in grades one through 12:

- ◆ whose motivation to succeed at school is high, but whose scholastic achievements are poor,
- ◆ who lack the economic resources to purchase additional education assistance.

Students are invited to join if they express motivation to improve their school achievements, have no record of disciplinary problems or school violence, and do not suffer from severe learning disabilities. At the start of the program, children and parents sign a contract with YRF. Once they join, attendance is mandatory and checked regularly.

The basic YRF supplemental education programs are conducted in the schools during the afternoon hours with groups of up to 12 children. Lessons focus on key subjects: mathematics, English and Hebrew. The curriculum is based on the Ministry of Education's national curriculum. A key and unique component of the program is the structure of the lessons: The teachers are committed to a pre-set format that includes defined periods of time for the opening session, group work followed by a discussion, individual work, activity that provides a break in the routine, homework and feedback. Lessons are designed to provide the students with additional inputs that will reinforce what was learned in school.

Students in the YRF program also receive lunch. The meal component appears to be significant and an incentive for many students to stay for the afternoon lessons.

YRF aims to find the best teachers possible for the supplemental lessons. They are selected from among teachers in the community and are not limited to those teaching at the host schools. They receive special teacher training from a number of agencies that are contracted by YRF. The encouragement of excellence in teaching is an important YRF objective. Indeed, the professionals who were interviewed considered the program's teachers to be of high quality. However, the high recruiting standards for teachers are reported by program managers to pose an obstacle for rapid program expansion.

Respondents who were interviewed reported that coordination between program teachers and the school teaching staff is essential to ensure that lessons are relevant. However, this may be difficult in instances where program teachers do not themselves teach at the host schools. The program at each school is run by a "project manager" who is responsible for program operation and facilitating ongoing communication between program and school staff. Additional program staff are responsible for the quality of instruction in specific subjects.

Attempts have been made to increase parental involvement in the program. Several respondents reported that it had been relatively difficult to recruit and work with parents for activities, and some noted that, ultimately, the parents who attend activities are those who are involved anyway. In two communities, YRF has collaborated with the Adler Institute to provide classes for improving parenting skills.

YRF programs are implemented in collaboration with the local authorities. Private donors and other non-profit organizations support YRF, and the municipalities provide funds of varying proportion. Parents of participating children are requested to pay a small fee. In some communities, other non-profit organizations collaborate in the actual implementation.

YRF prides itself on its business model approach, which stresses clear, measurable objectives; detailed and systematic planning; and ongoing monitoring and accountability. The organization collects data regarding student achievement on the basis of testing administered at the start, middle and end of each school year. Standardized tests administered 10 weeks into the school year provide feedback regarding student engagement in the learning process. In addition, feedback questionnaires have been administered to children and teachers participating in the programs, and the information collected has shown positive results.

There are varying opinions regarding the major emphasis on structure and the monitoring of student progress. Some note that these are important advantages of YRF programs, as structure facilitates quality teaching. Ongoing monitoring ensures that the staff is tracking the students' needs and progress, that management can review program results. In contrast, some staff members complained that too much time is invested in monitoring and data entry.

The professionals who were interviewed praised the program. For example, the director of a municipal education department stressed that "people in the community recognize YRF's reputation and excellence." A school principal commended the program's seriousness:

"They (YRF) are serious; I have 37 years of experience and had yet to see such a serious program."

Another school principal noted that YRF provides a comprehensive service for a large number of students and even, indirectly, improves the infrastructure by exposing schools to its organizational culture.

Alongside satisfaction with the program, concerns were raised in the interviews. An important concern is that the program may end at some later date. At the municipal level, some described the fear of becoming dependent on the program. The director of an education division noted that there are numerous projects being implemented in the city, with some, like the YRF program, receiving municipal funds. He reported that the extra funding that these projects (including YRF) contribute to the education system have led the local authority to support the projects financially and rely on them to meet important needs. As a result, there is concern that the system may have difficulty functioning if the programs are pulled out of the schools.

Many respondents noted that there are multiple projects at the schools in which YRF operates, and that they work with the same or similar population of students. Some were reported to have components that may be perceived as especially attractive by students or the schools, e.g., individual tutoring or lessons in very small groups; supplemental lessons in more, or even all, school subjects (beyond the focus on just English, math and language); the absence of student payments; and invitations to special events (such as concerts). When there is a generous supply of other programs and their conditions are tempting, there may be a need compete with other organizations for participants by actively recruit participants or introducing greater flexibility in entry requirements.

3.2 Focus on Comparable Organizations

In order to better understand the unique role and operation of YRF relative to comparable organizations, interviews were held with senior management at six other organizations. These organizations were identified by the research team and YRF senior management as being similar to YRF in terms of the number of students served, budget, and funding sources. Specifically, all of the organizations:

- ◆ aim to work with disadvantaged children and youth
- ◆ focus on scholastic achievement
- ◆ provide direct services to approximately 1,000 to 15,000 children and youth in a number of communities

- ♦ receive considerable private sector funding (although they may receive government funding as well)²

The information on YRF and the six organizations is summarized in the attached table.

Characteristics of the Organizations

All of the organizations were established by concerned citizens interested in improving the quality of education for disadvantaged children. YRF is the oldest of the organizations surveyed here; it was joined by most of the rest toward the end of the 1990s.

- ♦ Among the organizations surveyed, YRF is among those with the highest number of participants. Two other organizations have 11,000 participants yearly, and the others have far fewer.
- ♦ In contrast to the large number of participants, YRF has remained relatively focused geographically and operates in 13 communities. Of the two organizations with similar numbers of participants, one operates in 35 localities, and the other in over 60. Like YRF, most of the other organizations have more than one program site in each locality.
- ♦ These specific organizations are mainly funded by private sources and public entities. Only YRF and one other organization require payments by parents.
- ♦ Information was not provided regarding the budgets of the two organizations with approximately 11,000 students. The budget of the four organizations serving 4,000 or fewer students is NIS 6–7.5 million.

Program Participants

- ♦ Like YRF, all of the organizations [that were surveyed] work in communities characterized by a low-to-medium socioeconomic level.
- ♦ Schoolchildren constitute their main target populations: YRF and three of the organizations work with children in grades 1 through 12; two of the other organizations work only in high schools, and the remaining organization works with children in grades 3 through 12.
- ♦ YRF works with the general Jewish population. Three of the other organizations also target special populations, such as new immigrants (from Ethiopia, the Caucasus and Bukhara) and the Arab population of Israel (particularly the Bedouin and the Druze).
- ♦ Like YRF, almost all of the other organizations run programs for students with moderate or low achievement levels who are motivated and have no disciplinary or behavioral problems. Only one organization targets its program to students with special difficulties: those with disciplinary or truancy problems, those who are on the verge of dropping out, and those who have been placed in low-level ability classes or are studying at vocational or "alternative" schools. Three of the organizations also work with top students from the periphery.

² Organizations which are government companies or primarily funded by the government were not included.

Program Goals

- ◆ The organizations run a range of programs, often for different populations and with varying goals. A goal continuum extends from dropout prevention through mobility within a school's ability-tracking system and improved scholastic achievement, including matriculation certificates, to the attainment of a bachelor's degree from a prestigious faculty. YRF mainly focuses on improving scholastic achievement.
- ◆ Most of the programs also have social and emotional goals: boosting self-confidence and self-efficacy; envisaging a future that includes academic studies and a good job; exposure to enrichment, culture, and informal education activities; and ongoing and meaningful voluntarism.

Programs Provided

- ◆ All of the organizations that were surveyed primarily provide scholastic support. The support offered by three of the organizations, including YRF, focuses on English, math, and language. One of the also stresses sciences. Three of the organizations are more flexible in that they offer scholastic help in subjects according to the students' needs.
- ◆ The extra lessons provided by most of the organizations (including YRF) are held after school hours. Two provide their program in the framework of special homeroom classes, whereby program participants study together throughout the school day. One works through teaching assistants who provide children with special help, often within the classroom. YRF has set up regional centers for teaching English.
- ◆ The organizations, including YRF, provide enrichment classes to varying degrees, as well as special activities, such as field trips. In addition, five of the organizations also offer social activities and emotional support.
- ◆ Four organizations (including, to a limited extent, YRF) also conduct activities with parents in which participation may be mandatory.

Staff

Staffing policies of the organizations vary.

- ◆ YRF priority in staffing is to work with high quality professional teachers. Four of the other organizations provide learning support exclusively through qualified teachers, and one of the other organizations seeks teachers with masters degrees in the subject they teach.
- ◆ Three organizations provide tutoring through volunteers and through students receiving a stipend. At YRF there is only occasional teaching by students.
- ◆ YRF teachers are often not part of the regular staff at the host school. In contrast, other organizations place priority on running the program through teachers from the regular school staff.
- ◆ Some of the organizations offer training to the teaching staff, either in teaching strategies or in a certain subject. YRF staff receive ongoing training and constant supervision, including classroom observations several times a year.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

- ◆ All of the organizations monitor their programs and collect data in order to plan program implementation at the school level, and to examine the extent to which they are achieving the goals set for the participants.
- ◆ Data is generally collected at three main points in time (this also applies to YRF):
 - Prior to entry, when information is gathered about the participants' scholastic level.
 - During the course of the program: As the programs are run over a period of time, information is gathered several times during this stage. The programs monitor continued participation in the program, school grades, and grades on the program's exams.
 - At the end of the program, mainly according to matriculation eligibility and the quality of the matriculation certificate.
- ◆ As noted, most of the organizations have also formulated social and emotional goals for participants, and some make an effort to examine the extent to which these goals have been reached.
- ◆ The six organizations that were studied all commissioned external evaluations by outside agencies, sometimes regarding a specific part of their work. Only some of this research has been published. YRF has not yet undertaken an external evaluation.

Table 1: Summary of Information about YRF and Other Comparable Organizations

Area	YRF	Org. A	Org. B	Org. C	Org. D	Org. E	Org. F
<i>Established</i>	By businesspersons in US (1989) and Israel (1997)	By private foundation and Ministry of Education (1990)	By immigrant scientists from the Former Soviet Union (1992)	By young people (1998)	By leading Israeli business (2000)	By businessman (2000)	By students (1999)
<i>Number of participants (2005-06)</i>	11,500 students	11,000 students	11,000 students	4,000 students	3,000 students	700 school students; 300 young-people in "national service" program; 150 university students	850 students
<i>Deployment</i>	13 localities (100+ schools)	60+ localities	37 localities (78 schools, 22 enrichment programs)	9 localities	21 localities (35 schools)	8 localities (9 schools)	6 localities (a number of schools in each locality)
<i>Funding sources³</i>	1. Private donors 2. Foundations 3. Local authorities 4. Parents	1. Government 2. Non-profit organizations	1. Government 2. Non-profit organizations 3. Local authorities 4. Parents	1. Private donors 2. Foundations 3. Government 4. Local authorities	1. Private donors 2. Foundations 3. Non-profit organizations 4. Local authorities	1. Private donors 2. Foundations	1. Private donors 2. Foundations 3. Local authorities
<i>Annual budget</i>	NIS 12,000,000	NA	NA	NIS 6,000,000	NIS 7,500,000	NIS 7,200,000	NIS 6,500,000
<i>Student characteristics</i>	1. Grades 1-12 2. Moderate to low socio-economic background 3. No behavioral problems 4. No learning disabilities that require special intervention	1. Grades 1-12 (mainly 7 -12) 2. Low socio-economic background and geographic periphery 3. 35% Ethiopian-Israeli, 10% Bukharan, Russian or Caucasus background, some Bedouin 4. 70% scholastic underachievers; 20% top students	1. Grades 1-12 2. Immigrants, non-immigrants, youth village residents, Druze 3. Science-oriented students top-students 4. High levels of motivation 5. No behavior problems	1. Grades 1 to 12, especially 5-6 and 8-9 2. Disadvantaged neighborhoods 3. Immigrants, Arabs, including Bedouin 4. Students on verge of dropping out and/or with behavior problems or truancy 5. Students at vocational schools 6. No learning disabilities	1. Grades 10-12 2. From neighborhoods with low socio-economic status and low matriculation results 3. High motivation <u>Regular program:</u> Poor scholastic achievements <u>Program for top students:</u> Students with potential to excel in sciences	1. Grades 10-12 and through completion of bachelor's degree. 2. Moderate to low socio-economic localities 3. Neither top students nor underachievers ("middle third") 4. High motivation 5. No behavioral problems	1. Grades 3-12 2. Low socio-economic background 3. High motivation

³ The funding sources are listed in random order, and not according to the extent of funding.

Area	YRF	Org. A	Org. B	Org. C	Org. D	Org. E	Org. F
<i>Program goals</i>	Scholastic progress	Scholastic progress Aspirations for higher education. Programs for top students: matriculation certificates that will enable acceptance by prestigious university faculties	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Scholastic progress More advanced studies in math and science Better personal, social and cognitive skills 	<u>Goals for the students:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> School integration and academic success for those at risk of dropping out; Transfer from vocational school to academic-oriented school; transfer from low-level ability classes to higher level classes; Matriculation certificates which enable university entrance; self-efficacy. <u>Goals for volunteers:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of voluntarism and equality as important values, Active involvement in society 	Matriculation certificate <u>Program for top students:</u> Matriculation certificate which will enable entry to prestigious university faculty	<u>Goal:</u> Academic degrees <u>Interim goals:</u> Full and high quality matriculation certificate; increased self-esteem and self-confidence; increased motivation for self-advancement and higher education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> High scholastic grades Attendance at cultural events Participation in group voluntary activities at school and in the community

Area	YRF	Org. A	Org. B	Org. C	Org. D	Org. E	Org. F
<i>Activities</i>	<p>Supplemental lessons in English, math and Hebrew (language skills) provided after school (up to 12 students in each group)</p> <p><u>Learning centers and mini-centers for English:</u> Mornings and after school</p> <p>Also enrichment activities and field trips</p>	<p>Supplemental lessons provided after school in accordance with each student's needs</p> <p><u>Emotional support</u> for better school and social adjustment, as required</p>	<p>Supplemental learning <u>inputs</u> provided over the course of the school day in special homerooms. Additional hours for studying math, sciences and English. Also music and Russian.</p> <p><u>Cultural centers</u> operate after school.</p>	<p>Supplemental lessons in English, Hebrew/Arabic and math provided during school hours. (Additional subjects prior to matriculation, as required). Program staff enter class as teaching assistants. Sometimes children taught out of class.</p> <p><u>Informal education</u> at school: homeroom class discussions, Mentoring, with emphasis on social and emotional needs Preparation for holidays and special events Enrichment courses</p> <p><u>Informal education after school</u> Programs for children at risk Learning centers Youth clubs (leadership training, empowerment for girls)</p>	<p>Supplemental lessons: Provided after school and for full days as required by students.</p> <p>Emphasis on subjects for matriculation.</p> <p><u>Program for top students:</u> Emphasis on English, math and science with special help for individual needs in other subjects. Special science and technology activities at university. Empowerment workshops.</p>	<p>Supplemental lessons at <u>high school level</u>, usually in Hebrew-oriented studies, civics, sciences, provided during the morning through creation of homeroom; after school and Fridays in small groups; 2 hours a week of private lessons or 4 hours a week for 2 children <u>Mentor</u> also services as role model and provides emotional support.</p> <p><u>During army service:</u> 1. Preparation for improving/completing matriculation certificate and for psychometric exam 2. Consultations for choosing academic discipline through meetings on Thursday afternoons</p> <p><u>During university studies:</u> assistance as required: support with studies, tuition fees, dorms, stipend, travel expenses</p>	<p>Supplemental lessons in English, math and composition provided after school 16 hours a week.</p> <p><u>Elementary school level:</u> 14 children per group</p> <p><u>Junior high and high school:</u> 7 children per group</p> <p><u>Informal education:</u> enrichment courses and education for values</p>

Area	YRF	Org. A	Org. B	Org. C	Org. D	Org. E	Org. F
<i>Work with Parents</i>	Seminars by Adler Institute	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> In Programs for special populations (e.g. Ethiopian immigrants) Home visits 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Parents seen as a key Partners for children's school success Home visits Assistance to parents in realizing entitlements, babysitting, Hebrew studies and learning about the educational system 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory participation for enrichment courses Mandatory monthly lecture 	Seminars by Adler Institute	
<i>Staff</i>	<p>All teachers are professional teachers. Most are Ministry of Education employees or pensioners. A few are students. All teachers receive a salary. Special teacher training provided.</p>	<p><u>Teachers</u>: Prefer teachers from within the schools. Training focuses on teaching strategies</p> <p><u>Youth leaders</u> are part of staff at all programs: provide ongoing personal support to students</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers hold master's degrees in the subject matter. Same teacher teaches regular hours and additional hours 	<p><u>Volunteers</u> are youth who have recently completed high school: "Community service"</p> <p>volunteers who work for a year before army service</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> "Nahal" soldiers, whose army service includes a period of community service Arab youth who have graduated high school Arab university students <p><u>Professional teachers</u> - primarily to prepare for matriculation exams</p>	<p><u>Tutors include</u>: University students who receive a stipend: Volunteers from donating businesses. Some professional teacher primarily to prepare for matriculation exams</p>	<p><u>Teachers</u>: Class teacher or other teacher from the school</p> <p><u>Tutors</u>: University students who receive a stipend</p>	Class teacher or other teacher from the school

Area	YRF	Org. A	Org. B	Org. C	Org. D	Org. E	Org. F
Program monitoring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Examination of knowledge and comprehension s at three points in time: the beginning of the school year, 10 weeks later, and at the end of the year School grades Matriculations scores Student satisfaction 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Matriculation scores Classroom placement and tracking at school School grades Data is analyzed by student socio-demographic characteristics 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Standard tests in math in grades 1-9 Matriculation scores 	<p><u>Regarding students:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Grades in the program School grades Truancy and behavior at school <p><u>Regarding volunteers:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perseverance during year of service Active involvement in society after end of program Assumption of responsibility within the organization 	<p>Matriculation scores</p> <p><u>Program for top students:</u></p> <p>Also school grades</p>	<p>School grades Standard tests</p> <p>Matriculation scores</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> School grades Internal tests Matriculation scores Attendance at cultural and voluntary activities Parental attendance and satisfaction
Evaluation	Internal evaluation	Internal evaluation External evaluations	Internal evaluation External evaluations	Internal evaluation External evaluations	Internal evaluation External evaluations	Internal evaluation External evaluations	Internal evaluation
Special principles of implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Standard structure for lessons Frequent monitoring of student progress Regional learning centers for English language instruction Recruitment of outstanding teachers Teacher training Contract with students 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on multiple methods in order to work with each individual in the best way Clearly defined work programs and monitoring of implementation Computerized database regarding participants' needs and progress Ongoing personal support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of program inputs within the framework of special homeroom class Schools allocate additional class hours to Mofet classes Highly educated teachers Competitions in math and physics Opportunity for university classes Preparatory course at end of 6th grade for program candidates 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Program provided primarily by volunteers (youth who have recently graduated from high school) Volunteers live in community in which they work Work with Arab and Bedouin populations Work with and within schools (including work with homerooms) Extensive presence in the schools 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Program is led by school principal and staff School steering committee Personal contract with each student Emphasis on correct utilization of student's time <p><u>Program for top students:</u></p> <p>Visits to academic institutions and high-tech industries</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term assistance from high school through bachelor's degree Provision of program within the framework of special homeroom class Program development through pilot evaluation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive assistance for each child (16 hours weekly) Long-term support for each child (10 years) Support for parents

3.3 Summary

The information presented in this chapter shows that YRF presents a well-developed, highly structured program of supplemental instruction to its target population in accordance with its goals. In providing after-school supplemental instruction to children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds who display positive motivation, it is providing a service to a population which is served in this way by a number of other non-profit organizations operating nationally. Thus, the organizational landscape is "dense" and may sometimes require competing with other organizations for participants or school resources (e.g. manpower, attention).

In comparing YRF to other similar organizations, there are a number of areas in which YRF displays special strength: Some key attributes include:

- ◆ The large number of students served;
- ◆ An emphasis on high quality instruction through the standard structure for lessons, policy of recruiting outstanding teachers and ongoing training and supervision;
- ◆ Frequent monitoring of student progress; and regional learning centers for English language instruction;
- ◆ Strong reliance on funding from the local authorities, as well as limited participation by students.

Finally, it is interesting to note a number of principles which have been adopted by some or many of the other organizations:

- ◆ Many of the other organizations offer more inputs of other types – e.g. enrichment, personal support, etc. - in addition to the basic instructional program. In contrast, YRF programs are more focused.
- ◆ Many of the other organizations place emphasis on recruiting staff from among the regular school teachers, a principle which YRF has forgone in favor of outstanding teachers from the community.
- ◆ Some of the other organizations provide the service through volunteers or students receiving stipends. Sometimes the volunteers are also considered a target population.
- ◆ In addition to the internal evaluation performed at YRF, other organizations have also commissioned external evaluations.

4. Effectiveness of Intervention Strategies

As part of its strategic planning process, YRF is interested in examining the feasibility and effectiveness of different interventions that could be provided by the organization in addition to existing programs. A wide variety of intervention strategies have been developed and implemented in schools all over the world in the effort to improve the scholastic achievement of disadvantaged children and youth. Not all strategies have proven their potential contribution; success is, to a large part, dependent on effective implementation.

The review below summarizes key research from numerous sources regarding the following strategies, which were identified as bearing special interest for YRF:

- ◆ A focus on specific age groups
- ◆ A focus on key learning objectives
- ◆ Teaching strategies, including the use of computers
- ◆ Arrangements for providing supplementary education after school, during school and within the classroom
- ◆ Teacher training
- ◆ Work with parents.

4.1 Focusing on Specific Age Groups

Interventions with Preschool Children

Many educators believe in the importance of intervention in early childhood in order to enable children to enter school on an equal footing (Gazit and Yair, 2003). Extensive studies of preschool programs in the US found that the programs helped disadvantaged children become better prepared for the first grade and perform better in the critical early grades (Gilliam and Zigler, 2001; Ramey and Ramey, 2002;). However, other studies found that early childhood programs failed to achieve the desired impacts (Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, 2005). An important concern in implementing interventions for preschool children is that tools for assessing competencies among children may be unreliable; thus it is particularly difficult to target the interventions to the children who need them most (Barnett et al., 1999).

Some research indicates that early childhood interventions will not reduce later gaps in school (Anderson et al., 2003; Merrell and Tymms, 2005). In the absence of further interventions, the positive effects of interventions for children from disadvantaged homes cannot be expected to last for years, if environmental conditions of deprivation remain unchanged (McKey et al., 1985). For example, if parents are expected to help children with their homework and they fail to do so, for whatever reason (perhaps because, as immigrants, they do not know the language or the material), then their children will continue to be at a disadvantage relative to their classmates. Students in the *Head Start* project for preschoolers showed an immediate rise in their IQ scores that faded over the following years (Borman and Hewes, 2002).

Interventions with Elementary School Children

Many researchers stress that the years through third grade are the most critical time in children's personal and educational development. With kindergarten and elementary school children, the cultivation of literacy is especially important (Stegelin, 2004; Gambrell, 2004). Intervention at the early stages of entering the education system and language acquisition may help disadvantaged students acquire tools, skills and basic knowledge that may serve as a good basis for learning in all the following stages. Children who do not know how to read by the end of second grade are at very high risk for later school failure since they will not be able to learn with the rest of the class and will keep falling behind.

Working with young children with an emphasis on literacy is the basis of the *Success for All* (SFA) program (Slavin and Madden, 2000). This program defines a clear goal of achieving literacy by the third grade. In order to ensure that all children keep up with the class in the acquisition of basic skills, there is an emphasis on responsiveness; a student encountering difficulty receives assistance immediately, before gaps expand (Slavin and Madden, 1989). SFA was found to be effective (Slavin and Madden, 2000) and cost-effective, since students who took part in it reached higher achievement levels than did students in the control group at an equivalent cost (Borman and Hewes, 2002). Barr and Parrett (2001) reviewed numerous programs for students at risk and dropout prevention and concluded that programs to prevent school failure are most effective up through third grade and that they have the most potential to achieve long-term effects.

Interventions with Secondary School Children

Student achievements drop in junior high schools (Seidman et al., 1996; Rice, 1996) and this stage of schooling is often accompanied by learning problems, behavioral problems and a lower sense of competence (Grolnick et al., 2000). Students need to adjust to a changed school learning environment, which includes new demands, shifts in their position within social groups and different support systems. (Elias et al., 1985; Rice, 1997). Parental involvement and support at this stage is especially important (Rice, 1997).

Intervention programs may help students cope with the demands of junior high school (Elias et al., 1985; Rice, 1997), especially those students for whom parental support is limited. These programs include helping new **junior high school** students retain existing social contacts, training the **school** staff in conflict resolution, and ensuring that for each student there are specific staff members who can be approached for support.

For many disadvantaged youth, **high school** is the last chance to achieve a basic level of education. By this stage, many youth have suffered considerable frustration. Some programs report impressive success from interventions at this age in improving scholastic achievement, self-esteem and attitude toward teachers and school, and in reducing rates of drug and alcohol use.

It seems that the most effective programs intervene by targeting intensive services to a relatively small number of children (Barr and Parrett, 2001). For example, an evaluation of the Israeli *New Education Environment* (NEE) program for very weak students found positive impacts in many areas, including subjective school experience and scholastic achievement (Cohen-Navot, 2000). However, there is also evidence in the literature that interventions among junior high and high school students are not always effective. A US study that evaluated 21 federal programs implemented in junior high schools and high schools for dropout prevention concluded pessimistically that only a few of them showed significantly positive results (Dynarski and Gleason, 1998).

Instruction for “high stakes” testing can yield significant payoffs. In Israel, programs that prepare students to take the matriculation exams may have significant impacts because they set clear and relatively short-term goals. The benefit of investments at this stage is extremely practical and tangible for students – they can earn a matriculation certificate, which is their entry ticket to higher education. Lavy and Schlosser (2004) examined the effect of matriculation-focused intervention for underperforming students and found that the program increased the number of students eligible for a matriculation certificate in the participating schools. This increase is partially due to the success of the programs in targeting the intervention to those students most in need. The researchers wrote that “the results imply that for a not-too-outrageous cost, some disadvantaged or under-performing students can be helped to earn matriculation certificates...” (p. 24).

Attention to Transitions

For children of all ages, transitions pose special challenges. Scholastic and social performance of children may be hindered by an unsuccessful transition, and researchers maintain that many school adjustment problems stem from ignorance of the subject’s great importance (Neuman and Kagan, 1998). The transition to junior high school is considered especially stressful (Elias et al., 1985).

During this review of interventions for children of varying ages, we saw many intervention programs designed to prepare children for the entry into elementary school and junior high school: many of the early childhood programs focus on preparing children for first grade; interventions have also been developed to train students who are about to graduate from elementary school in problem-solving techniques and coping skills (Elias et al., 1985) For many schools, this is an important priority (Barr and Parrett, 2001).

Length of Exposure to the Interventions

There is a consensus in the literature that long-term support, rather than short-term intervention, is paramount (Gandara and Bial, 2001; Mckey, 1985; Mitchell et al., 1992). As noted, researchers have found that effective school readiness programs may have long-term effects if they are supplemented by continuing programs at school (Ramey and Ramey, 2002; Stegelin, 2004; Borman and Hewes, 2002). A follow-up study that examined the effects of interventions among children of various ages four to seven years after the interventions ended found that in most areas interventions were most effective when they began earlier (when the children were still in pre-school) and lasted longer (Campbell and Ramey, 1994). Another important reason for implementing interventions at the elementary and junior high school level – as opposed to high schools – is that there is thus more opportunity for the individual student to continue to participate in the program for a number of years, if he so requires.

4.2 Focusing on Basic Skills and Cognitive Strategies

Interventions that aim to impart and reinforce basic skills and cognitive strategies are very significant in promoting scholastic achievement (Lavy and Schlosser, 2004; Gambrell, 2004; Stegelin, 2004). Teaching language and reading skills is especially important because these skills

enable students to advance and achieve in all other school subjects. As we wrote in the previous section, the importance of basic skills is a key reason for working with young children, but students at all ages can benefit from these interventions.

Cognitive and "metacognitive" strategies enhance study skills, help students manage their own learning and strengthen reading comprehension (Waxman et al., 2001). Cognitive strategies are thinking patterns that aid students in reading and learning different subjects. For example, cognitive strategies that support reading include inferring the meaning of an unknown word from its context and asking oneself questions about an unclear reading passage. Learning and practicing cognitive strategies may help improve the reading skills and achievements of students with poor school achievement. These strategies are considered basic tools that may remain with students as they continue their education (Eggen and Kauchak, 1995). "Metacognitive" strategies refer to "the conscious awareness of one's own cognition and the conscious control of one's own learning" (Salem, 2004, p. 8). Researchers have found that teaching "metacognitive" strategies helps students learn more effectively (Bonds et al., 1992; Devine, 1993).

4.3 Arrangements for Providing Supplemental Learning Inputs

One key decision in planning education programs is whether to operate the program as supplemental inputs provided to students after school hours, as "pull-out programs" provided to targeted children outside the classroom (but during the school day), or as part of ongoing school functioning.

After-school Programs

As we saw in the previous section regarding YRF and similar organizations, the provision of additional scholastic instruction after school hours is very popular. Typically, students with difficulties or in need of the service are targeted and invited to receive supplemental learning inputs in the framework of small groups that meet after school hours. Research has found this strategy to be effective in raising scholastic achievements (see, for example, a recent study of a scholastic assistance program for Israeli-Ethiopian youth [Cohen-Navot et al., 2007]). Afternoon programs that promote students' development in scholastic, social and recreational areas and increase community involvement have been found to decrease the chances of dropping out (Peterson and Fox, 2004). In addition, these programs stretch the school day and prevent students from engaging in at-risk behaviors. This is especially important for children and youth whose parents are employed and who are left without care or supervision during the afternoon hours. (Barr and Parrett, 2001). A variation on the theme of out-of-school programming are interventions that are implemented during the summer break: Lavy and Sclosser (2004) found that summer schooling is effective in improving academic achievement among disadvantaged underperforming students.

After-school programs are considered relatively easy to implement. However, low attendance among participants may be a problem, as they are required to be at school during their "free

time." In addition, difficulties often arise in maintaining contact and coordination between the teachers in the after-school program and the teachers at the students' regular schools.

Moreover, Some professionals voice concerns that teachers may feel they are less responsible for student learning because there is after-school assistance. . When a teacher knows that a student will be receiving help in the afternoon from a supplemental program, he or she may feel that it is less critical to provide attention and other inputs during the school day.

Pull-out Programs

"Pull-out programs" target underperforming students and provide them with individual or group tutoring in a room other than the regular classroom during the school day. These programs are referred to as "pull-out programs" because they involve pulling the students out of their regular class for part of the day. The rationale behind pull-out programs is that they are an efficient way to provide those most in need with the extra help they require without interfering with the learning of the rest of the class or funding more intensive teaching resources for the class as a whole. This model is very common in the United States. In Israel, pull-out strategies are the main method for providing assistance to new immigrants and to children with special needs receiving "inclusive services" from specialist teachers under the Special Education law.

However, research regarding pull-out programs is mixed. There are a number of common problems in implementing pull-out programs (Archambault, 1989; Slavin and Madden, 1989; Gelzheiser et al., 1992):

- ♦ Teacher skills – in some cases, the personnel teaching the students may be less capable and experienced than the teachers in the class
- ♦ Coordination – often, staff and school material are not coordinated and there is a diffusion of responsibility
- ♦ Efficiency – students may lose instructional time if there is no pre-allocated place for study and timing is not coordinated.

For these reasons, researchers have suggested that pull-out programs should provide intensive inputs and aim to help students close gaps and return to class as soon as possible (Slavin and Madden, 1989). They should also implement measures to address or lessen the negative consequences of these drawbacks such as regular updates with teachers, joint planning of when to "pull-out" each students, etc.

Additional Instruction through Ongoing School Activity

A third type of arrangement aims to enhance the education inputs for disadvantaged children by changing the classroom management strategies of the regular school teachers, so that teachers provide more attention to underperforming students within the regular classroom. Strategies for this purpose include:

- ♦ co-teaching, whereby two or more teachers work side by side in the same classroom with students in small groups

- ♦ dividing the class into groups, often by ability, and having the groups study in different classrooms.

The rationale is that the regular classroom teachers are best acquainted with the children and their needs, especially in the lower grades. Students' curriculum and the demands from them can be adapted to individual needs by the classroom teacher, who can respond in an immediate and flexible manner to students' difficulties in class as they emerge. Moreover, providing additional learning inputs in the course of ongoing classroom activity is thought to reduce the risks of diffusion of responsibility and lack of coordination among teachers mentioned earlier in regard to the other types of arrangements for supplemental instruction. Researchers have also pointed to benefits for teachers in terms of a heightened sense of self-worth and opportunities for creativity and meaningful partnerships with other teachers (Cately and Cately, 2001).

The research regarding these strategies is mixed. A meta-analysis that reviewed 89 studies on co-teaching found that results varied greatly (Murawski and Swanson, 2001). Dieker and Murawski (2003) identified principles for successful co-teaching: implementation of the program from the beginning of the school year, clarification of evaluation measures, scheduling co-teaching at the beginning of the school day, and setting aside time for discussion and consultation among co-teachers.

There has also been considerable research on the effects of dividing classes into small groups. Ability-grouping has been the center of much controversy in the United States and Israel (Slavin, 1990).⁴ The main argument in favor of ability-grouping is that teachers find it easier to provide differential instruction in accordance with individual needs (Feldhusen, 1989). Those opposed to ability-grouping point to the possible disadvantages of the arrangement for the weaker students in the class, due to negative "labeling" that can cause lowered teacher expectations and low self esteem, a level of studies that may be too low, and the tendency to allocate weaker teachers to weaker students (Gamoren, 1989). The case for heterogeneous groups points to the advantage for weak students in learning alongside stronger students who can serve as behavioral models.

4.4 Teaching Strategies

The literature has identified some key principles for effective instruction of underperforming students:

Setting Clear and Attainable Goals for Students

Setting clear and attainable goals for students characterizes effective programs and schools (Druian and Butler, 2001). This is a particularly significant element for underperforming students because clear and attainable goals allow them to feel successful (MacIver, 1991). In addition, giving feedback and positive reinforcement to students has been identified as one of the factors of school efficacy (Sammons et al., 1995). This intervention strategy is designed to address the

⁴ In Israel, government policy limits ability-grouping to key subjects in the elementary and junior high schools.

problem posed by traditional evaluation methods, which are not sensitive enough to changes in underperforming students' performance: An underperforming student may advance greatly but still fail in relation to the rest of the class, which may lead to frustration and even despair (Legters and McDill, 1994).

Individualized Learning and Ongoing Assessment

Individualized learning and ongoing assessment are particularly effective with at-risk students, who often need personalized learning material and teaching methods. This method of teaching requires consideration of each student's academic abilities and motivation (Switzer, 2004), with emphasis on personalized and experiential teaching. This intervention strategy also includes thorough monitoring and documentation of the students' progress. Programs that adopt this model show compelling results (Slavin and Madden, 1989). Monitoring of students' scholastic performance has been identified as a contributing factor to successful interventions with both young children and youth (Slavin and Madden, 1989; Barr and Parrett, 2001; Sammons et al, 1995; Drian and Butler, 2001)

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning in small groups, which combines group goals and individual accountability, has shown positive results both in scholastic performance and in confidence and self-esteem (Barr and Parrett, 2001; Slavin and Madden, 1989). In cooperative learning, teachers work with both homogenous and heterogeneous groups in terms of the children's academic level. New skills and knowledge are taught in the homogeneous groups and then practiced and reinforced in the heterogeneous groups. As with individualized learning strategies, there is frequent monitoring of student progress - first by the members of the group, and then by the teacher.

Effective cooperative learning promotes individual accountability and social skills, as well as the ability to learn from the learning experience (Foster and Shirley, 2004). Cooperative learning is especially beneficial for students at risk of dropping out because it addresses the element of social isolation. Waxman and et al. (2004) found that students from minority groups prefer cooperative learning to competitive learning and that, in many cases, this teaching strategy is responsive to cultural differences.

Individual Work with Tutors

Programs that provide inputs to individual children by tutors were found to be effective in improving scholastic performance, especially among elementary school students with difficulties in reading and arithmetic (Slavin and Madden, 1989; Barr and Parrett, 2001). Other positive outcomes include improved motivation for learning, boosted confidence and more positive school behavior. Because individual lessons require extensive resources of manpower, many tutoring programs utilize peers and adult and peer volunteers to provide the tutoring. When programs employ volunteers, they may be especially low in cost. Thus, individual tutoring by adults or peers was found to be more efficient in cost-benefit terms than were reduced class size, computer-assisted learning and a longer school day (Levin et al., 1984; 1986).

There are other important implications to the use of volunteers: when tutors are peers, their own scholastic performance may also improve. However, relying on volunteers may be problematic, as their work may be sporadic.⁵

Technology-assisted Learning

Teaching with the aid of technology, computers and multimedia has been found to be effective in motivating and improving scholastic achievement among students, in general, and among disadvantaged students, in particular (Waxman, 2001; Hertz-Lazarowitz and Bar-Natan, 2002). The main advantages of computer-assisted teaching include individual work at an individual pace, immediate feedback and active learning. Computer-assisted teaching gives teachers more time to teach students individually and reduces the time the teachers spend interacting with the entire class (Waxman et al., 2001).

Often, schools with disadvantaged populations require greater access to technology. Teachers often resist using the new technology both because of concerns that they will not be competent in its utilization and because of concerns about the organizational changes required for introducing computers into everyday work (Terrel et al., 1995; Heekap, 2001). Effective programs need to support teachers in their efforts to best use the new technology for learning. In addition, ongoing investment of resources is necessary for upkeep of the computers and technology support.

In order for disadvantaged students to reap the most benefits from computer-assisted learning at school, their access to computers after school should also be improved. The *Computer for Every Child* program in Israel provides disadvantaged children with computers for their homes. The evaluation found that the children make good use of the computer, and there was preliminary evidence of improvement in these students' learning behavior (Ben Rabi et al., 2001).

4.5 Teacher Training

High-quality teachers are of major importance to students' scholastic achievement levels, especially for those who experience learning difficulties (Reimer, 2004). Studies that examined the relationship between background characteristics of the teachers (e.g., education, experience and salary level) and student achievement levels have failed to produce conclusive results (Angrist and Lavy, 2001). On the other hand, studies have shown that the quality of the teachers' work, and especially factors related to classroom management, are the best predictors of students' success (Reimer, 2004; Wang et al., 1994; Rhoton and Stiles, 2002).

These findings underscore the importance of providing high quality training to students at teachers' colleges. Nevertheless, many teachers lack the necessary skills to work effectively with all their students, especially those with special difficulties. Thus, it is not surprising that

⁵ Note, that if the program uses a "pull-out" strategy, then it may be affected by some of the issues discussed in the next section.

successful schools in disadvantaged areas are characterized by large resource investments in teacher training programs (Barr and Parrett, 2001).

The goal of teacher training programs is to improve management or teacher functioning through improved knowledge of the subject matter, competence with instructional methods, skills in interpersonal work with students and parents, and teamwork. The rationale behind this type of intervention is that successful teacher training programs have the capacity for greater impact than do direct services with individual students: If teachers work more effectively they will be able to improve the education of all their students in all subjects, both this year and for years to come. Moreover, teacher training programs can also impact teacher well-being in terms of an increased sense of competence and self-efficacy.

While some research has shown that teacher training has improved scholastic achievement levels (Reimer, 2004; Cohen-Navot, 2000; Gaziel, 2001; Olshtein and Hatab, 2000), the findings of other research is mixed (Angrist and Lavy, 2001). This is because teacher training interventions may be of low quality and are often difficult to implement (Reimer, 2004). Problems of quality exist when the contents of training programs are fragmented and lack coherency; ignore knowledge about best practices, and fail to support teachers in their everyday work (Reimer, 2004; Sparks, 2002).

Research also documents difficulties in effective implementation of teacher training programs (Kedzior and Fifield, 2004; Birman et al., 2001; Supovitz and Zief, 2000; Reimer, 2004). Common obstacles include time constraints and rigid school scheduling, which make it difficult for teachers to attend the training sessions, resistance by teachers to changes in the way they work, and skepticism about the potential value of the training. Ever-present time pressures may encourage short interventions.

Effective teacher training programs should be coherent and integrated, and have a well-built comprehensive curriculum based on state-of-the art knowledge. The training should relate to everyday teacher practice and address issues and problems that are meaningful to the teachers in doing their job. Effective teacher training programs also include ongoing coaching.

Training programs that aim to promote significant change in teacher behavior and professional practice need to be long term (Kerka, 2003; Reimer, 2004). The training program should enable teachers to practice what they learn - e.g., it should include elements such as coaching, learning groups and practice (Reimer, 2004). Thus, an important condition for successful teacher training implementation is the availability of resources for the whole course of the program. Birman and et al.(2001) have written that the extent of resources required is typically twice the amount that is allocated. The extent of time and resources required will be a function of the goals and contents of the training program. For example, evaluations of training programs aimed at promoting more effective work with students at-risk and new immigrants found that the first year of the interventions was mainly devoted to changing attitudes and imparting information; that

significant behavioral change by most teachers was often achieved only during the second year of program implementation; and that additional time (years three and four) was important for further enhancement of the new approach (Cohen-Navot, 2003; Lavenda et al., 2003).

4.6 Work with Parents

Today it is widely recognized that parental support and involvement in education are important for school adjustment and scholastic success (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Barnett et al., 1999). Studies indicate that when children feel their parents are interested in their schoolwork and support their efforts, they do better at school and have more confidence and motivation (Mapp, 2004). Wang and et al. (1994) found that a supportive home and parental involvement in the learning process (e.g., checking that the child does his homework, taking an interest in what goes on in school) are very important for school learning. Thus practitioners and researchers alike maintain that work by teachers with parents is very important (Baker and Soden, 1998; Barr and Parrett, 2001; Sammons et al., 1995; Mapp, 2004). In addition, intervention programs with pre-school and elementary school children produced better results when parents were involved (Mitchell et al., 1992)

Many schools seek to promote contact with parents, but in reality avoid letting parents take meaningful roles in determining school policy (Friedman and Bar, 1988). In fact, there is confusion and a lack of knowledge about how to achieve effective parental involvement at schools (Baker and Soden, 1998). Teachers often find it difficult to maintain meaningful contact with parents of children with difficulties, as teachers and parents alike may blame each other for the child's failure; parents may feel alienated from the school and teachers may prefer to maintain that distance. A study of a training program designed to promote teacher work with at-risk students found that effective work with parents was especially difficult to achieve by many of the teachers (Cohen-Navot, 2000).

Often, parents of children from minority populations may encounter difficulties in their contacts with schools and parental participation at school events is lower at schools with especially poor or minority student populations (Carey et al., 1998). A key element in working with parents of disadvantaged children is sensitivity to the diverse cultures of immigrant and marginal groups. Sometimes, the values these children hold may not be compatible with school values – These children include, for example, those whose families expect them to miss school in order to baby sit for younger siblings or whose families punish them if they do not strike back when hit. Children may come from families that distrust the school or are even hostile toward it. Cultural sensitivity enables teachers to understand the needs and communication of their students and their parents (Lavenda et al., 2003) and has been found to be related to better scholastic achievement (Waxman et al., 2001). Sever (1997) found that an Israeli project that included intercultural mediation was effective and cost-efficient. The *School Development* program emphasizes cultural sensitivity through a focus on cultural and social gaps, and on establishing a good relationship between the school, on the one hand, and the students and their families, on the other (Barr and Parrett, 2001).

4.7 Implementation Makes the Difference!

From the wealth of research surveyed in this chapter, we can learn that many strategies *may* work. Interventions can be effective with children of all ages, from pre-school through secondary school. There are a number of instructional approaches that have been proven to be effective, including technology-supported techniques. In addition, instruction may take place either after school or during the school day, and either outside the classroom or within, and the focus of interventions may be students, teachers or parents. All of these strategies rest on solid rationales, and interventions to promote them have received some empirical support. On the other hand, no one intervention strategy has been proven to be consistently effective.

Whether a program is effective depends on the quality of implementation. There are a number of general principles for effective implementation:

- ◆ Quality implementation requires considerable expertise, appropriate targeting, competent staff and ongoing monitoring of students' progress
- ◆ Programs can fall short of achieving desired impacts because of failure to successfully address practical considerations and constraints
- ◆ Long-term exposure to the intervention is preferable to short-term support;
- ◆ Quality implementation usually requires the considerable resources demanded by long-term implementation at the program site
- ◆ Strong partnerships with schools are essential to ensure that program services are utilized effectively. Collaboration with the school staff and with the staff of other supplemental programs is important for maximizing the value of the work and programs provided by all parties.

Different types of programs require different implementation strategies and emphases. For example:

- ◆ Programs which provide instruction after school require ongoing collaboration between program and school staff.
- ◆ Programs which provide instruction during the school day, such as pull-out programs and co-teaching, require continuous and frequent coordination of practical details
- ◆ Interventions with disadvantaged and minority populations require special knowledge ("cultural sensitivity") and methods
- ◆ Teacher training programs require management support in creating time for teachers to participate

Predisposing school factors can help predict implementation success. These factors can often be checked in advance, before implementation is underway. They include (Cohen-Navot and Lavenda, 2003):

- ◆ whether the school shares the approach to education of the intervention
- ◆ involvement of the school principal in the program
- ◆ the strength of the existing organizational structure (e.g. clarity of roles and responsibilities, etc.)

- ◆ the willingness on the part of the school to allocate resources (mainly time)
- ◆ the competency and commitment of the program coordinator
- ◆ the existence of other interventions in the school at the same time
- ◆ In addition, support from other management and supervisory departments - such as the municipal education department, Ministry of Education supervisors, etc.- can also contribute greatly to effective implementation and long-term sustainability of the program.

5. Directions for YRF Development

The review of the education system highlights the fact that much significant work remains to be done in the education of disadvantaged children and youth in Israel. YRF has matured as an organization and is now in a position to consider new and different directions for future operation in accordance with its goals and values. On the following pages, we will briefly summarize three key issues for the upcoming strategic discussions: the current YRF role, changes in the education system that pose special opportunities for YRF development, and key options for future activity.

5.1 The Current YRF Role

YRF currently works with disadvantaged Jewish children through the direct provision of services - mainly after-school supplemental learning inputs in key subjects. A standard instructional technique has been developed that ensures quality classes by all teachers. Students' progress is monitored and there is successful partnering with local authorities and other non-profit organizations. The advantages of the current YRF role are that the organization has the capacity to meet highly prevalent needs, and positive results are highly predictable. Moreover, the organization has the capacity to monitor and ensure quality. Thus, YRF can quickly, and with relatively low costs, make an impact at a school among a relatively large number of students.

The limitations of the current YRF role are that the impact is largely limited to the students being served. Expansion is limited by the availability of competent teachers. YRF programs often compete with other programs, as many organizations work with the same target population and in the same communities. The stress on low financial overhead and service provision have limited opportunities for the dissemination of YRF expertise beyond those directly involved with program operation.

5.2 Changes in the Education System: Key Opportunities and Challenges

Greater acceptance of YRF principles: Many of the principles currently being adopted by the education system coincide with thinking and programming already entrenched at YRF - for example, the stress on structured lessons to ensure quality, increased teacher competence and ongoing monitoring of student progress. This may predict more demand for YRF programs and greater capacity to form strategic partnerships.

Changes in the market for programs by non-profit organizations: Budgetary reform, accountability demands and greater school autonomy will all impact the market for non-profit organization programs at the schools. Budgetary reforms are increasing the resources available

for schools with disadvantaged populations – which are the target population of YRF - meaning there may be more resources available at schools that could be mobilized for joint programs. At the same time, greater pressure is being placed on schools and municipalities to improve student learning and prove that they have done so. Some schools may turn to outside experts like YRF for support and to mobilize additional resources. However, the greater autonomy granted to schools on how to use their funds means that schools will be able to choose between spending on outside interventions, on the one hand, and strengthening school staff through more staff positions or staff training, on the other.

The growth of NGO involvement in education for the disadvantaged: The increase in non-profit organization activity points to several possible channels for future collaboration. Firstly, there may be more NGO resources available for the funding by other non-profit organizations of YRF programs. Secondly, YRF may be able to contribute to programs provided by other non-profit organizations by sharing the expert knowledge it develops. Similarly, more NGO activity may contribute to the development of expertise and innovation by others, and collaboration can enable utilization of these developments for the enhancement of YRF programs.

Changing relations with the public system: While the public system holds responsibility for education, NGOs can have a significant impact on the learning of disadvantaged children through the additional resources and expertise they mobilize, their unique ways of operation alongside the public system, and the special concerns they promote. Another key challenge for non-profit organizations is in effectively working with the public system and creating meaningful dialogue at all levels – national, local and school. YRF needs to continue to build and expand existing collaborations. The government, for its part, is expressing increasing awareness of the need to formulate better policy for working with NGOs, including mechanisms for licensing and monitoring. It is not clear how this will impact future YRF programming and activity.

The proliferation of programs at the schools: Today, the many programs for disadvantaged students that are offered to schools are often implemented without sufficient planning and coordination at the school level and the result may be unnecessary waste or redundancy. A key challenge for school leadership, and YRF and other non-profit organizations which work with them, is to ensure allocation of services among different students so that collective efforts reach as many children as possible in the most efficient.

Trends in the distribution of programs: At the national level, the growing rise in non-profit programs for disadvantaged students needs to be supported by more systematic planning by the public system, as a basis for rational and effective allocation of services among different populations. For its part, YRF may decide to focus more on populations that have substantial needs but are receiving relatively little attention from other organizations.

The re-organization of the school week: Schools, especially those in disadvantaged communities, are undergoing a transition to longer school days, through the YOCHAI legislation or the partial

pilot of the Dovrat reform. Lengthening the school day favors more in-school interventions: There will be less student time available after school, and as more teachers work longer days, it will become more difficult to find the highly competent teachers that YRF requires. On the other hand, teachers and students will be at school for more hours each day, so the potential for introducing programming during school hours will be increased. It is important to note that even with longer school days, opportunities will remain for several hours of after-school programming each day. If the school week becomes shortened to five days, Fridays will become available for supplemental instruction.

5.3 Key Options for Future Programs

The review of the professional literature clearly demonstrated that there is no best way to support education for disadvantaged children and youth. Rather, many interventions can have important and positive impacts if the implementation process is of high quality. Quality implementation includes factors such as expertise in the subject matter and in working with the specific target population, appropriate targeting, competent professional staff, ongoing monitoring of student progress, effective collaboration with the school, and, in many cases, lengthy provision of the service.

The following are specific options to consider:

1. *More focus on work with children in the early grades of elementary school:* The literature strongly recommends working with children from the earliest grades, with a strong emphasis on literacy, in order to give them a solid basis for all future school learning. There is a compelling argument to helping children get off to a good start, rather than letting them flounder for years, only to finally bail them out at the end of high school. For long-term impacts, it is important to begin work with children when difficulties begin, and to continue for as long as gaps are likely to develop.
2. *Work with Arab children and youth.* In Israel, Arab children are a sizeable minority, constituting one-fourth of all children, and have by far the poorest education outcomes, as measured by enrollment rates and scholastic achievement. Moreover, current non-profit programming seems to be less available for this population. Work with Arab students will enable YRF to provide services for a population with many unmet needs.

Such work will require serious adaptations by YRF, including the recruitment of Arab-speaking teachers and the preparation of teaching materials and standardized tests in Arabic.

3. *More teacher training.* Teacher training programs enable impacts to be expanded to include all of the children being taught by the teachers. Much research indicates that teachers look for help in classroom management techniques, and future YRF teacher training could capitalize on experience in this area. Schools with additional resources for improving work with disadvantaged students may be interested in collaborating with YRF for this purpose.

Moreover, the move to longer school days favors more reliance on work done by the regular classroom teachers, and teacher training programs are a key way to support their work.

However, effective implementation of teacher training programs requires ongoing implementation over a number of years. As in all areas, close coordination with the schools is necessary to ensure that the training meets the needs of the school staff, and that school management creates the conditions that will enable teachers to fully participate in the training program.

4. *Work with children and youth at risk whose school problems also include low motivation and school adjustment problems.* By providing services to children with more complex needs and school problems, YRF will be able to serve students for whom schools are often at a loss regarding ways to proceed. Other supplemental programs for providing support are often unavailable, as many non-profit organizations prefer not to work with them. Thus, YRF will be able to move into a section of the education "market" that is relatively open, and provide for needs that are often unmet.

Effective interventions with children and youth at risk will require a more intensive multi-dimensional approach that includes a variety of inputs in emotional and social areas, and not just in scholastic areas.

5. *Work with parents.* The literature reports that parental involvement in intervention programs may contribute to program success; thus, expanding YRF programs to include work with parents has the potential to enhance the programs' impacts. Moreover, children and youth from disadvantaged families, especially new immigrants and children with behavioral and school adjustment problems, can all benefit from interventions designed to help their parents interact more effectively with the school system. However, work with parents of marginal populations is not always successful and YRF will need to develop expertise in this area.
6. *Dissemination of expert knowledge.* YRF may consider moving beyond its present focus on direct service delivery and apply efforts to the development of innovative intervention models and dissemination of expert knowledge. This would be a way to contribute to the education system as a whole, as such knowledge could ultimately contribute to the operation of the system as a whole, and capitalize on the organizational ethos of high quality front-running work. However, such efforts would raise program overhead costs as they require the more considerable funds demanded by research and development units.

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