

Review of the Arad Educational Intervention (Phase 2)

A four-year intervention, 2011/2 - 2014/5 school years

Implemented in the 5 elementary schools of Arad:
Avishur and Chalamish (continuing from Phase 1),
Ye'elim-Ofarim, Leva'ot and Tlalim

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Components of the Intervention

Starting in 2011/2 school year, the Arad Education Intervention has enabled the following supplemental activities:

- **An extended school day with a hot lunch to all five elementary schools**, which significantly contributes to improving the parents' earning ability, and protects and improves the quality of the children's recreational time.
- **Additional study hours in core subjects** in an effort to narrow learning gaps and raise the overall test results of the school.
- **Individualized therapeutic treatments** based on mappings to identify children in need, be that on the academic or emotional/behavioral fronts.
- **Strengthening** the city's policy of a **distinctive educational focus ("magnet") for each school**, by enabling additional activities and renovating school premises of relevance to the magnet.
- **Physical upgrade** of recreation, sport and study areas, following mapping of school needs.
- **Guidance and in-service training hours to school principals and teaching staff** to improve study methods and school management.
- **Enrichment activities** to broaden the children's understanding of the world and realms of interest, as part of improving the school climate.
- **Activities for parents** with their children, to build parent's involvement in the educational process, as part of improving scholastic and behavioral areas.

In the current school year, the Intervention is reaching 1,387 children in the five schools.

Main Accomplishments

1. Arad's schools have moved up from "underachieving" status

Schools that were below average, or at the low end of the normal range, are now well within the average range, with children achieving grades in core subjects of 70-80. For example, the schools' Math grades increased to at an average of 78 and in Hebrew Language to 76.

2. 85% rise in number of students heading to Excellence classes

There is a **dramatic rise in the number of students accepted into Excellence classes in junior-high**. This year there are 35 children (one class), next year there will be 65 children (two classes) – **an astonishing rise of 85%**. These classes require students to reach MoE defined standards in Math, Science, Hebrew and English. Children in Excellence classes are on track to gain a top-quality matriculation that grants access to competitive academic programs.

The transformation in the quality of elementary school education in Arad has been achieved by adding dozens of teaching hours per school per week and by close supervision and guidance of teachers by an experienced pedagogical mentor.

3. 19% grade improvement among the weakest students

In one year, children at the lower end of the achievement scale improved their grades by 19%, effectively **bringing them up from "failure" to "back on track"** on the scale of grades (from 54 to 64). Such improved school performance leads to more self-confidence and better self-image.

4. 36% drop in students moving to Special Education

As a rule, children whose needs cannot be met in the mainstream education system are shifted out to the Special Education system. Over the course of the Intervention, the number of children referred out of the five schools into a Special Education school is steadily dropping – an **overall decrease of 36%**.

This was achieved by ensuring that all of the 150 children identified to have issues that impede learning – a learning disability, behavioral or emotional problem – are receiving individualized therapeutic attention. With this help, the life-effecting transfer to Special Ed has been avoided.

5. Increased confidence in Arad's education system: twice as many children in Arad attend "school of choice"

Ministry of Education data show that twice as many children in Arad – **one in three children** – attend schools outside their registration zone (closest to home) compared to the national average. This is a proof of parents moving from apathy to involvement regarding their children's education as they actively choose which school would best suit their children.

Parental confidence is also shown by the fact that when a semi-private Ultra-Orthodox school closed last year, all 40 students came to Telalim, Arad's state-religious school. The parents heard positive reports of Telalim and chose it (instead of one outside Arad), even though its outlook is different from the one their children had previously attended.

This fundamental change in attitude can be attributed to the investments in strengthening the distinctive magnets of each school, facilitating the replacement of principals in two schools, upgrading the physical infrastructure and providing professional guidance and in-house training of teachers.

6. Broader educational choices for students: continuing the magnet through to high school

The municipal education bureau is opening **new matriculation majors** which allow children to express at high-school level the interest, knowledge and skills in Science, Communications and Music that they learned in elementary school.

This step to create an educational continuum is directly related to the strengthening of the magnets, which provide a platform for significant learning via projects and other innovative pedagogy.

7. 46% of children enjoy a long school day with hot lunch

For the first time in Arad, the option of a school day until 4 pm is available to all elementary school children. This platform of in-school time is used for additional teaching hours, homework preparation as well as enrichment and social activities, giving children the chance to develop talents in fields such as drama, sport and arts. The hot meal component significantly contributes to improving children's ability to concentrate and reduces the economic burden on parents.

8. School is a happier, calmer and more productive place

In response to questionnaires regarding school climate, contribution of physical upgrade and general attitude to school, each of the three target groups of teachers, parents and students reported high satisfaction. The better customized and more aesthetic spaces for learning, playing and gathering have influenced the school climate and raised motivation among teachers and children.