



# **Comprehensive Interventions in Elementary Schools**

## **Executive Summary**

December 2014

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### **Program Description**

As part of Rashi's activity to strengthen Israel's public education system, the Foundation initiated a range of comprehensive interventions in elementary schools in the geographic and social periphery, which are operated by its subsidiary the Association for Change in Education. These interventions aim to instill in the children confidence in their abilities and assist in developing skills that will enable them to succeed in school and beyond.

The comprehensive interventions were implemented in dozens of schools nationwide in different formats based on several original programs. Two years ago they were all brought together under the Revadim Initiative, where the experience and knowledge gained by Rashi and its partners in all the comprehensive interventions is being used in order to identify the predictors of success.

### **Methodology**

The Szold Institute was commissioned to conduct an evaluation study of the comprehensive interventions in elementary schools. This study was based on a preliminary stage of interviews with staff of the various programs and school representatives. In addition, questionnaires were answered by school principals (N=35), teachers (N=164), program coordinators (N=32), pupils (N=1194) and parents (N=111) in 35 schools.

As part of the study, an indicator was developed for overall contribution of the comprehensive intervention, which reflects its combined impact on educational achievements, school management, teaching skills, children's social-emotional functioning, school climate and acquisition of learning skills.

### **The Research Goal**

The research was designed to provide research-based, objective information about the best operating model within the Revadim Initiative. To this end, several objectives were defined:

1. To examine the way in which the intervention was incorporated within the schools, given that there are significant differences among them (in the type of program, its duration, the application of program components, and the school's socio-economic level).

2. To examine the program's contribution in different areas, as seen by the target groups (school principals, teachers, students and parents).
3. To examine the level of satisfaction with the program among the target groups.

### **Main Findings**

- There is consensus among parents, pupils, teachers and principals that the comprehensive interventions make a significant contribution towards improving the overall functioning of the school and its pupils, especially in strengthening weak students in terms of educational achievements and social-emotional functioning.
- The study found that the longer the program operates in the school, the higher its effectiveness. Thus, schools that are new to the program (up to one year) gained an overall score of 76%, while veteran schools (over two years) gained an average of 84%. Moreover, it was found that as the scope of application of program components increased, so did the level of perceived contribution.
- The program components that were found to have the most impact on the schools' overall functioning are: individual and group reinforcement, splitting classes, the program coordinators, and the individualized therapies.
- The principals view the program mainly as strengthening academic abilities, and to a lesser degree as addressing emotional and social needs.
- An examination of perceived contribution reveals that the teachers regard the additional class hours as helping to improve the achievements of all the students (an average score of 5.24 on a scale of 1-7). The program's contribution to enriching the school curriculum was also highly appreciated by the teachers. The students, too, believed that the program contributed to an improvement in their achievements (an average score of 5.32).
- The various target groups perceived the contribution of the extended school day as significant, but each group views the contribution differently: the staff (principals, teachers, coordinators) see the extended school day as a way to protect the children from wandering the streets in the afternoons, while the parents said that it has a positive effect on their ability to earn a living.
- The teaching staff viewed the lunch component as contributing significantly to reducing the economic burden on parents and to the students' ability to concentrate in lessons. The children and parents also valued the importance of school lunch.
- Out of the 21 program components, those of "individual educational reinforcement" and "lessons reinforcement" were applied in all the sample schools. The component of "program coordinator" was applied in all schools but one. The coordinators reported that the school day was extended in only 80% of schools.

- Satisfaction levels were high for most program components. The satisfaction was especially high for the components of lessons, reinforcement and enrichment. The exceptions to this were the components of “physical infrastructure” and “teaching assistants”, for which the satisfaction was relatively low.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The comprehensive interventions combine various holistic approaches, based on the understanding that the student’s success at school is connected not only to learning skills and educational achievements, and that the child must be viewed in a multi-dimensional perspective as a person with a whole range of needs and talents. Similarly, the school must address the various needs of all its pupils in a systemic manner.

It is clear that the program operates best with regard to extending the school day, the lunch program and improving the school climate, as well as the educational reinforcements and individualized therapies. However, in developing the school teams, teaching assistants, parent involvement, cooperation with the local authority and the community, the program is perceived as not making sufficient impact.