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מאייזרס - ג'וינט - מכון ברוקדייל



Executive Summary


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 עיריית פתח תקווה

 ג'וינט-מכון ברוקדייל
המרכז לילדים ולנוער

**תכנון אסטרטגי של שירותים
ותכניות לבני נוער בעיר פתח תקווה:
ממצאי המחקר והמלצות ועדת ההיגוי**

פאולה כאהן-סטרבצ'נסקי • ליאת ירוביץ



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Foreword

This report presents the findings of a survey of the characteristics, needs, and responses to needs of youth in Petah Tikva. This survey, the first of its kind in Petah Tikva, was conducted by the JDC-Brookdale Institute at the request of the Petah Tikva Municipality. Its paramount goal was to establish the infrastructure for municipal policy regarding youth, and for the development of local intervention programs for youth, in general, and youth at risk, in particular.

The survey focused on the following: the youths' characteristics; recreational and leisure activities; overall sense of well-being; relations with peers; patterns of risk behavior; perceptions of their neighborhood and the city; relations with their parents and other adults; attitude toward school; patterns of employment; plans for the future; contact with counseling and other services for youth; the integration into Israel of immigrant youth; and the system of services for youth in Petah Tikva. Since completion of the survey, and in light of its findings, efforts have been made to plan programs and services for youth in Petah Tikva.

Data were collected from both youth and key staff of local services for youth. Questionnaires were completed by a total of 680 youth, who attend local junior high schools, regular high schools, and alternative frameworks.¹ Eight focus groups were held with youth who attend non-school frameworks (e.g., youth homes, HILA, Al-Sam). In addition, face-to-face interviews were conducted with key professionals from various services. In analyzing the data, emphasis was placed on the unique characteristics of four different groups among the youth: students at junior high schools; students at regular high schools; students in alternative frameworks; and immigrant students from the former Soviet Union. We also analyzed the findings according to gender and age.

Based on the findings of the study, a process was begun of municipal planning of programs and services for youth, which was monitored by the research team. The programs that were recommended respond to a number of the issues that arose from the study findings regarding violence among youth, alienation from school, recreation, and the system of services for youth, among others. Some of these programs and services are being implemented in the 2003/04 school year.

Following we present the principal findings, according to the various issues examined and the different population groups. In addition, we will present the principal recommendations that arose in the wake of the planning process.

¹ The alternative frameworks we studied included MABAR and ETGAR classes (formerly known as "*hechven*" classes) in regular high schools, and the AMAL I, Michlala L'Minhal, Na'amat Petah Tikva, Ulpanit Re'ut, AMIT, Gardening and Landscape Architecture, and Kfar Avraham Yeshiva Schools. In consultation with the steering committee, we decided not to include AMAL II among the alternative frameworks, even though it is a technological school. Since this school has strict admissions criteria and offers a high level of instruction, its student body is more similar to that of a regular high school than to that of an alternative framework.

Principal Findings, by Issue

Characteristics of the Youth and Their Families

More than half (54%) of the youth who were included in the survey are girls; 86% were born in Israel, and 13% were born in the former Soviet Union. (This percentage is similar to that of children born in the former Soviet Union among all children newborn to age 18 in Petah Tikva: 15.3%.) The age range of the youth who participated in the study was 12-18. The percentage of younger youth (ages 12-15) is greater among the immigrants (54%) than among the non-immigrants (41%). A decisive majority (98%) of the youth are Jews, half of whom defined themselves as secular, one-third of whom defined themselves as traditional, and a smaller percentage (14%) of whom defined themselves as religious or very religious.

Eleven percent of the youth live in a single-parent family, compared to 9.5% of all of the children newborn to age 18 in Petah Tikva, and to 8% of all of the children in Israel. The youths' mothers were found to be more educated than their fathers: 48% of the mothers had post-secondary education, compared to 41% of the fathers.

Patterns of Participation in Afternoon and Recreational Frameworks

Leisure time is a central component of the life of any individual, and constitutes a most significant portion of the lives of youth. In recent decades, certain social processes – such as an increase in consumption, the development of recreational service industries, and the burgeoning of the media and communications – have contributed to making leisure time a fundamental yet fairly complex issue in western society.

The findings of the study indicate that a large percentage of Petah Tikva's youth participate in extracurricular activities, relative to all youth in Israel: 45% of all of the youth in the city and 43% of those ages 14-17 participate in some such activity, compared to 27% of the youth these ages in Israel, according to national data. The percentage of boys who participate in extracurricular activities exceeds that of girls (52% versus 40%, respectively). The greater percentage of participation of boys is a result of the large percentage (78%) of them who participate in sports, which occupy about three-quarters of those youth in the city who participate in some extracurricular activity.

The rate of participation in other organized recreational activities was found to be less than that of participation in extracurricular activities: 42% of the youth attend a club to meet friends; 20% had attended an event or party organized by the municipality during the month preceding the survey; 36% had volunteered in some framework; and 12% were members of a youth movement at the time of the survey.

The percentage of girls who participate in a youth movement is almost three times that of boys (18% and 6%, respectively). The percentage of younger youth who belong to a youth movement is much lower than the national rate (8% and 26%, respectively, among students in seventh grade, and 13% and 26%, respectively, among students in ninth grade). The rate of youth movement

membership among youth in tenth grade in Petah Tikva is identical to the national rate (15%). It was found that while the youth are willing to join a youth movement, they tend to "drop out" after a short while. This was found to be particularly true of the secular youth movements, such as the Scouts (11% belong to this movement at present, compared to 38% in the past), and "*HaNoar HaOved v'HaLomed*" (less than 6% at present, compared to 20% in the past).

Regarding voluntarism, it was found that one-third (30%) of the youth had never volunteered, and that girls volunteered more than boys.

The two most popular places among youth, where they spend the majority of their free time with friends, are the mall (64%), and the neighborhood (including at home) (45%). Slightly less than one-third (30%) of the youth spend time in public parks, and a similar percentage (32%) spend time away from Petah Tikva (32%). More than one-fifth (22%) spend time downtown, and a smaller percentage (8%) spend time at a kiosk.² The computer is chief among home recreational activities, with 88% of the youth reporting making some use of a computer. Watching television is also a popular recreational activity at home: About one-quarter of the youth watch television more than three hours a day.

Both the youth and professionals cautioned that Petah Tikva lacks places where youth can spend free time, in general, and Friday nights, in particular.

Overall Sense of Well-being and Self-image

As part of the study, examination was made of the youths' overall sense of well-being and self-image – both indicators of mental health. As the mental health of youth is influenced by all areas of their lives – social, scholastic, and familial – and by their functioning in these areas, the importance of a positive self-image can not be underestimated.

The findings indicate that one-fifth of the youth feel helpless sometimes, often, or always, and that 28% of them feel confident only sometimes, infrequently, or never. Half of the youth feel very healthy, and an even greater proportion (61%) of them feel that they look good or very good. Overall sense of well-being and self-image decline with age, and negative feelings are more prevalent among girls than among boys. These two trends were also found among all students in Israel.

Peer Relations

Examination of the youths' relationships with their peers reveals that most of them have two or more close friends (94%), have someone to spend time with when they wish (97%), and are part of a group of friends who spend time together (85%). A relatively small percentage reported extreme loneliness: 6% of all of the youth felt that other students did not want to be with them, and reported remaining alone more than twice during the school year.

² A so-called "*pitzutzia*", which sells soft drinks, candy, cigarettes, and the like, and is open until late at night.

Along with the contribution to an overall sense of well-being that arises from belonging to a peer group, we cannot ignore that 43% of the youth claim that they and their friends sometimes or often encourage each other to do things that are dangerous or prohibited.

Nearly 70% of those born in Israel reported that they have at least one immigrant friend. In general, girls exhibit greater openness to immigrants than do boys: A greater percentage of non-immigrant girls (72%) than boys (65%) reported having at least one friend (of either gender) who was an immigrant. The percentage of immigrants who reported having at least one friend who was not an immigrant was larger than either of these percentages (91%).

Risk Behaviors

In the framework of the study, data were also collected about a variety of risk behaviors, such as involvement in violence, alcohol consumption, smoking, and drug abuse. Examination of patterns of violence reveals that about one-quarter of all of the students believe there is a great or very great deal of teasing, harassment, or bullying at their school. This attitude is more prevalent among students under 15 who attend junior high schools (34%) than among older students (18%). The findings indicate that (both immigrant and non-immigrant) youth age 15 and under are more often victims of violence, but that there is no difference in the degree of violent behavior among these youth and youth age 16 and over.

The study findings reveal that boys are more involved in violence, as victims and as perpetrators, than are girls. A summary measure of being a victim of violence reveals that a greater rate of boys than girls reported at least one situation in which they were a victim of violence (23% and 11%, respectively). Similarly, a summary measure of violent behaviors reveals that a greater rate of boys than girls reported at least one such behavior (33% and 13%, respectively). A comparison of patterns of violence on school grounds among all students in Israel and among the youth in Petah Tikva reveals that the latter are less involved in violence – as victims and as perpetrators – in all of the measures examined, except for carrying a weapon. Thus, for example, 24% of the students in this study believed that there were many or very many incidents of teasing, harassment, or bullying at their school, compared to 38% of all of the Jewish students in Israel.

A comparison of the findings concerning violence on school grounds as opposed to off school grounds (e.g., en route to school, or in places where youth spend their free time) reveals that violence is more prevalent on than off school grounds. A similar trend was found among all of the students in Israel.

About 40% of the youth in Petah Tikva had consumed alcohol at least once during the month preceding the interview. This percentage exceeded that found among all Jewish students in grades six through ten: 29.5%. More than one-quarter (27%) of the youth had become intoxicated at least once. This percentage was also greater than that among all Jewish students in Israel: 20%. A greater prevalence of excessive drinking was found among immigrant than among non-immigrant youth; this ran contrary to the findings of the national study, according to which a greater

percentage of non-immigrant than immigrant students drink alcohol to excess (and not for religious purposes) once a week or more (17% versus 14%, respectively). The findings also reveal that, in Petah Tikva as nationally, the patterns of drinking are more pronounced among boys than among girls, and that the drinking of alcohol, both moderate and excessive, is more common among youth age 16 and over than among youth under the age of 15.

More than 40% of all of the youth had smoked a cigarette or another tobacco product at some time. This percentage is somewhat greater than that of all Jewish youth attending grades six through ten in Israel: 35.6%. Seventeen percent of the youth smoke a water pipe (filled with tobacco) often, and one-quarter of them do so occasionally. Water pipe smoking is more prevalent among boys (22%) than among girls (11%). Smoking both cigarettes and a (tobacco-filled) water pipe increases with age. This trend was also found by the national study.

Eight percent of the youth reported having taken drugs of some kind at some time. A summary measure constructed for the study, which included the use of illegal drugs and/or any type of pill for non-medical purposes during the past year, reveals that 12% of the youth had used such substances at least once during the past year; this exceeded the national percentage of 10.5%.

Another risk behavior, which was not covered by the questionnaire but which arose in the focus groups, was that of gambling. Although we do not have data about the extent of this phenomenon, we did learn that youth sometimes lose very large sums of money through gambling of various kinds, fall into debt, and sometimes resort to stealing to pay that debt.

The Youths' Perception of Their City and Neighborhood

The youth were asked what they thought of Petah Tikva and their neighborhood. Half of them responded that they were satisfied with the city. Younger youth were more satisfied than were older youth (59% and 45%, respectively). Thirty-one percent of the youth reported that they would like to live in Petah Tikva when they grow up. Boys wanted to remain in Petah Tikva more than did girls (41% and 23%, respectively), and a larger percentage of younger (37%) than older (25%) youth expressed a desire to remain in the city; this parallels their relative satisfaction with the city. Seventy-two percent of the youth reported being satisfied with their neighborhood, and 80% of the youth reported feeling safe there, although boys felt safer than girls (83% versus 77%, respectively).

Relations with Parents

Eighty-six percent of the youth reported that it was easy or very easy for them to talk to their parents about things that troubled them. Youth under age 15 had a better relationship with their parents than did youth age 16 and over. When asked about their parents' relationship with their school, 92% of the youth agreed or definitely agreed that at least one of their parents would be willing to help them if they had problems at school; 90% agreed or definitely agreed that at least one of their parents would be willing to go to the school to talk to their teachers; and 95% agreed or definitely agreed that at least one of their parents encouraged them to do well in school. The data reveal that girls perceive their parents as being supportive more than do boys.

School

We examined the youths' perception of school and their teachers, alienation from school and disengagement ("hidden dropping out"), scholastic functioning, and receipt of tutorial assistance.

Only 18% of the youth reported really liking their school. Less than half of them reported that school was pleasant, but 61% of them reported feeling they "belong" at school. When asked about their teachers, about half of the youth agreed or definitely agreed that their teachers encouraged them to express their opinions in class, and treated students fairly. Forty-four percent of the students reported feeling that their teachers were interested in them as people. Half of the youth indicated that they find school boring, either often or very often.

The findings reveal that school was a more positive experience for girls than for boys. Girls expressed a more positive attitude toward school, in general, and toward their teachers, in particular. A similar trend was also found regarding youth age 16 and over, relative to youth age 15 and under.

A comparison of this study's findings with those of the HBSC study, which, as noted, concerned all of the students in Israel, reveals that an identical percentage of the youth in each study reported either really liking (18%) or not at all liking (16%) their school; an identical percentage of the youth in each study also reported feeling that the other students accepted them as they are (79%). A similar percentage (about 50%) of the youth in each study reported finding school pleasant. In contrast, a greater percentage of all of the students in Israel (66%) than of the students in this study (61%) reported feeling that they "belonged" at school. A similar trend was notable regarding the youths' perception of their teachers. For example, 44% of the students in Petah Tikva believe that their teachers are interested in them as people, compared to 54% of those in the national study.

"Sense of alienation" was summarized in a measure that included the following: not liking school; and negative responses to the statements, "the rules at school are fair", "I feel I 'belong' at school", "the teachers treat the students fairly", "the teachers take an interest in me as a person". In a comparison of the alienation from school of students in Petah Tikva (exclusive of youth attending alternative frameworks) and of all students in Israel, students in Petah Tikva displayed more indicators of alienation than did the total student population. For example 34% of the students in Petah Tikva, compared to 52% of all of the students in Israel, did not report any of the indicators of alienation. Moreover, 40% of the students in Petah Tikva reported two or more indicators of alienation, compared to about one-quarter (27%) of all students nationally.

Boys were found to have a greater sense of alienation than girls: One-quarter of the boys reported three or more indicators of alienation, compared to 16% of the girls.

Regarding the youths' scholastic performance and behavior at school, it was found that 42% had received at least one failing grade on their last report card before completing the questionnaire. Six percent reported having been suspended from school during the year in which the study was conducted.

The findings reveal that half of the youth receive help with their studies, compared to one-third of all students in Israel. More girls than boys receive tutorial assistance (58% and 42%, respectively). This corroborates the findings regarding the girls' more positive attitude toward school, in general, and toward their studies, in particular, as well as the findings on the greater tendency of girls to ask for help (see below). More than half (55%) of the students who receive tutorial help have a private tutor; more than one-quarter (28%) of them receive help informally, such as from a relative or friend; and about one-tenth of them receive help formally, either free of charge or for a token fee, from a program to promote students, such as a remedial teacher or national service volunteer at their school. One-third of the youth reported wanting additional help with their studies. A larger percentage of girls (38%) than boys (27%) reported wanting additional help, regardless of whether they were currently receiving help or not. This supports the findings about girls' positive attitude toward their studies and school.

A measure was also constructed of school disengagement ("hidden dropping out"); it included frequent absence; alienation from school; social rejection; and being a perpetrator or victim of violence. The findings of this measure reveal that 42% of the students in Petah Tikva did not display any of the indicators of disengagement; more than one-third (35%) of them displayed one such indicator; 17% displayed two such indicators; and the remainder – 6% – displayed three or more such indicators. A much smaller percentage of girls displayed indicators of disengagement: 50% of the girls did not display even one of the indicators of disengagement, compared to 32% of the boys. Conversely, 10% of the boys displayed three or more indicators of disengagement, compared to 2% of the girls. These findings, too, corroborate the findings reflecting girls' more positive attitude toward school and their studies.

A comparison of data from the present study and national data (exclusive of students attending alternative frameworks) reveals that students in Petah Tikva display levels of disengagement similar to those of other students in Israel. For example, 7% of the students in Petah Tikva displayed three or more indicators of disengagement, compared to 8% of the students nationwide; and 41% of the students in Petah Tikva did not display any indicators of disengagement, compared to a slightly smaller percentage (40%) of all of the students in Israel.

Employment

One-fifth of the youth work for wages or in a family business while attending school. The findings indicate that employment increases with age, but that there are no differences by gender or between immigrants and non-immigrants. About 7% of the youth (35% of those who work) reported that they work throughout the year, compared to 6% (28% of those who work) who work during school vacations only, and 8% (39% of those who work) who work occasionally or sporadically. The most common reason for working was to pay for personal wants and needs, such as clothing, entertainment, and the like: This was reported by 16% of the youth (82% of those who work), regardless of gender or age group. Two percent of the youth (about one-tenth of those who work) reported working to help support their family.

Seeking Help

The study also examined patterns of seeking help from counseling and other services for youth. About two-thirds of the youth reported turning to their friends and/or parents with a problem, difficulty, or dilemma. Youth under age 15 are more likely to turn to their parents (74%) than are youth age 16 and over (63%), while the latter are more apt to turn to their friends (72%) than are youth age 15 and under (52%). Girls seek help from both formal and informal sources more than do boys: For example, 3% of the girls reported not turning to anyone for help, compared to 11% of the boys. A particularly small percentage (1%) of the youth reported seeking professional counseling to cope with a problem, difficulty, or dilemma. A significant percentage of the youth reported having felt the need to seek professional help, but not having done so (47% of the one-quarter who felt such a need, or 11% of the total population examined). The most prevalent reasons for this were that they could "manage on their own", or else did not know to whom to turn. In all, 30% of the youth had had some contact with a professional in the past.

Issues in the System of Services for Youth in Petah Tikva

The system of services for youth in Petah Tikva is composed of various municipal departments, which are independent of and unrelated to one another. Professionals in this system have noted the lack of coordination among services.

According to respondents, this lack of coordination is due to the lack of a shared perspective regarding the goals, priorities, and methods of the system as a whole. In addition, the respondents described the organizational situation as being characterized by a lack of consensus regarding the area of responsibility and target population of each service. This can be reflected in the provision by one service of care or activities that are actually more relevant to the conceptual framework and training of professionals in another service. This further contributes to the lack of coordination among the services.

This situation has a number of implications. First, lack of coordination among services means that information about projects and activities is not transferred from one service to another. Second, lack of coordination causes problems with the accessibility of information about youth served by the system, and impedes comprehensive care of youth. Third, competition is generated among the various services for youth; this was cited as both causing all of the other problems in the municipal system, and as resulting from them.

This situation was found to be injurious to the continuum of care. The interviews reveal a lack of contact among services; for example, at times, professionals may not refer youth from one service to another, despite the relevance of a specific service. Another consequence is that services are not sufficiently accessible to youth. According to professionals, the youth are unfamiliar with the activities and services available to them; this corroborates the study's findings, noted above, that a significant proportion of youth do not seek professional assistance in time of need because they do not know to whom to turn.

A number of attempts have been made to address these difficulties and problems by the "Inter-organizational Committee to Address Violence", the "Multi-professional Committee to Help Exceptional Youth", and panels of professionals. The interviews reveal that the initial steps toward cooperation, and the establishment of the above forums, arose because of informal interaction among professionals. This has both advantages and disadvantages: The disadvantage is that such contacts and activities have not been institutionalized, nor are they guided by a comprehensive perspective. The advantage is that informal activities often lead to inter-personal relationships, which open doors for professionals in different services.

In discussing the current problems of the system of services for youth, professionals also discussed the optimal situation. In the interviews, they raised several key suggestions for addressing the problems of cooperation and coordination among services. These included formulating a philosophical perspective and a shared policy regarding services for youth in the city; establishing a unit to address matters pertaining to local youth; establishing a data base common to all of the services; and taking more appropriate advantage of existing resources.

In the wake of the current study, a process of planning services and programs for youth has begun through a municipal committee.

Principal Findings, by Population Group

One of the main goals of the survey was to examine the characteristics that are unique to different population groups among the youth in Petah Tikva, rather than to see the youth as a homogeneous population. Below we present a summary of the characteristics that are unique to each of the four groups examined in the study.

Junior High School Students

The findings of the study reveal that a larger percentage of the participants in extracurricular and group activities may be found among junior high school students (52%, compared to an average of 45% of all the youth). At the same time, larger percentages of these students cited two reasons for not participating in extracurricular activities: "the activities are not interesting" (72%), and "the hours of activity are inconvenient" (54%), compared to 63% and 42% of all of the youth, respectively. Also, a larger percentage of junior high school students than of the other youth reported that they would prefer that extracurricular activities be held in their neighborhood (81%, compared to 74% of all the youth), and on weekends (30%, compared to an average 25% of all the youth).

The data reveal that relatively large percentages of violent incidents occur on junior high school grounds. For example, the largest percentage of students reporting many or very many incidents of teasing, harassment, or bullying at their school were junior high school students: 34%, compared to 24% of the other youth. Large percentages of the junior high school students also reported having been the victim of one of the following violent acts at least once during the school year in which the questionnaire was completed: teasing and harassment (43%, compared to one-third of all of the

youth); having their property taken by force (11%, compared to 8% of all of the youth); being hit, slapped, or pushed forcefully (33%, compared to 27% of all of the youth); and verbal violence (three-quarters, compared to two-thirds of all of the youth).

Aside from being the victims of violence, notable percentages of junior high school students are also actively involved in perpetrating violence. It was found that a large percentage of them tease or harass other students (27%, compared to an average 23% of all of the youth). Also, 46% of them (compared to an average 43% of all of the youth) reported that their friends sometimes or often encourage them to do things that are dangerous or prohibited.

Examination of the risk behaviors of junior high school students reveals that larger percentages of them abuse substances such as "White-Out" correction fluid or contact glue (9%, compared to 5% on average of all of the youth).

Examination of their perception of school reveals that junior high school students have a more negative attitude toward school than do other youth: Only one-tenth of them said that they really like their school (compared to an average 18% of all of the youth), and about 40% of them definitely agreed that their school's rules and regulations were fair, or that they found school pleasant (compared to 47% and 49%, respectively, of all of the youth). In addition, a summary measure of alienation from school reveals that the largest percentage of youth reporting two or more indicators of alienation was found among junior high school students (40%, compared to 35% of all of the youth). Similarly, more than half of the junior high school students reported one or two indicators of disengagement, including frequent absences, alienation from school, social rejection, and perpetrating or being a victim of violence.

Regular High School Students

The participation of regular high school students in extracurricular and group activities is similar to the average percentage of participation (45% and 46%, respectively). A larger percentage of these students reported that they would prefer extracurricular and group activities to take place during the evening, also (85%, compared to 71% of all of the youth). However, a smaller percentage of them were interested in having such activities available on the weekends (18%, compared to 25% of all of the youth).

A larger percentage of regular high school students (21%) currently belong to a youth movement, compared to other youth (12%); accordingly, a larger percentage of them are group leaders, counselors, or guides in some framework (23%, compared to an average 11% of all of the youth).

This group was found to spend more time in the neighborhood, including at the homes of peers, than were youth in the other groups (52%, compared to 45% on average). This may be because normative youth find activities that can take place at home interesting: For example, approximately 95% of them reported knowing how to use a computer for some purpose (compared to an average

88% of all of the youth). However, a larger percentage of them watch less television (less than one hour a day): 44% versus 30% of all youth.

A larger percentage of regular high school students claimed that a main problem for youth in Petah Tikva is a lack of places for recreation and leisure, and that to improve their situation, more such places are needed. This corroborates the finding that these youth spend less time than do the other youth at sports arenas and fields, arcades, kiosks, and parties, and tend to stay in their neighborhood, including at each other's homes.

Regular high school students were found to have the best relations with their peers. For example, the largest percentages of them, compared to the other youth, reported having two or more friends (97%), and being part of a group of friends who spend time together (94%). Conversely, the smallest percentage of them reported feeling they don't have enough friends (10%, compared to 14% on average of all of the youth).

The findings of the study indicate that regular high school students are least likely to be the victims or the perpetrators of violence. Thus, a summary measure of being a victim of violence at school reveals that 91% of these students were not subjected to any type of violence during the past year, compared to an average 84% of all of the youth; and a summary measure of violent behavior reveals that 87% of them did not act violently during the past year, compared to 77% of all of the youth. Also, these students reported many or very many incidents of teasing, harassment, or bullying at their school to the least extent (16%, compared to 24% of all of the students).

In most areas examined, regular high school students displayed more normative characteristics than did the other groups. However, their abuse of drugs was similar to that of students in alternative frameworks, and immigrants (10%, 11%, and 12%, respectively). For example, the use these students made of hashish or marijuana was above average (9%, versus 7% on average). Their rate of abuse of any illegal drug or pills was similar to the average rate (13% versus 12%, respectively).

Regular high school students have good relations with their parents, as they do with their peers. Their responses to questions about their parents' willingness to help them or become involved in their school reveal that larger percentages of them, relative to all of the youth, felt their mother or father would be willing to help.

Examination of help-seeking behavior reveals that among those who felt a need for professional help but did not seek it, a large percentage of regular high school students reported not knowing where or to whom to turn. This reflects their unfamiliarity with existing services for normative youth.

Students Attending Alternative Frameworks

Students in alternative frameworks constitute the population with the most difficult socio-demographic background. Larger percentages of them than of the other groups live in a family in

which the head of the family is not working (20%); have parents with a lower level of education, mothers who work in unskilled jobs, and fathers who work in skilled jobs; and reported that their family's financial situation is fair or poor (17%).

The smallest percentage of participation in extracurricular or group activities was found among students in alternative frameworks (29%, compared to 45% of all of the youth, on average), and the largest percentage of non-participation in such activities due to cost was found among them (19%, compared to 19% of all of the youth).

These students exhibited the smallest percentages of participation in youth movements (1%) and voluntarism through school (10%), compared to 12% and 21%, respectively, of all of the youth.

Examination of how the youth spend their time reveals that a relatively large percentage (about two-thirds) of these students visited an arcade during the month preceding the survey (compared to 43% of all of the youth), and that a larger percentage of them reported "hanging out" at a kiosk with their friends – more than at any other place (16%, compared to 8% of all of the youth). Smaller percentages of them had visited a library (46%, compared to 60% of the other youth) or a sports arena or field (56%, compared to 66% of all of the youth) during the month preceding the survey.

Watching television is a central activity for these youth when they spend their free time at home, while the computer is a more marginal activity: A large percentage of these students watch television for three or more hours a day (31%, compared to 25% of all of the youth), and a large percentage of them do not know how to use a computer at all (34%, compared to 12% of all of the youth).

Regarding peer relations, it was found that the largest percentage of these students (about half of them) reported that their friends sometimes or often encourage them to do things that are dangerous or prohibited.

The largest percentages of youth reporting violence of various types were students in alternative frameworks. For example, a larger percentage of these students had harassed or teased another student (30%, compared to 23% of all of the youth); vandalized the property of another student (21%, compared to 14% of all of the youth); been in a fight (42%, compared to 30% of all of the youth); or carried a weapon with them at least once during the month preceding the survey (20%, compared to 13% of all of the youth). Accordingly, a summary measure of violent behavior reveals about one-third of these students displayed at least one indicator of violent behavior.

Consumption of alcohol was more prevalent among these students than among the students in the other groups: 53% had drunk alcohol at least once during the month preceding the survey (compared to 42% of all of the youth, on average). The data on smoking cigarettes or a tobacco-filled water pipe also pointed to a difficult situation among these students: A large percentage of them smoke regularly (36%), smoke three or more packs of cigarettes a week (51%), and often

smoke a tobacco-filled water pipe (34%), compared to 17%, 36%, and 17% on average, respectively, of all of the youth.

Drug abuse and the use of pills were also more prevalent among the students in alternative frameworks. For example, relatively large percentages of them reported smoking hashish or marijuana (12%, compared to 7% of all of the other youth), or taking diet pills, sleeping pills, or tranquilizers (13%, compared to 6% of the other youth). These percentages are corroborated by the results of a summary measure of the use of drugs and pills, which reveals a larger percentage for students in alternative frameworks than for all of the youth (17% versus 12%).

Examination of these students' relationship with their parents reveals that a small percentage of them reported that their parents or siblings knew where they were when they were not at home (47%, compared to 62% of the other students). An examination of their help-seeking behavior reveals that these students sought their parents' help with a problem, deliberation, or difficulty less than did all of the youth (56% versus 67%).

The findings on the youths' attitudes toward the atmosphere at school reveal that students in alternative frameworks have a more positive perception of their teachers than do other youth. For example, larger percentages of these students agreed or definitely agreed that their teachers took an interest in them as people (61%, compared to an average 44% of all of the youth). In addition, a relatively large percentage of students in alternative frameworks did not report any indicators of alienation from school (50%, compared to 40% of all of the students). This jibes with their positive perception of their teachers and school, and was corroborated by a multivariate (logistic regression) analysis, which indicated that these students were less likely to display two or more indicators of alienation than were students in regular junior high or high schools. However, in contrast, students in alternative frameworks had a more negative perception of the atmosphere among the students at their school (45%, compared to 53% of all of the youth). This would seem to support the data on violence among these students.

Despite their positive perception of their teachers and school, students in alternative frameworks have more problematic learning behavior than do other youth. This is reflected in a number of findings: Relatively larger percentages of these students reported not doing their homework because they do not know how (17%, compared to an average 12% of all of the students); a larger percentage of them received a failing grade in at least one subject, and more poor grades overall, on the last report card they received prior to the survey (64% and 28%, respectively, compared to 42% and 11%, respectively, of all of the students); and larger percentages of them reported having been suspended from school for at least one day during the past year (19%, compared to 6% of all of the students). In addition, a larger rate of them (about one-quarter) had skipped school for an entire day (not because of illness or vacation) four or more times during the past month (compared to an average one-tenth of all of the students). Larger percentages of these students believed they would not complete twelfth grade (12%, compared to 5% of all of the students).

It should be noted that the smallest percentages of students who reported receiving tutorial help was also found among students in alternative frameworks – 33%, compared to an average 50% of all of the students – despite the serious difficulty they experience with their studies. They constitute the smallest percentage of students who receive the help of a private tutor (34% of those in these frameworks who receive help or 11% of all students in alternative frameworks, compared to an average 55% of all of the youth). However, those who receive help are most likely to receive formal assistance free of charge – for example from a learning project, remedial teacher at the school, a college student (40% of those in these frameworks who receive help or 13% of all students in alternative frameworks, compared to an average 11% of all of the youth). This is logical, given the financial situation of their families.

Examination of the youths' orientation toward the future reveals that students in alternative frameworks talk less about the future: Larger percentages of them expressed a lack of desire to enlist in the IDF or National Service, and reported not knowing what they would do after completing military service; and smaller percentages of them reported intending to attend a college or university.

Examination of the help-seeking behavior of these youth revealed that a relatively large percentage (42%) of them indeed had contact with a counseling service (compared to 30% of all of the youth). However, it is possible that counseling was not necessarily initiated by the youth, but rather that it was the initiative of a professional who works with them. Attendance at an alternative framework is usually determined by a professional, such as a school counselor or truancy officer. Larger percentages of these youth also reported that it was easy or very easy for them to talk to their school counselor (26%), school psychologist (17%), or a social worker or psychologist outside of school (19%), than did 22%, 12%, and 13%, respectively, of all of the youth.

Immigrant Students from the Former Soviet Union

Immigrant students defined their families' financial situation as fair or poor, in a larger percentage (17%) than did all of the youth. However, the immigrant youth were not characterized by any additional socio-economic difficulties.

The percentage of immigrants who participate in extracurricular and group activities is similar to that of the regular high school students. It should be noted that one-quarter of the immigrants who do not participate in extracurricular activities reported not doing so because of their cost (an average 19% of all of the youth reported this). About half (52%) of the immigrants reported that they would prefer that extracurricular and group activities take place during school vacations (compared to 46% of all of the youth). It is also worth noting that a small percentage of immigrants belong to a youth movement (3%, compared to 12% of all of the youth).

A relatively small percentage of immigrant youth reported receiving support from their peer group: Small percentages of them reported having two or more friends (87%, compared to 94% of all of the youth), and that they are part of a group of friends who spend time together (76%, compared to

85% of all of the youth). Larger percentages of them reported feeling that their friends do not include them sometimes, often, or always (31%, compared to 21% of all of the youth), or that they do not have enough friends (23%, compared to 14% of all of the youth). The percentage of immigrants who reported having at least one non-immigrant Israeli friend (91%) was larger than the percentage of non-immigrant Israeli youth who reported having at least on immigrant friend (68%). This may be because immigrant youth are more likely to meet non-immigrant youth, given that the latter constitute the majority of the population.

A multivariate (logistic regression) analysis revealed that immigrant youth were more likely to be harassed or teased at school (at least once during the past year) than were non-immigrant youth, regardless of their gender or age. Thus, 44% of the immigrant youth reported being harassed or teased, compared to 32% of the non-immigrant youth.

Ten percent of the immigrants reported drinking alcohol more than once a week during the month preceding the survey, and 4% reported drinking every day. These percentages are larger than those of any other group, and demand special attention, given that most of immigrants in this study were younger (ages 12-15), and that alcohol consumption is usually more prevalent among older youth (age 16 and over). Moreover, among younger youth (ages 12-15) alone, 12% of the immigrants reported drinking alcohol more than once a week during the month preceding the survey, compared to only 4% of the non-immigrant youth.

About one-tenth of the immigrant youth reported smoking hashish or marijuana during the past year (compared to 7% of all of the youth), and 17% of them reported taking illegal drugs or pills (compared to 12% of all of the youth). Significant differences were found in the use of drugs by age – specifically, that drug use increases with age. Given this, and given that more than half (54%) of the immigrant youth are under age 15 (compared to 41% of the non-immigrant youth), the data concerning drug abuse among immigrant youth deserve special attention. For example, 21% of the immigrant youth ages 12-15 reported using some drug or pills during the past year, compared to 7% of the non-immigrant youth in the same age group. A multivariate (logistic regression) analysis conducted on youth ages 12-15 also revealed that immigrant youth are more likely than their non-immigrant peers to use drugs for non-medical purposes.

Regarding relations with parents, immigrant youth find it more difficult to talk with their parents than do other youth. For example, only 52% of the immigrant youth reported that it was easy for them to talk to their father, compared to 62% of all of the youth, and fewer of them reported turning to their parents with a problem, dilemma, or difficulty (61%, compared to 67% of all of the youth). A relatively small percentage of immigrant youth also reported that their parents or siblings knew where they were when they were not at home (57%, compared to 62% of all of the youth). In addition, smaller percentages of immigrant youth reported that either their mother or father would be willing to become involved in school. This might be explained by the generation gap created in immigrant families by differing levels of adjustment, language acquisition, and internalization of the host country's social norms.

Smaller rates of immigrant youth feel they "belong" at school, and agree with phrases such as, "the teachers are interested in the student as a person", "the students in my class tend to stick together", "most of the students are willing to help", and "the other students accept me as I am".

A relatively large percentage of immigrant youth have contact with a counseling service (42%, compared to 30% of all of the youth); this is similar to the percentage of students in alternative frameworks. Apparently, both of these groups have more contact with professionals who serve them or their families (either in or outside of school) than do non-immigrant students in regular junior high or high schools. Among students who felt a need for counseling but who did not seek it, a larger percentage of immigrants reported not knowing where or to whom to turn. This suggests that they are unfamiliar with services for youth, in general, and for immigrant youth, in particular.

Issues for Discussion and Directions for Action

Analysis of the study findings highlights several issues that deserve attention in developing programs and services for youth. Following are the main issues, and a number of directions for addressing them.

Addressing the Unique Needs of Different Groups of Youth

- ♦ The many differences found among the different groups of youth examined by this study indicate that "youth" should not be treated as one entity. Rather, attention should be paid to the differences in the needs and preferences of specific groups of youth. This requires conceiving responses that will be appropriate to each population group – junior high school students, regular high school students, students in alternative frameworks, and immigrant students. The study also highlights a need for more in-depth, comprehensive attention to youth who are not in any framework.
- ♦ One of the goals of the study was to identify particularly problematic groups of youth, which require special attention from service providers. The findings clearly indicate that some youth exhibit a variety of negative behaviors, including violence, poor relations with parents, social alienation, and use of alcohol and drugs. It was found that these youth also have a poor self-image and self-assessment, and are less likely to seek help from professionals or informal sources, such as parents or friends. Consequently, it is extremely important that services reach out to these youth, and seek multi-dimensional solutions to their problems.

Recreational Activities

- ♦ Since Petah Tikva lacks sites where spontaneous, unstructured activities can take place, there is a need to create places where youth can "hang out", without having to engage in an organized, defined activity. At such sites, the youth might determine for themselves what they want to do, with adults present only to supervise and maintain order. Such sites should be accessible to youth and available when youth can use them – usually in the evening and at night – so that they might preclude loitering on the streets and in public parks.

- ◆ It is also important to reinforce additional unstructured places of recreation, such as sports fields. Games such as basketball and soccer can be initiated by the youths themselves; they allow for the participation of a large number of youth, and require minimal equipment. Since the youth complained that the lighting of playing fields in Petah Tikva is turned off too early, it is recommended that it be kept lit until later, so that they youth can play sports during the hours available to them for this. It is important that sports fields be distant enough from residential areas to ensure the peace and quiet of neighbors. Sports also have the potential to preclude or minimize loitering on the streets and in other public places.
- ◆ The lack of places for recreation on Fridays was also cited as a problem for local youth. This issue should be addressed, and appropriate solutions formulated, together with the youth.
- ◆ Given that few youth belong to youth movements and many drop out, the youth movements should be encouraged to make themselves more attractive to youth, in general. They should also be encouraged to reach out to youth who are less familiar with them, particularly boys, youth ages 12-15, and students in alternative frameworks. Youth movements should become more familiar with these groups of youth, learn what "speaks" to them, and expand their recruitment efforts at schools.

Risk Behaviors

- ◆ The findings of the study reveal that younger youth are notably involved in violence, as both victims and perpetrators, and that this involvement decreases with age and the transition to high school. It was also found that violence is more prevalent among boys than among girls, and on school grounds than off them. Solutions to this problem should therefore focus on junior high schools, especially among boys.
- ◆ The findings indicate that drug abuse is more widespread in Petah Tikva than it is nationally; this warrants attention. A response to this problem must consider that youth of different ages abuse different addictive substances.
- ◆ Gambling among youth in Petah Tikva is also worthy of in-depth consideration. Specifically, efforts must be made to determine the extent of this phenomenon, and the characteristics of the youth involved in it. It is also important to formulate possible directions for addressing this phenomenon. Since some of the gambling takes place in clubs, these should be closely supervised to prevent youth from entering them.
- ◆ Another phenomenon brought to light by the study is that of "fining": That is, some youth impose monetary "fines" on other youth. In-depth investigation should determine its extent, and the characteristics of the youth who are involved in it. However, this will be more difficult than examining gambling, as fining does not occur at any particular place and time.

The youth themselves should be enlisted to help in determining the breadth and nature of this problem.

Social Alienation among Immigrant Youth

- ◆ The finding that immigrant youth suffer social alienation at school highlights a need for schools to make a concerted effort to integrate them. For example, students with a great deal of social awareness could be asked to function as "liaisons" between immigrant and non-immigrant youth. Further, intercultural exchanges, and activities that address perceptions of the "other", could be held in individual classes and for the school as a whole.

The Relationship between the Youth and Their Parents

- ◆ According to this study's findings, immigrant youth, in particular, have difficulty in their relationship with their parents. These problems may seem more acute given that, as noted, these students also suffer from social alienation. It is possible that immigrant parents, who confront the difficulty of making inroads into a new society and learning a new language, need to work many hours, and are unfamiliar with the "rules of the game" in Israeli schools, may seem to their children to be unable to help in time of need. One way of coping with this situation might be to expand the use of teacher-liaisons and school-based immigrant coordinators. In addition, workshops for parents about the "rules of the game" in Israeli society and Israeli schools could be used to help immigrant parents help their children, in general, and with matters involving school, in particular.
- ◆ While the findings reveal that students in alternative frameworks perceive their parents as a source of support, they do not necessarily see them as a source of emotional support. In addition, the findings suggest that these parents barely supervise their children. Therefore, alternative frameworks might consider initiating activities for students and their parents, which will reinforce the parent-child relationship and involve the parents more fully in their children's lives. Workshops on parental functioning and authority could also be organized to give parents the tools to improve their relationship with their children, and increase their supervision.

School

- ◆ The prevalence of alienation and disengagement ("hidden dropping out") among students in Petah Tikva highlights a need to reinforce the relationship between students and their school. As a first step, it is recommended that schools improve their physical and social environment, so that youth will find it more pleasant to attend school. Ways of accomplishing this include improving the appearance of the school, overall, and of classrooms, in particular, and organizing activities that strengthen relations among the students, and between students and school staff.
- ◆ According to the findings, students in alternative frameworks have poor scholastic performance and behavior at school. The findings also reveal that these students receive the

least amount of help with their studies outside of school. It is consequently very important to increase the hours of tutorial help, and the number of study frameworks outside of school that are available to these students.

Seeking Help

- ♦ On one hand, a small percentage of youth seek help from professional counselors; the main reasons they cite for this are unfamiliarity with them, and believing they can "manage on their own". On the other hand, students who do have contact with professional counselors (i.e. immigrant youth and students in alternative frameworks) find it easy to talk to them. It is therefore important to expose all youth to the local services that are geared for them. It is also important to eradicate the stigma associated with referral to some of these services. Furthermore, these services should be made more available and accessible to youth. For example, a service "fair" might be organized, or services marketed in schools.

The System of Services for Youth

- ♦ The description of the system of services for youth in Petah Tikva, and the suggestions made by the heads of services and other professionals who were interviewed, bring to light a number of ways of building inter-organizational partnership. First, it is possible to establish a data base on the activities offered by each service, which could serve both professionals and youth. Second, a position might be created for someone who would take responsibility for collecting and constantly updating the relevant data, and for promoting the data base. Third, the services for youth in Petah Tikva should formulate a shared perception of services for youth and of the goals of each service; this should involve the clear definition of shared goals and priorities. This shared perception may then become a basis for establishing a unit to oversee, or at least coordinate, services for youth in the city. Fourth, it should be remembered that a necessary condition for establishing a successful partnership is clear, consensual definition of the areas of responsibility and the target population of each service.

The Process of Planning Services and Programs for Youth

In light of the study findings, a process was undertaken of municipal planning of services and programs for youth, in which the following issues were addressed: the lack of places in Petah Tikva where youth can spend unstructured recreational time; violence in junior high schools; the abuse of drugs and pills; alienation from school; and the lack of coordination among the various services for youth in Petah Tikva.

As part of the planning process, recommendations were formulated, which are meant to provide a response to these issues. Following are some of these recommendations:

- ♦ Establishment of a "warm home" for youth, which will serve as a center for information and counseling, as well as provide a place where youth can spend their free time in unstructured recreational activities.
- ♦ The "Hot Summer Project", which provided a variety of activities for youth during the 2003 summer vacation from school.

- ♦ The program, "The Violent Adolescent", which would focus on a small number of youth who were found to be extremely violent. This program will be implemented in schools, and will continue after school hours as well, such that it will encompass the free time of this group of youth.
- ♦ The "Transitions" program to reinforce the relationship between the junior high schools and the elementary schools that "feed into" them. The program will include activating a "liaison", who will become acquainted with elementary school pupils beginning in fifth grade, and will help identify children who have the potential for behavior problems before they enter junior high school. The program will also involve the implementation of ongoing learning activities for sixth grade pupils, at the junior high school that will be enrolling them.
- ♦ Expanded work with parents surrounding the issue of drugs. In addition, a recommendation was made to recruit youth leaders to identify youth who use drugs and formulate special intervention programs.
- ♦ Reinforcement of an existing program (under the auspices of the Educational Administration) to improve the school climate. In addition, the recommendation was made to monitor the outcomes of this program, and, based on them, determine whether the program should continue or be replaced.
- ♦ The recommendation was made to compose a declaration of intent for all of the services for youth in the city, which would detail their aspirations and goals regarding the local system of services for youth. This declaration would address both the recommendations for organizational change, and those calling for increased cooperation among services, even prior to the implementation of organizational change.