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ENGELBERG CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

After-School Educational Programs: Goals, Work Practices and Best-Practice Indicators

Dalia Ben-Rabi ♦ Sharon Amiel

The study was commissioned and funded by
the UJA-Federation of New York



RESEARCH REPORT

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Executive Summary

Background

The main goal of after-school educational programs is to help low achievers and disadvantaged students to fulfill their academic potential. In pursuing their goal, the programs play a part in the effort to reduce educational gaps. The rapid growth rate of such programs in Israel and abroad has led to increasing efforts to define and measure their quality. At the request of the UJA-Federation of New York, the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute conducted a mapping of the main educational programs implemented in Israel in an attempt to discover the extent to which the practices perceived to contribute to the quality of the programs are being implemented. This report is intended to support decision-making regarding new directions and priorities in the development of after-school educational programs.

Study Goals

The study's ultimate goal, as noted, was to provide information to support decision-makers regarding new directions for the further development of after-school educational programs

The study focused on the following questions:

1. What are the key best-practice indicators in the literature?
2. Which are the outstanding programs implemented in Israel?
3. To what extent do these programs reflect best practice?
4. What difficulties do these programs experience? Which best-practice indicators are difficult for them to achieve and what issues do they have to address in the course of the implementation?

Study Method

The study was based on a list of the main educational programs in Israel (42 relevant programs were identified) and an in-depth mapping of 25 of them, which were representative of a range of characteristics of programs and age cohorts. The data were collected from self-report questionnaires completed by directors or representatives of the programs between May and September 2009. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with professionals at the Ministry of Education and planners and implementers of after-school educational programs. The mapping did not include an examination of the actual method of implementation or the outcomes of the programs regarding the students' situation.

Main Findings

The mapping of programs in Israel revealed a diversity of programs and implementation strategies, including comprehensive support programs, group academic assistance programs and mentoring programs. The programs' work was examined in terms of best-practice indicators identified in the literature as promoting effective work.

In the literature, best-practice indicators are divided into structural indicators (relating to the program goals, quantity and quality of personnel, measurements and evaluation), indicators relating to the learning process (which relate to program aspects with a direct impact on the students' learning experience) and the program's relationship with the school, the parents and the community.

This study found that there were some areas in which implementation methods considered effective were being used to a great extent and other areas in which little use was made of methods considered effective. In these areas, best-practice methods should be further strengthened and utilized.

The principles of best practice that were *usually* implemented included the following:

- ◆ Declaration of clear goals
- ◆ Provision of academic assistance as well as enrichment activities
- ◆ Support for students for at least three years
- ◆ Appointment of a staff member for liaison with the students regarding academic and social matters
- ◆ Monitoring of student attendance and achievements
- ◆ Appointment of a staff member for liaison with the school
- ◆ Training on how to work with low achievers.

The study also showed that important principles of best practice *were not often implemented*. These included:

- ◆ Extensive involvement of schools in all aspects of decision-making regarding the program
- ◆ Inclusion of youth in planning activities and decision-making
- ◆ Significant work with the parents.

Finally, there were principles of best practice that were *sometimes* implemented, notably the following:

- ◆ Frequent opportunities for individual learning
- ◆ Most of the teachers have a teachers certificate or B.A. degree
- ◆ Individualized learning plans
- ◆ Cultural sensitivity is an important element of the teacher training.

The main difficulties that the program directors reported they had to contend with were: budget constraints and the constant struggle to find funding; difficulties in recruiting quality teachers in the periphery and teachers who met the program's criteria; difficulty finding college students and volunteers willing to make a long-term commitment (in programs working with college students and volunteers); coping with additional needs of the students (emotional problems, behavioral problems, learning difficulties and financial difficulties); difficulty contending with attendance problems and dropout from the program; difficulty adapting the program activities for a range of ages; and difficulty working with parents, particularly when there was a need to cope with cultural differences.

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1. Introduction

The main goal of after-school educational programs is to help low achievers and disadvantaged students fulfill their academic potential. In pursuing their goal, the programs play a part in the effort to reduce educational gaps. This report examines after-school programs for elementary and high school students in Israel that are implemented with the pedagogic involvement of formal institutions (government ministries and local authorities) and organizations in the voluntary sector.

The development of after-school intervention programs around the world has been monitored by studies that seek to establish criteria and guidelines to ensure the quality of the programs and the successful achievement of their goals. This report surveys the main programs implemented in Israel (based on information from the program directors) and maps their goals and methods of implementation, in an attempt to ascertain the extent to which they follow the principles of "best practice." The report discusses issues and directions for action relating to the implementation of the programs. In this way, it is designed to support discussion of new directions and priorities for developing after-school programs in Israel.

In order to understand the context in which the programs are implemented in Israel, we begin with a short review of the country's education system and the difficulties with which it has to contend.

1.1 Scholastic Achievements of Israeli Students

The education system in Israel faces many challenges to its efforts to respond to the needs of the entire student population, particularly the low achievers. Information from numerous sources indicates that many students in Israel have difficulty with their studies or adjusting to an educational framework. For example, in a study mapping the ways that elementary schools and junior high schools cope with low achievers, 29% of homeroom teachers at elementary schools in the sample and 52% of homeroom teachers at junior high schools reported that over 25% of their students were low achievers (Cohen-Navot et al., 2009). The results of the PISA tests conducted in Israel in recent years also indicate that the achievement level of Israeli students falls below that of most developed countries (OECD, 2003). Data on matriculation exams in Israel reveal that 42% of twelfth graders who took the exams in 2007/8 were not eligible for a matriculation certificate. Moreover, 49% of the students failed to obtain certificates that met university admission criteria. A student's failure to be admitted to higher education limits his/her employment opportunities and reduces his/her chances of earning a good living.

Of particular concern is the issue of the gaps between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, which are among the greatest in the world, as evidenced in the PISA tests (OECD, 2003) and the TIMSS mathematics tests (Heller, 2002). There are also considerable disparities between the scholastic outputs of students at Arabic-speaking schools and at Hebrew-speaking schools: 51% of Druze students, 44% of Arab students and 39% of the Bedouin students in the

Negev are eligible for matriculation certificates compared with 60% of Jewish students (Ministry of Education, 2008). The results of the GEMS – Growth and Effectiveness Measures for Schools (*meitzav*) – tests also reveal that the scores in Arabic-speaking schools are lower than in Hebrew-speaking schools (Ministry of Education, 2008). There are differences, too, among different groups within the Jewish population: the achievements of students in peripheral areas and of new immigrants (particularly Ethiopian Israelis) are particularly low.

1.2 How the Israeli Education System Copes with Students in Need of Academic Assistance

In the 2008/2009 academic year, almost 1.5 million students were enrolled in grades 1–12 at over 4,000 educational institutions in Israel. Advancing low achievers and narrowing gaps between students from well-off backgrounds and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are among the main goals of the Israeli education system (Brandes, 1996), which strives to provide quality education and equal educational opportunities to all students (Dovrat Commission, 2005). Efforts have been made in recent years to introduce structural changes to strengthen schools' ability to provide better responses for low achievers. These include the introduction of differential budgeting in elementary schools according to the number of children and their socioeconomic characteristics (based on the Shoshani Report) and transferring budgetary control to the school principals (see the Ministry of Finance's Economic Recovery Plan, 2003); extending the school day in schools; and the New Horizon reform, which was first implemented in 2007/2008. New Horizon places considerable emphasis on expanding teachers' work with students in need of special assistance individually and in small groups. The reform is being implemented gradually and in 2009/10, it was implemented in 80% of the elementary schools and a small percentage of junior high schools in Israel. Furthermore, some low achievers are eligible for additional professional inputs and assistance through the Inclusion Amendment to the Special-Education Law, and special assistance is provided for new immigrants.

The education system also strives to implement a variety of strategies in the classroom, such as: teaching methods for working with students individually; augmenting teaching staff; taking some of the students out of the classroom for study periods in small groups, etc. (Cohen-Navot et al., 2009). In addition, many schools implement a wide range of intervention programs aimed at advancing low-achieving students with the help of external pedagogical agencies (cf., Oren, 1989; Shemesh, 1989; Kfir and Elroi, 1998; Kashti et al., 2001; Hertz-Lazarovitch, 2001; Cohen-Navot, 2000; Cohen-Navot and Lavenda, 2003; Keisser-Sugarman et al., 2007; Dar and Neumann, 1996; Gaziel, 2001; Tetter, 2002; Schild et al., 1998; CBS, 1999; CBS, 1997; Cohen-Navot et al., 2009). Intervention programs are implemented during school hours (some of the students are taken out of the classroom for their additional help) and after school hours.

A study that mapped practices used by schools to advance low achievers (Cohen-Navot et al., 2009) revealed that supplementary programs to advance low achievers that were implemented with the involvement of external agencies were provided in about half the country's elementary and junior high schools. External supplementary programs were more common in junior high

schools (64% implemented programs of this kind) than in elementary schools (39%). Among schools that implemented such programs, junior high schools implemented on average 2.4 programs, compared to 1.7 in elementary schools. However, only a minority of *classes* at elementary and junior high schools implemented any kind of supplementary program to advance low achievers (23% of classes at elementary schools and 30% of classes at junior high schools). Great variance was found among the schools with regard to the amount of supplementary programs.

The Cohen-Navot et al. study found that the organizations and institutions involved in the implementation of the programs were varied. The external agencies involved in about half of all supplementary programs were affiliated with the formal education system – departments of the Ministry of Education (mainly the Elementary and Secondary Education Divisions, the Social Welfare Division, and the Psychological Counseling Service) or the local authority. NGOs were involved in about a third of the programs. About 15% of the programs were implemented through joint collaboration of agencies from the formal education system and the voluntary sector.

The voluntary organizations are valued for their capacity to supplement services and resources, which relieves the burden on the public purse. In addition, these organizations focus on special groups of students and can provide them with a more intensive service than the regular education system can offer. They also provide services that are not a high priority – or are not provided at all – by the regular system. The provision of services and programs through voluntary organizations allows the government relative flexibility, with fewer bureaucratic constraints (Cohen-Navot et al., 2008). However, there is sometimes concern as to the extent to which the programs are compatible with the goals and priorities at each of the schools at which they are introduced.

1.3 After-School Programs

Along with the approach that emphasizes working with low achievers during regular classroom hours, another approach promotes special tailor-made inputs for low achievers outside of regular classroom hours (Donmoyer and Kos, 1993). This complementary strategy consists of "pullout" programs, which provide academic assistance outside of the classroom (Slavin and Madden, 1989; King, 1990). However, the findings about the impact of pullout programs compared to other methods and to regular classroom teaching are not conclusive (Barr and Parrett, 2001), largely due to implementation difficulties: time wasted going to and from the classroom; no regular fixed place for the program sessions; little or no coordination between the classroom staff and the program teachers; and the level of teaching of the program teachers, who are sometimes less skilled and experienced than the classroom teachers. In addition, one must be aware of the possible social impact of the pullout programs, which separate participants from the other students in the class (Brandts, 1999; Archambault, 1989; Dieker and Murawski, 2003; Gelzheiser et al., 1992; Meyers, 1990; Slavin and Madden, 1989; Taylor, 1985).

There is a clear distinction between academic assistance outside of the classroom in the morning, *during school hours* – at the expense of lessons with the rest of the class – and that provided *in addition to classroom hours*. Some researchers (Wong and Wang, 1994) note that in many cases, low achievers do not need tailor-made instruction; they simply need additional instruction. Indeed, researchers who have examined programs that provide additional hours focusing on the needs of low achievers found that these programs had a positive impact (Cohen-Navot et al., 2007; Lavy and Schlosser, 2004). In line with this, studies indicate that participants benefit considerably from programs providing extensive academic assistance during the summer vacation (Borman and Boulay, 2004; Cooper et al., 1996).

After-school programs are defined as structured activities to encourage learning and development that are held "out of school time" (Harvard Family Research Project, 2008; Kelley, 2007). They have three main goals:

1. To improve students' achievements through best-practice activities: This strategy has been found effective in enhancing students' achievements, reducing dropout, and improving school attendance rates and interest in learning (Cohen-Navot et al., 2007; Peterson and Fox, 2004; Chung, 2000). Low achievers are offered academic assistance through a diversity of educational methods, such as instruction in small groups.
2. To provide enrichment and recreational activities to students from disadvantaged backgrounds: After-school educational programs frequently offer enrichment activities to students who may otherwise be unable to participate in such activities because they cannot afford them or because the activities are inaccessible (Mahoney et al., 2005). In addition to being enjoyable, the enrichment programs are designed to help develop new skills and self-esteem and may introduce participants to new experiences such as community service and volunteer activity.
3. To provide a safe environment and prevent risk behaviors among the youth: After-school programs extend the school day, thereby keeping youth off the streets and preventing them from engaging in risk behaviors. This is particularly important for children and youth whose parents are at work in the afternoons, leaving them unattended and unsupervised (Barr and Parrett, 2001).

A variety of after-school educational programs are available in Israel. This report focuses on three main types of program:

- ◆ ***Comprehensive support programs*** aim to provide students who have social, emotional and academic difficulties with an after-school framework that addresses all these needs. Two such programs have been implemented in Israel for many years on a relatively wide scale with government ministry sponsorship: *Milat* ("supplementary study framework"), which is implemented by the Ministry of Education, and the *Moadonit* joint welfare-education after-school frameworks, implemented by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services. The programs are implemented several times a week, after school, and while they include educational inputs, they also put greater emphasis on the

provision of general emotional and social support for the students. This survey includes the Milat program and an experimental program that upgrades the activities of the Moadonit after-school frameworks.

- ◆ **Group educational programs:** This category includes an assortment of programs, implemented by a variety of agencies, mainly in the voluntary sector, or by partnerships with agencies in the formal education system. These programs focus chiefly on providing academic assistance to small groups of participants. In most cases, they meet several times a week and teach a variety of subjects. Many also offer social activities and additional enrichment activities. Some of the main programs in this group are included in this report.
- ◆ **Mentoring:** Comprehensive support programs and group educational programs sometimes include a mentoring component; in mentoring programs per se, it is the *main* element. Mentoring is a strategy that has stimulated great interest in recent years and the use of mentors (who are usually volunteers) is designed to promote the emotional well-being of low achievers, to improve their self-confidence, enhance their social skills, and reduce risk behaviors and absenteeism from school (Smink and Schargel, 2004; McLearn et al., 1998; Tierney and Grossman, 1995). Mentors may also serve as role models for the students. Mentoring has been implemented nationally in Israel for some 40 years. Of special note is the Perach program, which involves thousands of university students who work with children from disadvantaged populations. In most cases, the emphasis is not on academic assistance, but on offering social and emotional support and the personal relationship between the mentor and the child/youth is central. A relatively small number of mentoring programs do focus on *academic* mentoring for low achievers, either on an individual basis or in small groups of no more than three.

The rapid growth of after-school programs, both in Israel and abroad, has led to increased efforts to define and measure their quality: What do they do? What should they do to achieve their goals? Research on best practice in after-school programs is dynamic. Various studies have formulated standards, criteria and guidelines – all of which describe important aspects of measuring best practice and defining how to achieve it. Nevertheless, it is hard to be certain which characteristics produce the best results. For example, Valentine et al. (2010) evaluated 12 research syntheses that examined the results of after-school programs and found that the 12 syntheses used highly divergent methods, varying in problem definitions, search strategies, inclusion criteria for individual studies, and techniques for drawing conclusions about the cumulative evidence. The main best-practice indicators discussed in the literature are described below.

1.4 Best-Practice Indicators in the Literature

In the literature, best-practice indicators are divided into structural indicators, indicators relating to the learning process (examining aspects with a direct impact on the students' learning experience) and the relationship between the school, the parents and the community.

Structural Indicators

- ◆ Program strategy: Focused and deliberate strategy that is evident to the program staff, families and students; structured program; selection of appropriate, goal-oriented activities
- ◆ Appropriate teacher-to-student ratio and opportunities for individual instruction
- ◆ Emphasis on the teachers' education, training and professional development
- ◆ Measurement and assessment of the students' progress and the program's achievements.

Indicators Relating to the Learning Process

- ◆ Duration of the students' participation in the program
- ◆ Intensity of study – frequency of the sessions and number of hours per week, number of subjects each student studies in the program, other educational activities (e.g., during the summer vacation)
- ◆ Supportive relationship between the staff and students
- ◆ Diversity of scholastic activities, learning-support activities (e.g., learning skills workshops), and enrichment and empowerment activities
- ◆ Allowing the students to be involved in determining the program's activities
- ◆ Cultural competence – including staff training and the recruitment of teachers from a similar cultural background to that of the students.

Indicators of the Relationship with the School, Parents and Community Services

- ◆ Nature of the program's relationship with the school: Involvement of school staff in identifying students' needs and implementing the program
- ◆ Family involvement
- ◆ Work with community services.

2. The Study – Goals and Methods

2.1 Study Goals

The study's ultimate goal, as noted, was to provide information to support decision-makers regarding new directions for the further development of after-school educational programs

The study focused on the following questions:

1. What are the key best-practice indicators in the literature?
2. Which are the outstanding programs implemented in Israel?
3. To what extent do these programs reflect best practice?
4. What difficulties do these programs experience? Which best-practice indicators are difficult for them to achieve and what issues do they have to address in the course of implementation?

2.2 Study Methods

The study was based on mapping key programs in Israel and gathering more detailed data on a sample of them. The data were collected from reports by senior professionals at organizations implementing each of the programs. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with professionals at the Ministry of Education and planners and implementers of after-school educational programs to learn more about various aspects of implementing after-school programs. The program selection process was as follows (for details, see Appendix I):

1. A list of 42 relevant programs was drawn up.
2. The programs were classified according to their operating strategies and target population, including children's age-group.
3. The 29 programs included in the mapping were selected as representative of the diversity of programs.

The data were collected from a questionnaire for program directors. The questionnaires included items about the program's characteristics, goals and scope and examined the best-practice indicators described above. They were mailed to respondents for self-reporting or were used in telephone or face-to-face interviews. The data were collected in the summer of 2009. Twenty-five of the 29 program directors responded (86% response rate).

All the findings in this report are based on information from program directors. Note that the mapping did not include an examination of the actual practices or of the programs' impact on the students.

3. Main Findings

3.1 Main Background Characteristics of the Educational Programs

The characteristics of the 25 programs examined were as follows:

Strategy: 21 group educational programs, 2 comprehensive support programs and 2 mentoring programs (Table 1).

Age: Five of the programs were for elementary school children or for students at elementary or junior high schools (age 6–14), 12 were for students at junior high and high school (age 12–17) and 8 were for all school grades (age 6–17).

Target population: Fourteen of the programs defined their target populations as "vulnerable students" (e.g., low achievers, students with behavioral problems, those on the verge of dropping out of school and those exposed to risk situations). In contrast, 4 programs were for high achievers from the periphery (one was for Bedouin students). Five programs targeted new immigrants and 2 were for Arab students.

Table 1: Sample of After-School Educational Programs According to Intervention Strategy and Target Population, by Participants' Age (Absolute Numbers)

	Total	Elementary School Age*	Junior High and High School Age	All School Ages
Total	25	5	12	8
Intervention Strategy				
Group programs	21	3	11	7
Comprehensive support programs	2	2		
Mentoring	2		1	1
Target Population				
Disadvantaged populations	14	3	5	6
High-achieving students from peripheral areas**	4		4	
New immigrants	5	1	2	2
Arabs	2	1	1	

*Two programs were for children aged 6–14.

**One of the programs was for Bedouin students.

On average, the programs had been implemented for 8 years (ranging from 1 to 15 years) (Table 2). A considerable proportion of them were implemented in up to 25 localities. Three were spread over a particularly wide number of localities. When examining the number of frameworks (schools, community centers, etc.) in which the programs were implemented, we found 2 large-scale programs that were implemented in over 100 frameworks. These programs also worked with a greater number of students – from 5,000 to over 18,000.

Table 2: Number of Years the Programs have been Implemented, Number of Localities and Frameworks/Locations of Activities (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Number of programs	25
Average number of years of implementation	7.67
Number of localities/local authorities	
Up to 10	9
11–25	8
26–50	4
85+	2
Dozens of localities (exact number not known)	2
Numbers of frameworks/locations*	
Up to 20	10
21–56	8
100–200	4
Over 200	2
Information not provided	1
Main framework where activities are conducted*	
School	24
Municipal facility	12
Private learning center/Students' homes	3

* Programs could note more than one framework

Most of the programs conducted their activities at schools. Half of them included study both at schools and at municipal facilities. The mentoring programs also reported that they provided assistance in the homes of the students or the mentors. Notably, about half of all programs included in the mapping (13 of the 25) provided instruction in the morning as well as after school hours.

3.2 Program Goals

The program directors were asked (in an open question) to specify the goals of their programs, which they set out at the student level and at the school level. As expected, the main goals for the students were scholastic, but about half of the programs had additional goals (social, personal empowerment or value-related) such as fostering skills for independence, responsibility and commitment, and self-efficacy. A small number of programs reported goals for the schools, such as improving the staff's skills for working with low achievers and changing principals' and teachers' attitudes and perceptions about their students' abilities.

3.3 Best-Practice Indicators

3.3.1 Structural Indicators

Focused and Intentional Strategy

Clear focused goals and the selection of appropriate activities to achieve them are the cornerstone of best-practice programs (Metz et al., 2008). It is important for all members of program staff at all levels of the organization to identify with the goals and for the program's policy to be clear to the families and students (Halpern, 2005; NYSAN, 2005; Spielberg and Halpern, 2002).

The program directors reported that all the programs had written goals and a vision, which had been presented to the program staff, but the goals of only some of the programs had been presented to students and parents. It was reported that most of the programs had a structured curriculum and about half of them (12) used study materials tailor-made for them (Table 3).

**Table 3: Goals, Structuring of Curriculum and Use of Special Study Materials
(Absolute Numbers)**

	Total
Total	25
Program has a written "vision" and goals that are presented to:	
Program staff	25
Students/New participants	18
Parents	16
Structured curriculum	21
Program uses tailor-made study materials/tools	12

Teacher-to-Student Ratio

While studies have indicated the effectiveness of instruction in small groups, there are no conclusive recommendations as to the optimum teacher-student ratio (Bodilly and Beckett, 2005). In programs at elementary schools, the average number of children in academic assistance groups was 10.5. At junior high schools, there were approximately 13 children in the groups on average, while the average number of students in academic assistance groups in high schools was approximately 12 (Table 4). Mentoring programs, naturally, work on a one-on-one basis or in very small groups (up to 3 students). Further, over half the group programs provided group instruction along with ample opportunity for individual instruction. However, only 3 of the group programs (and, of course, both of the mentoring programs) reported there was always an opportunity for individual instruction (Table 5).

**Table 4: Number of Students per Group (excluding Monitoring Programs)
(Absolute Numbers)**

	Elementary School	Junior High School	High School
Number of programs per target age group*	12	15	17
Average number of students per group	10.5	12.9**	12.1
Range of number of students per group	5–30	5–30	5–30

*Some programs are for children of various ages. Program directors were asked to provide data for each age group separately.

**We excluded one program from the calculation of the average number of participants, because the number varied.

Table 5: Opportunity for Private Instruction (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Total	25
Not at all	1
Seldom	1
Sometimes	8
Often	10
Always	5

Relationship between Students and Staff

A strong, supportive relationship based on the students' trust of staff members has been found to motivate participants to remain in programs for a sufficiently long time to learn and develop (Raley et al., 2008). Furthermore, it has been found that support and encouragement from the staff raise the value of education in the participants' eyes and enhance their expectations of the future (Huang et al., 2007).

In most of the programs (23), a permanent member of staff was responsible for liaison with the students on scholastic matters (developing a personal study plan and/or monitoring academic progress) and social matters (help with social problems and maintaining contact with the students' families) (Table 6).

**Table 6: Member of Staff Responsible for Student Liaison and his/her Duties
(Absolute Numbers)**

	Total
Total	25
There is a permanent position for student liaison officer	23
Duties include:*	
<i>Academic:</i>	
Coordination with school's permanent teaching staff	21
Monitoring academic progress	21
Solve problems with school's permanent teaching staff	18
Devise individual curricula	15
<i>Social:</i>	
Help with social problems	19
Maintain contact with families	19

*Other duties reported include emotional support (1 program) and addressing problems of motivation and discipline (1 program).

The Quality of the Teachers – Training and Professional Development

The programs were based on a mixed teaching body – teachers from the permanent school staff and those employed by external agencies, university students, and volunteers (including women soldiers and women in National Service – a two-year volunteer program for recent high school graduates in lieu of army service) (Table 7). University students or volunteers taught in 21 of the programs; teachers on school staff taught in 19 programs, while 17 of the programs employed teachers from outside the school system. That said, some programs tended to work with a majority of teachers belonging to the same group: Most of the teachers in 9 programs were on the school staff; Most of the teachers in 7 programs (including the two mentoring programs) were university students or volunteers; Most of the teachers in 3 programs were not employed by the schools. In 17 of the programs, most of the teachers had a teaching certificate, a bachelor's or master's degree or an educational consultancy qualification.

A significant proportion of the program directors reported the following difficulties when hiring teachers for the programs: Difficulties finding teachers who met the demands of the program (e.g., were willing to work in a different way from the one they were used to and to work during vacations); difficulties finding quality teachers in the periphery; and difficulties finding English and science teachers. The programs working with students and volunteers also noted it was difficult to find students prepared to make a long-term commitment and to recruit volunteers.

**Table 7: Teachers in After-School Educational Programs – Composition and Training
(Absolute Numbers)**

	Total
Total	25
Subject teachers on the school staff	
None	5
A few	3
Some	7
Large proportion/most	9
Information not provided	1
Subject teachers <i>not</i> on the school staff	
None	7
A few	5
Some	9
Large proportion/most	3
Information not provided	1
Students/Volunteers	
Large proportion/most	7
Teachers' training – some or most of them*	
Teaching diploma	15
Special-education teaching diploma	5
Bachelor's degree	15
Master's degree or PhD	10
Educational consultant qualification	2

*Other response categories were "none" and "few."

Teachers' personal skills may be enhanced through training. A correlation has been found between ongoing teacher training and successful implementation of intervention programs and achievement of goals (Sheldon and Hopkins, 2008; Herrera, 2004). The gap that sometimes exists between the teachers' original training and their routine work in the program can sometimes be bridged by a process of supervision and personal training (Sheldon and Hopkins, 2008) together with regular staff meetings.

All the programs reported that the teachers were given some form of training for the program. Eleven reported that teachers received training at the start of the program. All programs provide training during the school year (14 intermittently and 11 regularly). Most programs included the following in the training: methods of working to promote study skills and motivation, teaching adapted to the needs of low achievers, and coping with social and emotional needs. However, when asked, only a third of the programs reported that these topics were central to the training (Table 8).

Table 8: Teachers' Training (Absolute Numbers)

	Total	Programs in which this element is central to the training
Total	25	
Frequency of training or instruction*		
Start of program	11	
Periodically during the school year	14	
Regularly during the school year	11	
Subjects taught		
Promotion of study skills	21	9
Teaching adapted for low achievers	20	9
Ways to increase motivation/attendance	20	9
Coping with social and emotional needs	20	8
Improving knowledge of contents taught	16	9
Methods of teaching individuals/small groups	17	7
Methods of monitoring students' progress	17	7
Teaching of subjects included in the program	16	8
Multicultural sensitivity	14	7
Working with parents	12	4
Teaching gifted students	9	3
Contact with community services	6	1

* More than one response was possible.

In addition to training the teachers, almost all the programs (except 2) reported that the quality of the teachers' work was monitored. About half of the programs reported that the coordinator held regular discussions with the program staff at least once a week (Table 9).

Table 9: Monitoring Quality of Teachers' Work and Feedback Discussions with Program Teachers (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Total	25
Quality of teachers' work is monitored	23
Frequency coordinator holds discussions with staff members involved in the program	
Once a year	1
Several times a year	5
Once a month or more	6
Once a week or more	13
Basis for holding discussions*	
Ad hoc	6
Regular forum	21

*Respondents could give more than one answer.

Permanent Staff

Having a permanent staff may be a critical factor in creating a stable culture and climate for intervention program (Raley et al., 2008). Ten programs did not provide information about permanent staff and one program was in its first year of implementation. Two programs reported that almost all of their teachers were permanent and had been on the staff for some time. Seven programs reported that between 65% and 80% of the teachers had been working in the program for over a year and 5 programs reported that almost half of their staff had been working in the program for over a year (Table 10).

Table 10: Programs, by Percentage of Teachers Working in the Program This Year for the First Time and by Gross Hourly Pay (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Total	25
Percentage of teachers working in the program for the first time this year	
All/most have been in the program for some time	2
Up to 20% are in their first year	4
21%–35% are in their first year	3
Over 50% are in their first year	5
Not applicable (first year of implementation of the program)	1
Information not provided	10
Gross hourly pay	
Up to NIS 55	3
NIS 70–100	11
NIS 100 or more	5
Students receiving annual stipend/unpaid volunteers	3
Information not provided	2

Follow-up of Program Implementation and the Students' Needs and Progress

Monitoring student performance makes it possible to determine the extent to which a program has progressed toward its goals vis-à-vis both quality and student achievement. Evaluation studies of best practice have found that poor results were generally achieved in programs that did not have a routine way to evaluate the process or the extent to which their objectives were achieved (Sheldon and Hopkins, 2008).

The directors of almost all the programs reported that they monitored participant attendance in the activities, although some programs had difficulty coping with attendance problems and dropout. Half of the programs reported that they designed a tailor-made curriculum for each student. Moreover, most of the programs monitored the students' school grades and half of them administered internal exams to the students (Table 11).

Table 11: Monitoring of Attendance and Academic Achievements (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Total	25
Attendance is monitored for:	
All participants	20
Most or some of the participants	3
Information not provided	2
Individual curriculum drawn up for every student	13
Academic achievements monitored on the basis of: *	
Scores on school report card	19
Matriculation scores	15
Program's internal exams	13
Advancement to higher stream (within the school grade)	11
Pre-matriculation interim exam scores	10
Other (external exams approved by RAMA, the National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education, questionnaires and evaluation)	3

*Respondents could give more than one answer.

Most of the programs were evaluated to see if they achieved their objectives: 10 programs had an external evaluation and 16 an internal evaluation (some programs reported both types of evaluation). Only two programs did not report any form of evaluation (Table 12).

Table 12: Evaluation of Programs* (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Total	25
No evaluation	2
External evaluation	10
Internal evaluation	16
Evaluation based on impression of professional staff in the field	8

* Respondents could give more than one answer. Seven programs were evaluated both internally and externally. In addition to evaluation, 3 programs also considered the impression of professional staff in the field.

Cooperation with Other Services in the Community

Cooperation among municipal agencies allows for continuity of individual care, which may help students reach their potential by addressing the family, community, educational and cultural aspects of their lives. According to program directors' reports, most of the programs (except 3) are in contact with community services, mainly the education department at the local authority, community centers and social services (Table 13).

Table 13: Contact with Services in the Community (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Total	25
Program is in contact with services in the community	21
Type of service	
Local education department	20
Community center	15
Social services	11

Outside contacts are also essential to assure funding and long-term implementation of programs (NYSAN, 2005). Indeed, the directors reported that budget constraints and the constant need to ensure there would be funding were among the main difficulties the programs had to contend with, which made planning and stable implementation difficult. It was found that most of the programs involved formal agencies – the local authority (17 programs), Ministry of Education (9 programs) or other ministries (9 programs). Voluntary organizations co-funded 12 programs and private organizations or businesses co-funded 10 programs (Table 14). Altogether, 14 programs were co-funded by formal institutions and voluntary or private organizations; 9 programs were funded by formal institutions only; while only 2 programs were funded exclusively by third-sector or private organizations. Note that the programs co-funded by the Ministry of Education (7 group programs and 2 comprehensive support programs) were characterized by a large number of participants and 7 of them offered instruction during the morning school hours as well as in the afternoon.

Table 14: Program Co-Funders (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Total	25
Co-funders*	
Local authority/Local council	17
Voluntary organization, foundation or nonprofit organization	12
Private/business concern	10
Co-payments by parents**	10
Ministry of Education	9
Ministry of Immigrant Absorption	5
Other government ministry	4
University	1
Other	2

*Respondents could give more than one answer.

**Monthly co-payments for parents ranged from NIS 20 to NIS 550.

The annual cost per student ranged from NIS 300 to NIS 16,500.¹ In five programs, the annual cost per participant was over NIS 6,000 (Table 15). The average annual cost per participant was NIS 4,422. The calculation of the average annual cost for each student by stage of education revealed that the average annual cost per elementary schoolchild was higher than the annual cost for students at junior high and high schools (the figure was affected by the high cost of the Moadonit program). For the first group, the average annual cost per participant was NIS 6,430, compared with NIS 4,495 per junior-high or high school student.²

Table 15: Annual Cost per Student (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Total	25
Annual cost per student	
Up to NIS 500	1
NIS 1,000–2,500	6
NIS 3,000–4,000	4
NIS 5,000–6,000	2
NIS 6,000+	5
Information not provided	7

3.3.2 Best-Practice Indicators for the Study

Duration of Participation in the Program

Long-term participation is considered preferable to short-term participation (Gandara and Bial, 2001; McKey et al., 1985; Mitchell et al., 1992). According to program directors' reports, students participated in over half of the programs for an average period of 3–6 years. Two of the programs provided support for even longer. In contrast, there were 4 programs in which students participated on average for up to one year. On average, students participated in the programs for about 3 years (Table 16). Most programs reported low rates of dropout from the program.

¹ The regular cost per participant at the Moadonit frameworks (without upgrading, based on Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Service rates) was up to NIS 13,800 per year, due to the employment of therapy staff at the frameworks, the large number of hours participants spend at the frameworks, and the provision of meals. Of this sum, the teaching cost per participant was NIS 2,700 (in the upgraded format).

² The calculation was based on 5 programs for elementary schoolchildren and 9 programs for students at junior high and high school and did not include the "multi-age" programs.

Table 16: Average Number of Years Students Participate in Program and Dropout Rate (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Total	25
Average number of years in program	
1 year	4
2 years	3
3 years	11
4–6 years	3
8–10 years	2
No limit/Variable	2
Dropout from program in the course of current school year	
No one, or less than 4%, dropped out	13
5%–10%	4
11%–20%	4
No information provided	4

Intensity of Studies

According to the literature, intensive programs in which students study for several hours, several days a week have more positive outcomes with regard to academic achievements and social and behavioral aspects (Fiester et al., 2005). Eleven of the programs provided compulsory activities at least 3 times a week (Table 17) and five of these demanded particularly intensive attendance (4 times a week or more). On average, the students participated in the programs approximately 6.5 hours a week. In the Moadonit program, participants spent 4 times more than the general average number of weekly hours, although, as noted, this is a comprehensive program and most of the activities are not study oriented.

About half of the programs were implemented in the morning, as well as in the afternoon. Moreover, the directors of 16 programs reported that they conducted study marathons and/or other activities during the summer vacation.

The number of subjects in which the students received assistance, in most programs, ranged from 1–5 (Table 17). A considerable proportion of the programs, for all ages, provided assistance in mathematics, English and language skills. About half the programs for high school students reported that they provided assistance in all matriculation subjects according to the needs of each student (Table 18).

Table 17: Frequency of Sessions, Number of Weekly Hours, Study Marathons and Number of Subjects (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Total	25
Frequency of sessions (average: 2.6)	
Up to twice a week	14
3 times a week	6
4 times a week or more	5
Average number of hours per week*	6.6
Marathons prior to exams or during vacations	16
Activities during summer vacation	16
Number of subjects taught to participants	
Up to 2	7
3 subjects	6
4–5 subjects	2
According to students' needs	5
No information provided	5

*Two programs reported a very large number of weekly hours (50 and 45, respectively), due to work conducted in the mornings as well. These programs were not included in the calculation of the average.

Table 18: Subjects in which Program Participants Receive Academic Assistance, by Age Group* (Absolute Numbers)

	Elementary School	Junior High School	High School
Number of programs	13	16	19
Mathematics	11	12	13
English	11	12	14
Language skills	10	8	11
History	--	1	8
Chemistry	1	2	10
All matriculation subjects			10
According to student's needs/school's request	2	2	3

* Some programs were for students of various ages. Program directors were asked to provide data for each age group separately.

Among the 25 programs examined, we found 6 had a high level of intensity, reflected in an average length of participation of 3 years or more and a requirement of 8 hours attendance or more per week. These included 2 comprehensive support programs and 4 group programs.

Twelve programs were characterized by one of these intensity measures (either 3 years or longer or 8 or more weekly hours). Four programs did not have either of these characteristics.³

Study Component of the Programs

Many of the programs reported that they endeavored to provide the students with a different learning experience than that provided during the regular school day by instruction adapted to the low achievers' needs or other methods (e.g., new textbooks and educational games). Sixteen programs reported that they taught school subject matter in greater depth and about a quarter of them introduced the students to new material (2 programs in particular). Three group programs, the 2 comprehensive programs and 2 of the mentoring programs focused mainly on helping students with their homework.

In some programs, some of the activities were aimed at advancing the learning process without focusing on a particular subject. The most widespread activities of this type were workshops to impart learning skills to the students and expose them to academia. Only 2 of the programs included courses to prepare the students for the psychometric exams (Table 19).

Table 19: Contents of Academic Assistance ("Usually" or "Always"*) and Additional Academic Inputs Provided to Participants (Absolute Numbers)

	Total	No. of Programs in which Over Half the Students Participate in Activities
Total	25	25
Study the school material using different study methods/different means (study games, exercise books designed for the program, etc.)	19	
Study the school material in greater depth	16	
Study new material not taught in school	6	
Focus on help with homework	7	
Additional academic activities provided in the program		
Workshops imparting learning skills	13	6
Exposure to academia/academic studies	10	3
Lectures/seminars	7	5
Preparation for psychometric exams	2	1

*Other response categories were: "Never," "Usually not" and "Sometimes."

³ We excluded from the calculation 2 programs that were unable to report morning and afternoon activities separately and 1 program that reported that the duration of participation and the number of weekly hours varied according to each participant's needs.

Enrichment and Empowerment Activities

Variation in the activities increases participants' interest in programs, encourages them to persevere, and helps them develop new skills and abilities. Some examples of the additional activities include crafts, conflict resolution and leadership training workshops (Kelley, 2007; Raley et al., 2008; Metz et al., 2008).

The program directors' reports indicate that the combination of study and enrichment/empowerment activities was very widespread. Almost all the programs (apart from 2) included enrichment activities, although not all the students participated in them. The most common activities were: field trips, "fun days" and shows; meetings with adults who may serve as role models; personal development and empowerment workshops. Seven programs (including the comprehensive support programs) reported that they provided professional therapy for the students and 3 included workshops on working life. A considerable proportion of the programs (17) implemented 4 or more enrichment activities (Table 20). However, the directors of some of the programs reported that it was hard for them to meet additional needs of students (professional intervention/therapy for students with severe emotional problems, behavioral problems, complex learning difficulties and financial problems).

Table 20: Enrichment and Empowerment Activities (Absolute Numbers)

	Total	No. of Programs in which Over Half the Students Participate
Total	25	25
Programs that implement enrichment and empowerment activities	23	
Activities:*		
Fun days, field trips and shows	21	8
Meetings with program graduates serving as role models	18	6
Personal development and empowerment meetings/workshops	16	6
Social activities	16	6
Enrichment activities	13	5
Therapy for students in need	7	–
Preparation for the working world	3	1
Implementation of 4 or more enrichment activities	17	

*One program did not provide details of the enrichment programs implemented.

Participants' Involvement in Planning Activities and Implementing Programs

best-practice programs provide participants with an opportunity to plan activities that reflect their areas of interest, to have a choice of options and to feel a sense of responsibility and commitment to the program (NYSAN, 2005). The program directors' reported that a considerable number of the programs (17) encouraged participants to volunteer and play a leading role in running activities. In contrast, only a third of the programs involved participants in planning the study program (Table 21).

Table 21: Involvement of Youth in the Programs (Programs in which Youths over 12 Participate) (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Total	22
Volunteering and directing activities through the program	17
Planning and directing activities	12
Youth are involved in the planning of the curriculum and decision-making with regard to their participation, to a great/very great extent	8

Cultural Competence

Programs that take the cultural diversity of participants into consideration may offer a more secure environment both physically and psychologically. The reason is that respect and cultural diversity may help youth understand and appreciate their own culture as well as other cultures, language and communities (Metz et al., 2008). Those who learn to appreciate their own cultural identity can be expected to develop more positive opinions about youth from other cultures (Family Strengthening – Policy Center Brief, 2005). Furthermore, developing a positive identity affects self-image and self-esteem (Camino, 1992). Of the programs identified in the preliminary mapping, we sampled 8 programs for immigrant students or Arab students. The majority of teachers in only 3 of these programs were from the same cultural background as the students (Table 22). Fourteen of the programs reported that they included multicultural sensitivity in the staff training and 7 of the programs (including 4 programs for immigrants) noted this was the main focus of the training (see Table 8, p. 13).

Table 22: Programs in which the Teachers are from the Same Cultural Background as the Participants (Absolute Numbers)

Total programs for Immigrants or Arabs	8
Teachers from same cultural background as participants	
A few	2
Some	2
Most	3
No information provided	1

3.3.3 Indicators Relating to Relationship with Schools and Parents

Cooperation with Schools

As noted, most of the programs in this study implemented their activities at schools and were for students at those schools; about half of them also provided instruction during the morning (school hours).

In general, research notes that collaboration with schools is frequently based on the employment of teachers selected from the school staff (Kelley, 2007). When the program teachers are not employed by the school, the two staffs need to cooperate, to share information about the students' academic progress and to ensure that the programs' academic contents respond to the school's needs and are suited to the school curriculum (Harvard Family Research Project, 2006).

As noted, in only 9 of the programs were a large proportion of the teachers also on the regular school staff (although 10 other programs employed teachers on the school staff to some degree). Most of the programs (22) had a staff member responsible for coordinating the exchange of information between the program staff and school staff. In most cases, this coordinator attended school staff meetings, although only 3 programs reported that he/she did so very frequently – once a week or more.

In all programs, the schools were involved in selecting the students who would participate in the program. In fewer programs, they were involved in defining the students' needs and academic level (16 programs), in helping with disciplinary problems during the academic assistance sessions (11 programs), in helping to improve the program (10), in designing the contents taught in the academic assistance sessions (9) and in selecting the teachers to teach in the programs (9) (Table 23).

We found that school management was less involved in programs based on a teaching staff of university students or volunteers than those employing professional teachers.

Table 23: Responsibility for Selecting Participants, Management of Relations with the School, Attendance at Staff Meetings at the School and Nature of the Relationship with the School (Absolute Numbers)

	Total
Total	25
Activities in the morning	13
Selecting students to participate in program	
Program and school	14
School only	11
Way in which connection between program staff and school staff is managed*	
Staff member responsible for transfer of information	22
Discussions held as necessary	17
Regular discussions	10
Large proportion of the assistance teachers are on the school staff	9
Frequency of attendance at school staff meetings by member of the program staff	
Never/once a year	4
A few times a year	10
Once a month or more	5
Once a week or more	3
No information provided	3
Nature of relationship with school (to a great/very great extent) **	
The school staff plays a key role in <i>identifying participants</i> for the program	25
The school staff plays a key role in <i>defining the needs</i> of participants and their academic level	16
The school staff helps with problems of discipline and attendance during the sessions	11
The school staff plays a key role in learning from experience and improving the program	10
The school staff plays a key role in <i>designing</i> the contents included in the program	9
The school management is involved in the selection of the assistance teachers	9

*Respondents could give more than one answer.

** Other categories proposed were "Not at all," "A little" and "Somewhat."

Parents' Involvement

Best-practice programs endeavor to involve the students' parents in order to promote the program goals. Three strategies are employed to encourage this partnership: (1) Informing the parents about the program activities and the participant's progress; (2) Giving parents the opportunity to volunteer or participate in the program and to take leadership roles – or requiring them to do so; (3) Offering support services to the family, such as advice or adult education. Some after-school programs aspire to involve the parents more in the regular school activities. The goal is particularly important when working with new immigrants and marginal groups (Metz et al., 2008). Fifteen of the programs held meetings with the parents individually or in groups during the school year (Table 24). Eleven of the programs also provided services to the families such as workshops focusing on parental involvement, parental authority and adolescence. However, some program directors reported difficulty working with the parents, particularly when there were cultural differences.

Table 24: Parents' Involvement

Total	Total
Total	25
Regular individual/group meetings throughout the year	15
Contact when the need arises – telephone, e-mail or home visit	8
No contact with parents	2

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Appendix I: Criteria for Selecting Programs for Inclusion in the Mapping

The process of selecting programs on which to collect data was as follows:

- 1. Creation of a list of relevant programs** based on several sources of information: list of programs included in a study of elementary and junior high school activities for low achievers (Cohen-Navot et al., 2009) and a study of third-sector activity in education in Israel [Cohen-Navot et al., 2008]; programs evaluated by the Engelberg Center for Children and Youth at the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute; programs approved for inclusion in the National Program for Children and Youth at Risk; an Internet survey of programs; programs implemented in southern Israel with the support of the UJA-Federation of New York; interviews with heads of the Divisions of Elementary and Secondary School Education at the Ministry of Education and with representatives of key program implementers.

Relevant programs were those:

- ♦ That focused on academic assistance
- ♦ In which most of the activities were conducted after school hours
- ♦ That were designed for low achievers or disadvantaged students in the regular education system. The list did not include alternative schools for students who had dropped out of the education system, programs for special-education students and programs for students in residential educational frameworks
- ♦ That were implemented more than one locality/school
- ♦ That had a clear structure – continuity of study, more or less permanent participants, defined minimum duration.

This process yielded a list of 42 programs.

- 2. Classification of the programs:** The programs were sorted according to three parameters: participants' age, intervention strategy and target population (see Table I-1):
 - ♦ Age: about half of the programs (23) were aimed at junior high school and/or high school ages, about a fifth of the programs (7) were aimed at elementary school age, and about 30% of the programs (12) were for all school ages.
 - ♦ The principal intervention strategies found were as follows: group programs (35), comprehensive support programs (2) and mentoring programs (5). Group programs were more prevalent for junior high and high school age students, while the comprehensive support programs were prevalent for students of elementary school age.

- ♦ Most of the programs defined their target populations as "disadvantaged" (18 programs) or "students at risk" (6 programs) without defining specific population groups. Five programs focused on high-achieving students from peripheral areas. Although most of the programs worked with a diversity of populations, several of them were intended for specific groups: new immigrants (8), and the Arab population (4). One of the programs for high-achieving students focused on Bedouin students.

3. **Selection of a sample of programs** for the in-depth mapping (25 programs). The programs were chosen to represent the diversity of characteristics of the programs.

Table I-1: Intervention Strategy and Target Population of After-School Educational Programs, by Participants' Age Group (Absolute Numbers)

	Total	Elementary School Age*	Junior High and High School Age	All School Ages
Total	42	7	23	12
Intervention Strategy				
Group programs	35	5	21	9
Comprehensive support programs*	2	2		
Mentoring	5		2	3
Target Population				
Disadvantaged populations	18	3	8	8
New immigrants	8	1	5	2
Arabs	4	1	3	
Students at risk	6	2	2	2
High-achieving students from peripheral areas**	5		5	

*The programs were for children aged 6–14.

**One of the programs was for Bedouin students.