

Youth Renewal Fund

Education Opportunities for Disadvantaged Israeli Children



Youth
Renewal
Fund



Mission

Israel's school system is plagued by a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate facilities, over-crowded classrooms, and minimal instruction hours in core subjects. Students from low-income homes are the most vulnerable to these deficiencies and do not receive the quality of education they need to break the poverty cycle.

Youth Renewal Fund provides supplemental education to impoverished Israeli children.

Since inception in 1989, YRF has implemented close to \$30 million in supplemental education programming, improving the lives of nearly 100,000 children. Through a comprehensive approach, YRF helps Israeli children discover the power of education as a means to improve quality of life for themselves, their families, their communities and their country.

Israel:

A System in Crisis

Approximately 800,000 Israeli children live in poverty, representing 34% of the country's entire child population. This number has increased by nearly 60% in the past decade, and almost half of these children come from working families. The country also suffers from the largest gap between rich and poor of any industrialized democracy, after the United States.

A solid education foundation is one of the most effective tools in the fight against poverty, but the Israeli school system lacks the resources to serve its population. Research shows that 30% of Israeli 6th grade students cannot read at grade level and nearly 75% of Israeli 8th graders cannot perform basic math calculations.

On an international exam administered in 57 industrialized countries, Israeli students' performance ranked 40th in literacy and math, and 39th in science.

Only 38.5% of Israeli 17-year olds pass their matriculation exams at levels that qualify them for university admission, and less than one third of students who pass these exams enter college within eight years. Multiple studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between students' academic success rates and the average income level of their communities. In wealthier areas, parents supplement their children's educations with private tutors and extra classes. Students from disadvantaged families cannot afford these types of programs, and as a result, they do not receive the quality of education they need to become self-sufficient.



Youth Renewal Fund:

A Systemic Solution

Youth Renewal Fund gives underprivileged Israeli children the ability to change their futures through academic achievement. YRF partners with municipalities where the socioeconomic standards and education levels are below the national average and implements programs that help both individual students and the community as a whole.

PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS

- After-school projects that teach core academic subjects, expose students to innovations in technology and provide a strong network of support
- Single subject learning centers equipped with books, computers, listening stations and other educational tools that help students learn English or math in a unique, interactive environment
- Exam preparation courses focused on improving performance on college matriculation exams
- University scholarships for YRF alumni who return to work as tutors in current projects

PROGRAMS FOR TEACHERS

- A groundbreaking Teacher Professional Development Program that provides training workshops, group meetings, professional mentoring, and self and peer observation
- A resource center filled with computers and teaching aids
- A yearly award ceremony recognizing excellent teachers and serving to bolster public opinion of the teaching profession

Measurement & Results

YRF is focused on measurability and quantifiable outcomes to gauge project success. Methods of evaluation include reviews of grades and other performance data, qualitative research with host schools, student and teacher satisfaction surveys, and third-party analysis. A recent third-party study reported:

- 88% of YRF students graduate from high school with an academic degree, compared with the national average of 55% for low-income students.
- 77% of YRF students take and pass matriculation exams, compared to the national average of 55%.
- 60% of YRF students over age 25 have obtained degrees from institutes of higher learning, compared with the national average of 17%.

After-School Projects

After-school projects take place at the conclusion of the regular school day and provide up to six additional instruction hours per week in core subjects, including English, Hebrew and math.

FOCUSED EDUCATIONAL ENRICHMENT

Lessons are taught in small groups of 12-14 students, compared to the average class size of 35 found in the Israel school system.

A UNIQUE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In addition to using traditional lesson formats, YRF teachers also employ leading-edge methodologies, including logic games, interactive learning, drama techniques, debate groups and group learning—all of which foster curiosity and creative thinking.

LEADERSHIP

While focusing on academics, YRF's curriculum also stresses cognitive and leadership development skills, responsibility and value-based decision-making. Students keep personal journals and regularly meet individually with their teachers to discuss both long and short-term goals and to monitor progress.

NUTRITION

In communities where the need is greatest, YRF provides students with lunch immediately prior to the commencement of class. For many children, this is the only nutritious meal they receive on these days.



Learning Centers

YRF Learning Centers provide a unique study environment and a wide variety of resources to help students improve English or math skills. The centers contain computers, books, listening stations, videos, educational games and other materials that promote a challenging, interactive and interesting approach to learning. Under the guidance of YRF staff, the centers host classes from nearby schools during the mornings and feature YRF-run supplemental education programs in the afternoons.

CLAIRE & EMANUEL G. ROSENBLATT ENGLISH CENTER

Completed in 2002, this state-of-the-art, stand-alone facility in Tirat Carmel is used daily by several local schools and serves over 1,500 students each year. The majority of the community's children study here on a regular basis.



ETHAN H. FREED LEARNING CENTER

This large, stand-alone facility in Ramla was completed in 2010 and will serve up to 5,000 students annually. The two-story building boasts several classrooms, two auditoriums, a computer lab equipped with latest technology, and a special multi-purpose room for arts & crafts and other hands-on activities.

IN-SCHOOL CENTERS

In-School Centers are located in dedicated school classrooms. In addition to YRF's teaching staff, the host school teachers are specially trained to use these centers for their morning classes.

“I want to work in robotics. I come to YRF because I want to and because I really enjoy learning here. YRF is helping me so I can achieve my goals.”

— Itai, age 10, Ashdod

Partner Programs

Every municipality in which YRF works serves as an active partner in project implementation. YRF also teams up with other organizations in Israel to create effective programs. These partnerships enable YRF to leverage its own expertise in the field, expand programmatic reach and maximize financial resources. Examples of recent and ongoing partnerships include:

- Collaboration on a project that provides support for at-risk teens during high school, military service and college. YRF runs the after-school classes and exam preparation components of the program.
- Partnership with an organization that offers education services to low-income children suffering from learning disabilities. YRF teachers provide after-school instruction to these children using special learning techniques.
- Joint venture with a foundation to run programs for disadvantaged children at a local science center. YRF provides administrative support for the program and professional mentoring for its teachers.



Teacher Professional Development Program

Teaching is often cited as the single-most important success factor in any education system. An international study of best practices in education conducted by McKinsey and Company in 2007 revealed that students placed with high performing teachers will progress three times faster than those placed with low performing ones. Israeli teachers receive little ongoing training or professional development. Recognizing both a need in the market and a proven ability to meet that need, YRF made the strategic decision to increase its focus on teachers as the gateway to student success. After an initial pilot in 2007, YRF officially launched its groundbreaking Teacher Professional Development Program in the fall of 2008. Municipalities, education officials and schools across Israel where YRF works have been eager to partner in the program's implementation.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Improve teachers' lesson planning and management skills
- Provide teachers with an opportunity for training, goal setting, and performance feedback
- Increase teachers' sense of ownership and responsibility for their students' success
- Enhance the learning environment for teachers and students

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- A 2-day introductory workshop that defines teachers' roles as leaders, and outlines the program's goals and methods
- A need-based training department, offering a menu of services and solutions to real life classroom issues
- Training sessions and workshops on topics including lesson planning, classroom management, methods for opening/closing lessons, and techniques for forming one-on-one relationships with students
- Consultation on lesson plans with professional mentors
- Three forms of classroom observation: mentor, peer and self
- Bi-monthly peer meetings for discussion and networking

“There is no better feeling than coming to class and finding a student waiting to tell you that he just passed a test - because of you!”

— Samira, YRF Teacher, Lod

Teaching Resource Center

The Claire & Emanuel G. Rosenblatt Resource Center in Yehud provides teaching materials, periodicals, textbooks and computers to all YRF staff to help enhance their professional growth. YRF also conducts frequent seminars and meetings in the Center.

Teaching Award Program

In the spring of 2005, YRF held its first Award ceremony recognizing excellence in teaching. Teachers are nominated by their peers to receive these awards based on outstanding achievement, passion and dedication. Presented annually at a nationally publicized event, the ceremony also serves to bolster public opinion of the teaching profession in Israel.

School-Focused Programs

A subset of YRF's traditional after-school programs, these projects evolved in conjunction with YRF's increased focus on teachers and the education system as a whole.

In its school-focused programs, YRF works directly with administrators and principals to drastically improve the quality of learning for all students at an individual school. These projects combine YRF's core after-school programs for disadvantaged students with individualized teacher training that caters to the school's specific learning environment. What makes these projects unique is that the after-school classes are taught only by teachers from the host school, and YRF's training department works with these teachers intensively throughout the year to improve their methods and skills. This approach enables YRF to expand its focus beyond the students who electively participate in its after-school programs to a school's entire student body.

Alumni

YRF's alumni program provides university scholarships to select students who have participated in YRF projects. Since YRF started this initiative in 1994, over 50 students have worked as teachers, mentors and administrators for YRF in exchange for scholarships to attend universities. Many alumni also help with student recruitment at the beginning of each academic year.

These alumni are YRF's most tangible proof of success. They serve as role models for current YRF students, proving to them that academic success is within their grasp and that with hard work, anything is possible.

Management

YRF's international management team is comprised of two Executive Directors—one in the US and one in Israel—and an Israel-based Chief Financial Officer. Boards of Directors in both the US and Israel work jointly to oversee operations, make policy decisions and exercise guidelines for strategy, fundraising and management.



YRF stands apart from other philanthropic agencies, not only for the quality of its programs, but also for its emphasis on goal achievement, measurability and financial transparency. The demand for YRF services continues to grow, and the organization is committed to meeting this need. Several factors contribute to YRF's ability to maintain its hallmark level of efficiency:

CONSERVATIVE BUDGETING POLICY

YRF's fiscal year budget is determined by the actual funds available at the end of the prior fiscal year.

EXCHANGE RATE MANAGEMENT

YRF carefully monitors the dollar/shekel exchange rates. The organization transfers funds throughout the year and enters into forward contracts to help offset currency fluctuations.

STREAMLINED OPERATIONS

YRF constantly reviews operational and program budgets to reduce expenses and maximize resources. Focus is placed on eliminating excess cost without compromising the quality of programming.

COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

Contributions from the YRF US Board of Directors cover 100% of overhead and fundraising expenses, ensuring that all other donations go directly to projects in Israel.



Youth Renewal Fund

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