



The Fund for Innovative Teaching in Israel Educational Initiatives for Arab Children

Organization: The Fund for Innovative Teaching

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Organizational Background

Founded in 1971 by Prof. Marcella Brenner, the Fund for Innovative Teaching aims to empower teachers in Israel by encouraging creativity and innovation in education. By providing financial assistance and incentives as well as mentorship to individual teachers involved in the program, the fund nurtures innovative ideas and facilitates their implementation within the Israeli educational system.

The Fund for Innovative Teaching has had a significant impact on tens of thousands of children through its successful implementation of over 2,000 educational initiatives in kindergartens and schools in all population sectors and geographical locations. Our years of experience and reputation for excellence are key factors in affording us direct access to schools that leads to the smooth implementation of our projects. We enjoy the strong support of the Ministry of Education which is actively involved in our programs, providing professional development, mentorship and funding.

The Fund for Innovative Teaching supports a wide variety of projects that serve all populations throughout the country. We believe in the pivotal role that the individual teacher plays and have learned that when we succeed in inspiring teachers, we also succeed in empowering their students.

In a 2009 study of the Fund for Innovative Teaching conducted by the Henrietta Szold National Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, the findings showed that teachers felt more professionally empowered, demonstrated a marked improvement in the quality of their teaching and noticed more enthusiasm and involvement from their pupils.

Need

While the Israeli educational system serves 325,000 Muslim and Druze children with 18,000 teachers and 605 schools, there is a significant gap between government investment in Arab and Jewish school children. An Arab child receives 32% less educational services than his/her Jewish counterpart. This translates into less school hours per child, poorly trained teachers, dilapidated school buildings and inadequate infrastructure.

Unfortunately, the cultural environment of the educational system in the Arab sector is conservative and outdated both in function and in teaching methods. Principals typically do not engage teachers in setting the educational agenda, thus perpetuating a stagnant approach and atmosphere.

In addition, on a national level, close to 50% of new teachers leave the educational system during the first four years of their career. They often feel overwrought by the demands of their job. Some also feel that their creativity stifled, losing touch with their dreams and motivation as they invest tremendous energy in just meeting their superiors' and colleagues' basic expectations.

Program Goals

- Increase motivation among pupils
- Improve teaching methods
- Encourage teachers to actively influence the educational agenda
- Improve teachers' self-image in the Arab community

Program

The school environment and learning experiences heavily influence each child's cognitive, emotional and social development. While basic teaching methods are essential, a more creative approach often proves to have more impact. In addition, since each child learns differently, a variety of approaches and methods is crucial to answer each child's needs. The Educational Initiatives Program for Arab Children encourages teachers working in the Arab sector to develop creative and therapeutic models for learning, making positive changes in their classrooms.

As the professionals who spend the most time with children, teachers are strategically placed to best identify children's needs, and are often also the most qualified to come up with creative solutions. The Educational Initiatives Program offers teachers an opportunity to influence their own classrooms, their schools and the general educational system. For the motivated, creative teacher, this is a unique and compelling opportunity.

The program provides mentorship and funding for teachers to develop their initiative and implement it in their school setting. There are also opportunities for a second year of funding and assistance in promoting the initiative in other school settings. By focusing our attention on those who teach children in the Arab sector, we ignite a spark of creativity and motivation that empowers the children to become leaders and agents of change in their schools and ultimately in society.

During the 2013-14 school year, the program will accept 12 applications from teachers working with Arab children. During the month of December 2013, the program is advertised among all teachers and applications are accepted through Mid-August 2014. The educational committee,

chaired by the newly appointed Director of the Ministry of Education, Ms. Michal Cohen, consists of other prominent educational professionals and other representatives of the Ministry of Education. The committee interviews each applicant and selects projects that uniquely respond to the children's needs in the most effective and creative way.

Each teacher accepted to the program is assigned a mentor by the Fund for Innovative Teaching. All mentors are program alumni, who guide and assist teachers throughout the year both in the planning and implementation, making three site visits during the year. The Fund's Executive Director and a member of the pedagogic committee visit each project during the year. In addition to a start-of-year orientation meeting, two annual conferences are held: one in December and one in May. The conferences offer leadership training workshops as well as a chance for teachers to share ideas and experiences and receive support from their peers.

The funding for each initiative is divided into two parts - funding for the actual project as well as cash award for each teacher who successfully implements his/her project. The teacher also receives accredited hours towards professional advancement. Following the first year, teachers who are interested in continuing their initiative for a second year can request additional funding, providing that their project meets the high standards set for continuing projects.

Examples of Initiatives in the Arab Sector

Driving Differently: Our lives Are Our Responsibility

Ms. Troub Abu-Romi and Ms. Suhair Hamam, Tamra

The school lost a student in a car accident and this tragedy made it realize the great need for change regarding driving behavior amongst students, parents and in the broader community. The teacher chose to develop a theatrical production focusing on driving safety, that she presents in the school and in community settings.

Alternative Energy and the Development of an Ecological Garden

Mr. Firas Hamed, Mr. Haytam Deeb, Abu Tor, Jerusalem (second year)

The garden offers many therapeutic opportunities for managing emotions, behaviors and relationships. While working in nature, children learn about their environment as well as about themselves. Gardening can be integrated into subjects such as science, math and language. The activities in this second year of activities will be expanded to include building a solar oven and involving other teachers and members of the community into the garden activities.

Making Math Fun

Mr. Mahmoud Ghadeer, Ms. Israa' Ghadeer, Be'er al-Maksoor

The objective of the initiative is to make the study of mathematics fun through games and activities. The initiative offers students a meaningful learning experience via unique teaching methods focusing on a variety of mathematical content areas that are not included in the regular curriculum. The aim is to encourage students to enjoy learning math as they learn and progress scholastically.

Timeline

December 2013: Announcement of application process
August 1, 2014: All applications submitted
August 2014: Applications are reviewed
August 15: Decisions are sent out to applicants
September 2014: Start of year orientation gathering
September 2013: Projects are begun
December 2014: Conference for participating teachers to showcase their projects and leadership training workshops
May 2015: Second conference for participating teachers to report and share experiences

Evaluation

The program's goals are to guarantee the high quality and success of our programs, ensure that pupils receive the maximum benefit from the initiatives and to promote the replication of projects in other schools. Thus, in order to measure its effectiveness, an important aspect of the program is a required evaluation process that accompanies the implementation of each initiative. This is a crucial element in both tracking the success of each initiative as well as a vital tool in encouraging the Ministry of Education to adopt and continue funding successful initiatives on a national scale. The evaluation process involves the teacher and mentor as well as principal feedback questionnaires, reports and conference attendance.

Based on these materials, a formal report is prepared and presented to the Ministry of Education each year. The report analyzes the extent to which each teacher achieved the goals of the program, summarizes pupils' feedback and provides a budget breakdown. The teachers are also required to submit receipts for any expenses incurred, enabling the organization to verify that funds have been spent appropriately.

The organization is currently involved in a comprehensive evaluation process in cooperation with the JDC Brookdale Institute.

**Proposed Budget for 12 initiatives in the Arab sector
2013-14 (\$1 = NIS3.5)**

Expenses

Project Director	16,300
Operational expenses – school grant	22,000
Personal teacher award	13,500
Professional educational mentorship	21,500
Communication and outreach	4,000
<u>3 yearly conferences</u>	<u>5,800</u>
Total	83,100

Income

Beracha Foundation (approved)	34,050
Ministry of Education matching funds	34,050
<u>Requested from P.E.F</u>	<u>15,000</u>
Total	83,100

* Expenditure per initiative \$7,000