

TOP 15

CALL TO ACTION

A meeting with media experts to discuss the question of how to create a social movement around excellence in middle school

NOVEMBER 13, 2018, 15:15-16:15, DJANOGLY HALL, MISHKENOT SHA'ANANIM

A great many problems surround us - to the point of dulling our senses, and even more so in the field of education. Therefore, in order to ignite public momentum, specifically around middle school, many people have to feel a particularly difficult and painful problem, one that touches their hearts and with which they profoundly identify. They must be convinced that it is impossible to allow the situation to continue and that a solution to the problem must be urgently found. Only when the hard-to-handle feelings and deep convictions connect to a tangible solution to which we feel drawn and that we believe will indeed be able to help us, then perhaps we become engaged, become active and ready to take action.

In the roadmap the foundation presented regarding middle school, we told the story of our children who are left by their parents at the school gate. They arrive confused and brimming with hormones to a crowded train station, aimless and without direction. They do not find their way and get lost. Just at the age when they need someone by their side, to help them and mark out the path, just then they are left on their own, alone. Middle school is a period in which they have time to gain clarity about the direction their heart inclines and to forge a solid base of knowledge and abilities leading there. Together with their teachers they can prepare well for the intersection of choices concerning high school majors that will open doors for them and pave their way to the future.

The call we are proposing to students, parents and teachers is - "take responsibility for your lives" and "choose excellence". Excellence is a difficult and arduous path worth traveling because it builds the road to the future. True, you will have to expend effort and invest, to drill and persevere and there will be obstacles and challenges. But, together, you can drive and support, encourage and overcome, and prove to yourselves that you can. Choosing excellence is a practical choice, you must apply to register, to be tested, to assimilate and persevere in high ability grouping in mathematics, in special excellence tracks in science, and in various advanced classes and enrichment settings.

It should be noted that we are turning to the education system with somewhat of a different incentive, which is: if more students successfully study in mathematics and science excellence tracks in middle school, it will strengthen the foundation of excellence in Israel. And, Israel will make it into the top 15 countries in the world that excel in mathematics.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Does the description of the problem (getting lost) identify an authentic problem that is widespread and profound? Is the proposed solution (a teacher) convincing and gripping? And, is the call to action (choose excellence) clear, tangible and does it have a good chance of building a motivating environment? If so, under what conditions, and if not, what are the alternatives?

2. In contrast to the “five-units” campaign, in which the country’s and the students’ success were identical, in middle school there is a gap: being among the countries that excel in math is not what motivates students, parents and teachers. Is it possible to bridge this gap, and how? Are two messages desirable and possible?
3. With the five-units campaign we recognized that for students, it will be a long time before they see the dividend of investment they make in high school and therefore parents, together with teachers, played a central role. In light of the complex picture arising from surveys of middle school students, parents and teachers, what is the “springboard” worth investing in so as to ignite the rest?

As **background** to the discussion, we recommend reading the following:

- A. [Working Paper for Consultation with Partners: Choosing Excellence in Middle School Mathematics and Science Studies – Philanthropic Roadmap 2019-2024 \(B&W printable version\)](#)
- B. [What do Parents Think of Middle School and of Mathematics and Science Studies? – Hagar Lerman and Liat Atzmon Hecht](#)
- C. [What Motivates Students to Invest and Excel in Mathematics and Science Studies in Middle School – Hagar Lerman and Liat Atzmon Hecht](#)
- D. [How to Smooth the Transition from Middle School to High School in Mathematics and the Sciences – Hadas Brody Schroder](#)

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