

Excellence in Middle School — A Survey of Parents and Students

An abstract based on survey findings by *Midgam*, August 2022

Following a media campaign in collaboration with *Keshet*, which focused on promoting excellence in middle school, we turned to the *Midgam* Research Group to conduct a survey among parents and students. The purpose of the survey was to identify whether over time, and as a result of the campaign, changes in parents' and children's thinking patterns and behavior have been taking place. Earlier surveys showed that middle school is perceived as a less important stage from an academic standpoint and that there is a very low level of awareness of the option of choosing excellence tracks already at this stage.

Main findings

- 1.** In response to the question what is the first priority for students in middle school? 51% of the parents said, "investing in learning" and 25% responded "social life." Among students, the perceptions were reversed with 52% believing that social life is the most important and just 36% replying "studies". However, among students in excellence classes and the top ability group in mathematics, the perceptions were similar to those of the parents.
- 2.** Both parents and students say that English and mathematics are the most important subjects (about 70%), and there is a substantial disparity between those two and all the other subject areas (the next in line was roughly 10%).
- 3.** Most parents and students believe that studies in high school are the most important stage. This is followed by a significant gap, by studies in university and only then, in middle school (parents — 14 %, students — 11%).
- 4.** The parents report that they are the ones with the greatest impact on their children's degree of investment in middle school studies (75%). The children also believe that their parents have a very high degree of influence (80%).
- 5.** Even after the media campaign, only 53% of parents and students had heard about the existence of middle school excellence tracks. About 40% claim that there are no such tracks in their school. Among those who are familiar with these tracks, the most familiar program is Mofet (12%).
- 6.** To the question of "for what purpose?" should one study in an excellence track, parents and students agree that the main reason is "to develop thinking abilities" (parents — 63%, students — 48%). When asked to provide additional important reasons, a significant gap between parents and students was revealed:
 - a.** Parents cited pedagogical and social reasons, such as "to study in a class with good students" (45%), "to study interesting topics" (42%), and "to study with good teachers" (35%).
 - b.** Students mentioned these topics but along with them cited utilitarian reasons (which parents also mentioned but in lower numbers), such as "a better future" (45%) and "a higher salary" (39%).