The International Advisory Council 2024 Insights and Recommendations

The International Advisory Council of the Trump Foundation convenes every two years to provide critical feedback on the foundation's activities and offer insights into its future directions. Operating on a voluntary basis, the council comprises members from both Israel and abroad. This year, the council convened for a day of discussions at the new premises of the National Library of Israel.

Ahead of the discussions, <u>research</u>, <u>surveys</u>, <u>and background materials</u> were prepared, including in-depth analyses and perspectives on the foundation's areas of activity. Additionally, the foundation's team prepared a proposed <u>roadmap</u> for its activities in the coming years, to serve as a basis for discussions and critique.

The discussions were joined by members of the foundation's board of directors and the Trump family. The 2024 council members were Rabbi Menachem Bombach, Prof. Michal Beller, Naama Tal, Dr. Gili Leibushor, Prof. Michael Feuer, Prof. Boris Koichu, Prof. Irwin Kirsch, Dr. Rachel Knoll, and Ms. Dalit Stauber.

Excellence in the Coming Decade

Israel requires a strong, broad, and diverse scientific and technological leadership. Over the next decade, the country will need to recover and rebuild from the war, with education playing a special role as a lever for the future, while placing excellence in education at its forefront.

This is an enormous task compounded by the negative consequences of the pandemic, growing social polarization in Israel, and widening education gaps. On the other hand, a technological revolution driven by artificial intelligence is advancing rapidly, presenting both opportunities and challenges for Israel.

These processes intertwine with the Israeli education system at a challenging moment. Students and teachers have been deeply affected, educational content and school study hours have been reduced, and learning gaps have widened. Reports increasingly highlight declines in achievements, teacher shortages, and diminishing public trust in the education system.

Therefore, the Trump Foundation has a unique role to play in the coming decade: supporting recovery, expanding excellence tracks, upgrading content to meet international standards, and providing opportunities for excellence across all communities and genders.



High-Tech Matriculation

Following the recommendations of a Public Committee, the Israeli government has set an ambitious goal, to reach 20,000 twelfth-grade graduates by 2030 who complete their matriculation certificate with a combination of subjects known as "high-tech matriculation," which includes five units each in mathematics, English, physics, and/or computer science.

This combination of high school majors has been identified as the strongest predictor of future integration into the fields of science and high-tech. It has also been found that students who participated in excellence tracks during middle school have a significantly higher probability of pursuing "high-tech matriculation" in high school.

It is recommended that the foundation take the following steps:

- 1. Analyze the potential for expansion, to identify where efforts should be concentrated. Priority should initially be given to schools and cities with significant and immediate potential to create upward momentum and counter the emerging downward trend.
- 2. Develop collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Implementation will also benefit from a cross-sector Collective Impact initiative and the rollout of local programs with municipalities, networks, and districts that have proven capabilities and potential.
- 3. Study best practices of schools that have successfully improved their "hightech matriculation" metrics across the range of social strata in Israel. The foundation should document and model their methods, and provide schools with opportunities to learn from them.
- 4. Build prestige and demand for the "high-tech matriculation" brand to raise awareness and encourage its selection through incentives and media campaigns targeting parents, students, and the public. Special attention should be given to female students, recognizing that outreach to them requires a different approach.
- 5. Upgrade the content and skills taught in the "high-tech matriculation" courses to align with international standards and current developments in high-tech, artificial intelligence, and mental resilience, relevant to the 21st century.
- 6. Address the unintended consequences of focusing on "high-tech matriculation," particularly the implications for other high school majors, such as biology, chemistry, and vocational training, as well as for students who do not choose this study track.

PISA Skills

International standards that correlate with Israel's science and high-tech needs emphasize mathematical topics and thinking and application skills. With these standards in mind, the foundation has, in recent years, invested significant resources in developing teaching materials, professional development, and the opening of excellence classes. In 2022, the Ministry of Education approached the foundation to provide access to the materials it helped develop. Additionally, the foundation was asked to invest further resources to assist the government in adapting the national curriculum and in the professional development of teachers. The foundation responded positively to the request.

Following the advisory council discussions, it is recommended that the foundation:

- 1. Contact the Minister of Education to clarify whether the Ministry of Education has backtracked on its declaration to change the curriculum. The position presented by Ministry representatives during the discussions with the council was that the middle school curriculum has not been adapted, that the Ministry's policy mainly targets literacy at lower levels, and that discussions in the Ministry's academic committee on the matter would take a long time.
- 2. Consider the continuation of its activities in this area. Ministry representatives mentioned that they are targeting approximately 20% of teachers for professional development in applied mathematics, with an implementation scope of about three optional lessons per year. The impression given was that, as long as this policy and scope of implementation remain, there is little chance for Israeli students to improve their performance relative to international standards.
- 3. Assuming the government's policy will change, the foundation should focus on analyzing the performance of Israeli students on various tasks, with particular attention to topics and skills where they underperform. In task development, it is recommended to rely not only on the PISA conceptual framework but primarily on its technical guidelines (construct).
- 4. Assuming more emphasis is placed on these topics in the curriculum, the foundation should assist in developing teaching materials for subjects such as statistics and probability, three-dimensional geometry, and aspects of linear algebra.
- 5. The foundation should intensify its efforts to prepare the ground in the professional community, including in academia and among teachers, to increase awareness and understanding of the topics and skills measured in international studies.

Artificial Intelligence

Keeping Israel's relative advantage in science and technology, the next generation of excellence in Israel must master the intricacies of artificial intelligence. This means that the content and skills taught in excellence tracks starting from secondary school will need to adapt and upgrade.

We are approaching a new era where technology is advancing at an exceptionally fast pace, and Israel is already lagging in preparing to ride its wave. Other countries, particularly in East Asia, have already begun creating educational tracks, developing content and tools, and training teachers to prepare students at various educational levels.



In the advisory council discussions, it was recommended that the foundation:

- 1. Serve as a *field-building catalyst* for preparing the next generation of Israeli scientists and developers to master the realm of artificial intelligence. The foundation should start by supporting pioneering programs, advancing the development of professional standards, creating capabilities, encouraging discourse, and building infrastructure to prepare for broad policy and action.
- 2. Identify the necessary content and develop educational materials, including in areas such as linear algebra, data science, neural networks, and more. At the same time, it will be essential to prepare students to adopt a mindset that involves algorithmic, analytical, and critical thinking.
- 3. Prepare a cadre of teachers who would be capable of teaching artificial intelligence at scale. This effort will involve the development of AI-based aids to assist teachers in teaching and mentoring students, as well as technologies for personalization of learning.
- 4. Act quickly, as this is a field with an extraordinarily fast pace of progress, and achieve broad activity within a short time. The foundation should establish deep collaboration with the Ministry of Education across its various divisions on this matter.
- 5. Consider the ethical aspects of using and developing AI tools and integrate awareness of these dilemmas into school instruction. There is concern about widening gaps, so it is essential to emphasize social benefits and reach out to underrepresented communities.

Mental Resilience

Mental resilience skills are necessary for all students, including those in excellence tracks. These students need to cope with high level of learning, fast paced environments, continuous effort, and multiple tasks. The traditional tendency was to relate to mental skills as less important, particularly for excellence students, who were expected to overcome difficulties independently.

Following the pandemic, and even more so after the war, it can be anticipated that the need for mental resilience skills will greatly increase, even among excellence students, and that professional assistance will be required. Special attention should be given to vulnerable populations and the widening gaps among female students, students in the geographic periphery, and students from Arab schools.

The foundation should take the following actions:

- 1. Identify the specific mental skills needed for excellence-track students, and select from among them those that can be taught in schools by teachers, with a focus on teachers of excellence subjects. The foundation must clearly and in advance define the conceptual framework it chooses to adopt.
- 2. Build collaborations with centers of expertise to develop content, tools, and methods for teaching the selected skills to excellence students. Pilot programs should be conducted to gather feedback, improve, and validate the developed content and interventions.

- 3. Establish collaborations between expert organizations and educators to raise awareness and encourage efforts to integrate these skills into the regular practices of schools. Effective methods for practically integrating these skills into existing classrooms and lessons should be identified.
- 4. Pay attention to and provide solutions adapted to specific populations more affected by gaps, with an emphasis on female students, students in the periphery, and the Arab community. It will be necessary to identify the different needs, specific coping mechanisms, and motivating factors among these populations.
- 5. Define performance indicators, output measures, and outcome and impact dimensions for interventions aimed at developing mental resilience, and establish a system for assessing validity, efficiency, and success. These measures should focus on both the acquisition of skills and their impact on choices, perseverance, and success in studies.

Social Gaps

Science and high-tech are central drivers of Israel's success, and as such, they form the aspirations of many students and parents. Therefore, excellence in these fields can serve as a tool to motivate many students to invest and excel, while opening opportunities for anyone willing to be challenged, regardless of background, gender, or ethnicity.

Performance indicators in schools in these areas have been rising in recent years across the country and within all population groups. However, over the last two years, the trend has reversed, and gaps between different groups are widening, and are even expected to deepen due to the war and the artificial intelligence revolution.

Considering this, it is recommended that the foundation emphasize the following aspects in its activity:

- 1. Special effort should be devoted to closing the gender gap in education, which is primarily found in the larger schools in the center of Israel. The foundation and its partners should approach female students with tailored tools for awareness, social mission, and with mental resilience support.
- 2. Collaborate with local authorities in the periphery and the Arab community with proven capability of improving rates of excellence and with high-quality educational leadership. The combination of national policy and resources, with local leadership and philanthropic assistance, can drive significant local improvement.
- 3. Advanced uses of learning technologies incorporating artificial intelligence should be examined to provide quality, tailored education in areas with scarce teaching quality and quantity. This effort should include personalization tools and individual mentoring aids.

