

# Matanel Summer Tracks for Outstanding Students from the Periphery



## Summary report

The Elsie and Willie Rothschild

## Summer Program 2014

### Session 14



## *Tel Aviv Youth University*

*Discovering the human capital of Israel*

לגלות את ההון האנושי

## ***Background on the program***

In this program, some 50 outstanding 10th - 11th grade students from across the country take part in a summer semester at Tel Aviv University. During the week (Sunday to Thursday) the students board in student hostels in the center of the country. The day's activities run from morning to night, and include participating in academic courses, study and extra tuition groups, social and cultural activities, and more. Students can choose from a range of different courses in the faculties of the Humanities and Social Science, and are supported by personal mentors throughout their academic studies, who help them cope with the study material by developing and reinforcing their learning skills.

The academic credits achieved by the students will be credited to them when they are admitted to university studies in the future.

Participants in the program, students from a poor socio-economic background with a high potential to excel in their studies, are identified with the help of head teachers in high school in Israel's social and geographic territory, from Kiryat Shemona, Katzerin and Khurfeish in the north to Beersheba, Rahat and Eilat in the south, religious and secular, Jews and Arabs, immigrants and native Israelis studying together.

The program's main aim is to expose students to the academic world, based on years of experience and research showing that sampling academic studies while still in high school reduces anxiety with regard to successful integration in university in the future, contributes to a positive approach to higher education, and strengthens the students' belief in their ability to succeed in first and even advanced degree studies. These students, who will earn credits that can be used in their later academic studies, will be ambassadors for higher education and serve as an example and role model in their communities.



## Students

This year there were 50 students in the program, from 26 different localities around the country: Or Akiva, Achihud, Ashdod, Beersheba, Beit Shean, Jordan Valley, Givat Ada, Daburiya, Dimona, Karmiel, Kafr Yanuh, Kafr Misr, Kafr Sumei, Metulla, Ma'alot Tarshiha, Nahariya, Nahf, Nazareth, Netanya, Sakhnin, Acre, Afula, Rishon Lezion, Ramle and Sderot.

Karmiel, Nahariya, Nahf,  
Nazareth, Acre, Afula, Sakhnin,  
Ma'alot Tarshiha

Beit Shean, Jordan Valley,  
Metulla, Daburiya, Kafr Yanuh,  
Kafr Misr, Kafr Sumei



Ashdod, Beersheba, Dimona,  
Sderot

Netanya, Rishon Lezion, Ramle, Or  
Akiva, Givat Ada

In order to enlist students, we worked in cooperation with the schools, which sent us lists of their recommendations. The recommended students were asked to send a school report and written recommendation, and were then called in for a day of careful selection, which included a test and a personal interview.

In the admission process, we took into account the students' data (certificate, test score, standard of Hebrew), their motivation, and giving priority to students with a higher 'care index'.

## ***The program team***

Program director: manages the summer track of Tel Aviv Youth University, sessions 11, 13, 14.

3 graduate social counselors: Veteran students studying for a recognized academic degree (bachelor's or master's) in various disciplines in the faculties of social sciences and the humanities. Responsible for the social and personal field, manage the social activities, accompany the students, and provide an answer to various needs (mainly to do with the bureaucracy). The counselors sometimes also help to provide support for the academic aspect.



Academic tutors: Veteran students studying for a recognized academic degree (bachelor's or master's) in various disciplines in the faculties of social sciences and the humanities. Each of the tutors is responsible for the study units accompanying an academic course - tutoring and reading group.

6 youth counselors: Outstanding students who participated in the program one or two years ago. Each one is teamed up with a social counselor and an academic tutor. The youth counselors are the heart of the program. They stay with the students in the Kfar Hayarok student hostel, and accompany them both academically and personally: holding personal conversations, helping them learn the material, and taking part in the regular work. The program team is part of the staff of the Dov Lautman Unit for Science Oriented Youth, headed by Shira Shofet.

In their feedback, the students talk about the staff:

"My graduate counselor was always at my side, and helped me at every moment of despair!"

"The youth counselor helped me a lot, both in the project and emotionally. Whenever I was sad or things were difficult for me, he knew how to encourage me and make me smile".

"The counselors held many personal conversations with me and were very significant to me."

"I became very attached to the counselors, who believed that I could succeed."

### ***The academic component***

Each Youth University student chooses to participate in two of the academic courses on offer in the program. The list of courses includes 2 - 4 credit introductory courses dealing with a wide range of issues in the different disciplines of social sciences and the humanities. This year, the students were offered the following courses: Introduction to statistics, introduction to psychology, developmental psychology, introduction to political thought, and introduction to logic.

During their academic studies in the program, the Summer Youth University students enjoy the same learning experience as regular students at Tel Aviv University. They also meet all the course requirements, the reading list and other assignments, as well as passing an exam or final project.



In addition to the lessons and exercises of the different academic courses offered in the framework of the program, Summer Youth University students participate in a variety of academic frameworks offered by the Unit for Science Oriented Youth. These frameworks are suited to the special requirements of high school students wanting to make the less-than-easy transition to studying in the academic arena, and are aimed at giving participants in the program basic university student tools and learning skills.

Below is a list of the different academic frameworks in which Summer Youth University students participate during the program, in which they acquire the habits, tools and skills detailed above:

- **Reinforcement** - a 90 minute study unit accompanying the different academic courses in which the students participate, throughout the program. The unit is taught by a veteran student

studying for a recognized academic degree (bachelor's or master's) in the discipline in which the academic course is offered. In this framework, the participants process the contents of the lessons and exercises by means of active teaching methods (such as: extracting problematic issues that have arisen in the course of the lesson / exercise from the students, independent working in groups, rounds of feedback, mental processing of the material by means of tables / diagrams, discussion of the material through examples from literature and the media, and so on). In this process, the participants acquire various different academic habits, tools and skills to suit the specific requirements of each course, which help them to succeed in meeting the demands (for example: in courses for which there are closed exams, participants are taught skills relating to solving multiple choice questions, while in courses with open exams and/or papers, they are taught various writing skills).

Additional basic skills put across in the reinforcement framework: Summarizing lecturers, quick and in-depth reading of academic sources, summarizing academic source material in Hebrew or English, time management in the course of the semester, peer learning, academic writing (basic rules, style, form, making a comparison, establishing a case theory), organizing for the exam period, methods of processing and learning material for an open (mass answer) or closed (multiple choice) academic exam, and so on.

- **Reading group** - a 90 minute study unit accompanying the different academic courses in which the students participate throughout the program. The unit is taught by a veteran student studying for a recognized academic degree (bachelor's or master's) in the discipline in which the academic course to which the reading group applies is offered. In the reading group, participants read the academic material accompanying the specific course they are studying together, and process it together through peer learning, guided by the veteran student leading the group.



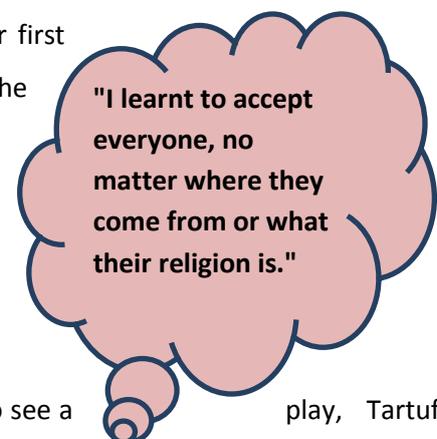
- **English reading group** - a 90 minute study unit given by an expert in the field (Dr. Orly Aidan). In the framework of the reading group, the participants read academic texts in English together, under the guidance of the expert, and learn how to deal with study material in a foreign language (which is not their mother tongue).
- **Workshops** - in the course of the program, the students participate in a number of study workshops in which they practice basic academic skills such as: time management in the course of the semester, organizing for the exam periods, and methods of processing and learning the material for an open or closed academic exam. These workshops are given by the team of social counselors and the program coordinator.
- **Marathons** - concentrated study days ahead of exams / final projects (two or three days), adapted to the specific content and requirements of the different academic courses in which the students are participating during the program. In these concentrated days, the students learn how to organize and process the material in preparation for the exam / final project, and practice different ways of learning, by means of active teaching methods led by the tutor of the specific course for which they are going to be assessed.
- **The skill of standing in front of an audience, rhetoric** - in the current session, the students joined a course teaching rhetoric skills. In the course, the students participated in debates, learned how to build an argument, held discussions, and as a final project, prepared a 10 minute presentation on one of their fields of interest.

### ***The social and cultural component***

We see the time that the students spend at Tel Aviv University as an opportunity to expose them to various different social and cultural aspects. For many of them, this is their first time in Tel Aviv and therefore an additional, important purpose of the program is to introduce them to the cultural institutions and lively life of the city. Some of the activities are at the initiative of the children themselves.

Below are the activities enjoyed by the 14th session of Summer University students:

**Tartuffe at Beit Lessin:** As we do every year, we travelled together to see a play, Tartuffe, at the Beit Lessin Theater. The students amazed us by their exemplary behavior during the show, and were



full of praise after it ended. The following morning, the graduate counselors held a theater workshop, and analyzed the play together with the students.



**Visit to the Hayarkon 19 Gallery:** On 9th Av, together with the students, we visited the gallery where there were two exhibitions on display. The students were given a guided tour of the gallery and met with the curator, Boaz Arad, and the exhibiting artist, Eran Naveh. The talk was accompanied by a cinema workshop, which included a screening of the film "The Orchestra's Visit", and acquiring tools for critical viewing. At the end of the day, we had a discussion on the role of art in our lives.

**Opera performance** - as part of the international opera workshop at the Israel Conservatory of Music, the students watched a performance of songs from musicals.

**Parents evening** - as every year, towards the middle of the program the parents of the students were invited to a parents meeting. At the meeting, the students were given student cards and then gave their parents a taste of the academic courses they were taking. The aim of the meeting, of course, was to connect the parents to what was taking place in the program.

Other activities: Introductory meeting on the first evening, Kabbalat Shabbat and social evenings organized by the students, sports, preparatory meeting prior to going home, and a moving graduation party in the University's Palm Garden.

At the same time, there were two other social frameworks:

1. **The "mamma groups"** - the general group of students was divided into two "mother groups". These groups were called "mamma groups". Each group had a social counselor and two youth counselors. The groups met once a week, on Sundays, in a warm and open atmosphere, for group activities. The name "mamma groups" gave the students a strong connection with the counselors, a feeling that the counselors were parental figures, or big brothers.

At the beginning of the summer, they dealt with introductory activities, teambuilding and breaking the ice. Later on, these meetings expressing emotions and feelings, as well as a platform for in-depth gaps, current affairs, and many other issues. The meetings of the great success.

2. **Projects:** The three social counselors chose a field from their personal world (details below) and gave a process-based workshop taking place once a week, the main objective of the project being to



"It was fun to experience the variety of activities, especially because for some of them it was the first time, and it was even more fun to share them with my friends. I didn't really connect with the visit to the opera, but just the same it is important because now I know what I don't like."

were used for discussions on cultural "mamma groups" were a

personal world (details below)

serve as a leisure and enrichment framework in a non-academic field. In addition, the students enjoyed exposure to a different field, from the personal world of their counselors. This summer there were three projects: 1) movement, 2) youth reporters, 3) theatre.



### **Lectures and workshops**

In the framework of the social program, the students took part in a number of enrichment lectures and workshops, such as:

- The history of the refugees and asylum seekers in Israel - a meeting with Prof. Gideon Kunda and Aladin Abekar, a refugee from Darfur.
- An art workshop inspired by Hanoch Piven - in the workshop the students got to know the portraits of Hanoch Piven, and created their own portraits using whatever material came to hand.
- Time management workshop - a workshop in which students learn how to manage their time properly. The children are in a framework that gives them the freedom of action of university students, and this workshop focused their attention on their free time and ways of using their time properly.
- Einstein and the theory of relativity - an enrichment lecture, Philip Artstein.
- Futures studies as an academic field - enrichment lecture, Dr. Oshi Kraus.

### ***Summer 2014 - in the shadow of Operation Protective Edge***

A great challenge that we had to cope with this year was holding the project in the shadow of the military operation that began just before the start of the project. We feared that the operation would affect students joining the project, and the atmosphere between them. We worried that running to the shelters would interrupt the course of the day and distract their attention from the objective.

The students surprised us at each stage of this process - they all arrived on the first day of the program, without exception, and some were even surprised when we called to confirm that they would be coming.

The alerts became part of the project routine, and the students followed the safety procedures without asking questions, returning to routine immediately after to continue the lessons.

We feared that there would be tension between the group of Arab students and the Jewish students, but we were happy to see that the students were respectful towards each other, and made firm connections despite, and perhaps because of, the situation.

### ***Scholastic achievements***

**Table of scholastic achievements**

<b>Course name</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>SD</b>
Introduction to political thought	85	4.82
Introduction to psychology	83	11.46
Introduction to logic	81	18.26
Developmental psychology	80	11.72
Statistics and data analysis	78	12.65



## ***The importance of the program***

Tel Aviv Youth University was established with the aim of generating personal and social change. This change is led by hundreds of young people from all strata of Israeli society, a mosaic of worlds that have in common a fierce desire to learn, to move ahead, to excel, to change and to cause change - in their lives and ours. We are discovering Israel's human capital. We believe that striving for excellence and education is an existential need in Israel. Through integration in academic studies, we are taking steps to make it possible for high school students to realize their potential, and to come up with a dream to follow.

In Israel, there are huge social, economic, and digital gaps between the center and the periphery, both geographic and social. In order to reduce the gaps, it is important to enable citizens from all parts of society to participate in scientific and academic studies. Only 9% of young people living in development towns and the country's geographic periphery go on to study at university, by comparison with 37% from urban centers. Even if we ignore the potential financial obstacles, the main reason lies in lack of awareness that university studies are a practical possibility for people with the desire and the ability.

Accordingly, we are taking steps to remove the psychological obstacle facing young people and help them overcome their anxiety and fears. Empowering students, so we hope, will increase their aspirations for the future, both with regard to employment and with regard to academic studies.

Tel Aviv Youth University, and the summer program in particular, is intended to open the door to higher education for a critical sector of Israeli society that is not aware of this possibility, offering a university experience in a rich intellectual environment, while providing emotional support and creating a learning community of people with shared interests from throughout the country.



## History

Tel Aviv University launched the Youth University in summer 2001 as part of the Dov Lautman Unit for Science Oriented Youth. The Unit brings high school students with high motivation and achievements from across the country (young Jews, Arabs, Druze and Bedouins, religious and secular, Israeli born and immigrants, from the social and geographic periphery, from towns in the north and the south, development towns and villages), who are the first generation in higher education, for a summer semester at the Ramat Aviv campus, exposing them to subjects that are not part of the curriculum at their schools.

The Unit for Science Oriented Youth has operated out of the School of Education at Tel Aviv University for some 40 years. Today, thousands of young people are studying in different programs at Tel Aviv University, in a wide range of study and enrichment tracks in different spheres of science and knowledge, and in unique programs for outstanding students.

Studying in the Unit opens a window for the students into subjects that are not included in the school curriculum, scientific ways of thinking, and modern and innovative research methods.

The Unit has an intra-faculty academic committee that approves its academic program and its lecturers, most of whom are advanced degree students.

The lecturers at the Unit are a source of attraction for the students, and a unique feature of the educational enterprise. Follow up research and evaluation are held regularly, guaranteeing that the high standard of teaching is maintained.

The Unit for Science Oriented Youth at Tel Aviv University is a center of excellence that offers a range of solutions for cultivating excellence at different levels and for different groups of the population. The Unit places great emphasis on encouraging striving for excellence in learning: raising young people's aspirations and their belief in their ability to integrate in academia.

The Unit's target audience is high school students who are hungry for knowledge - a definition of excellence based first and foremost on the curiosity of the youth, and belief in their ability to integrate in academia.

The objectives of the Dov Lautman Unit for Science Oriented Youth:

1. To bring youngsters closer to science, and science to youngsters
2. Discovering and nurturing Israel's human capital - creating an infrastructure for building the country's scientific reserve



3. Developing curiosity and creativity among young people; expanding horizons and developing critical thinking
4. Increasing access for young people of all sectors of society to academic studies and the academic world in all its shades
5. Creating a network of contacts between the University and young people from the geographic and social periphery
6. Encouraging striving for excellence in learning: raising young people's aspirations and belief in their ability to integrate in academia
7. Establishing a strong center of excellence that offers a range of solutions for cultivating excellence at different levels and for different groups of the population

### ***Selected quotes from the summary feedback***

#### **The social component**

"I was amazed at the social fabric there was here, the difference and the uniqueness that we brought with us. We created an amazing group."

"I learnt to accept everyone, no matter where they come from or what their religion is."

### **What did I discover about myself?**

"That I can be independent, and not to judge by outward appearance."

"That I can work to time, study, and manage life at university, and all in Hebrew!"

"That I am capable of taking great responsibility for myself."

"I discovered my emotional strength, and my independence in a new place. I grew up, I opened up to new ideas and make connections with people from different ethnic groups."

"I saw that I could give of myself, even when it was difficult and even when I was not in my comfort zone."

"I discovered that I could open up to people, and help them."

" I learned that I was more sensitive and forgiving than I thought."

"I discovered that there is a side in me that wants to succeed, that aspires to go far, and is ready to sacrifice for success."

"I learnt to adapt to changes, and reinforced my self-confidence."

"I learned to stand up and talk in front of an audience, and that it is only a matter of believing in myself."

"I learned that even if it is difficult, you don't have to give up, but to carry on and challenge yourself."