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Fund for Innovative Teaching-2012-2013

Name of program

Fund for Innovative Teaching

Year of activity

2012-2013

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Status of program

Matanel supported in the 2012-13 school year five (5) initiatives that will be integrated in the future as part of the regular curriculum of the schools where they took place. Two of the initiatives (the "Circusta" program in the northern Galilee town of Hatzor Haglilit and a Learning Development Center established at the Ilanot School in Ashdod) will be funded for a second year.

Main achievements during the last year of activity

1. Korchak School, Kiryat Shemona.

Initiative: Developing a Learning Center for Youth

Principal: Ms. Sara Schwartz

A learning center was developed whose aim was to develop a space for learning in order to narrow gaps, improve personal learning skills and to promote and foster a capacity for

excellence. The initiative helped students grapple with difficulties in a creative manner, enabling them and the professional staff to experience success.

2. ORT Elementary School, Hatzor Haglilit.

Initiative: "Circusta" – circus arts program

Principal: Ms. Alice Cohen

The program involved studying the circus arts using a curriculum where students were exposed to a broad spectrum of tools that were also required for personal development and improved thinking in the classroom, including awareness and concentration, coordination, eye contact, motor skills, balance and inner peace, and rhythm and movement. The initiative improved students' academic achievement and developed the personal and emotional aspects of each child, reducing violent behavior as well.

3. Ilanot School, Ashdod:

Initiative: Ilanot Learning Development Center

Principal: Ms. Eva Totai

The "Ilanot School" is a school for students with special needs who must cope with severe circumstances. The initiative involved the creation of an experiential learning center focused on the creation of "a healthy and sustainable lifestyle" and supported students who were on track to becoming normative school children, including being involved in the community as well. As part of the initiative, ties were established with regular schools in the community who also benefitted from the learning center.

4. Ein Nakuba Elementary School, Ein Rafa (Judean Hills).

Initiative: Establishing a Healthy Nutrition Center

Principal: Ms. Rada Yosef

The initiative developed healthy eating habits by focusing on foods and related nutritional studies using a variety of special learning methods. The center that was developed allowed for personal attention to each student, giving them a more positive learning experience. The initiative also became interdisciplinary and was taught in English and used in the art and theatre programs. The project also involved parents' cooperation who brought to the initiative their knowledge of local culture and foods.

5. Oded School, Misgav Regional Council (Galilee).

Initiative: Chemistry Laboratory - Workshop for Food Processing

Principal: Mr. Kobi Toch

The initiative aimed to increase the motivation, accessibility and capabilities of students in studying chemistry – always a challenging subject to teach as well as learn - through an experimental method: using products that we consume in everyday life, i.e. cheeses, wines, breads and soaps. The experience of manufacturing such foods allowed students to develop a personal and emotional connection with the material world and increased their motivation to understand the principles behind the chemical processes involved in their production.

Evaluation

While each initiative is separate and addresses different needs, different age groups and has beneficiaries who are unique to each project, the evaluation methodologies are similar. Each initiative's success was defined as follows:

- Principals' sense of personal and professional empowerment
- Principals' success in implementing their projects based on the goals and objectives set in advance
- Creating an atmosphere for further educational innovations in the school

Evaluations were based on each school principal's report – both verbal and financial – and presentations that took place during site visits and at FIT's annual conference. FIT pedagogical mentors were also involved in monitoring the progress of each project and by noting the increase of innovation in the school as a result of the school principals' openness to educational initiatives in general.

As new projects in these schools, the initiatives faced challenges at the beginning in their implementation but were guided by FIT's mentors in developing work plans and the pedagogical aspects of each project.

Others

Provisional guidelines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

All the initiatives are being integrated in the future into the regular curriculum of the schools, and in two cases (the "Circusta" circus arts program at the ORT Elementary School in Kiryat Shemona and the Learning Development Center at the Ilanot School in Ashdod), funding will be provided for a second year. In some cases the principals are often confronted with many challenges at the schools, raising the question of whether or not these initiatives might be led better by staff, as opposed to the principal, but with the principal's support, of course.

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