



**Year 2- Final Report**

**October 2011- September 2012**

# The Access for All Project

**Support for the Access for All Project has been provided via the Matanel Foundation in partnership with Ben-Gurion University of the Negev**

אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev



**MATANEL**  
FOUNDATION  
GRANTED TO GIVE

אוניברסיטה  
הידע מגיע לכולם

<b>From Our Project Director: Vision, Goals, and Thoughts for the Future .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Operational Model 2011-2 .....</b>	<b>9</b>
 <b>PART 1 - The AFA's Participants .....</b>	 <b>10</b>
1.1    Background and Characteristics.....	10
1.2    Recruitment .....	11
1.3    Statistical Data – Characteristics and Segmentation .....	12
1.4    Collaboration with the Welfare Authorities .....	15
1.5    The study Groups .....	16
<b>PART 2 - The Educational Program.....</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1    The Educational Model .....	20
2.2    The Study Fields .....	21
2.3    Graduation: end of the year events.....	25
2.4    Attendance and Persistence .....	27
2.5    Evaluation .....	29
2.6    Participants' Testimonies of Satisfaction .....	33
<b>PART 3 -The Instructing Students.....</b>	<b>34</b>
3.1    The Operational Model.....	34
3.2    The Students' Recruitment .....	34
3.3    Training the Instructors: The Preparation Period and the Academic Course .....	35
3.4    Evaluation and Feedback .....	38
3.5    Students' Stories .....	39
<b>PART 4 - The Operational Team .....</b>	<b>41</b>
4.1    The Operational Team .....	41
4.2    Continuing Education.....	42
 <b>Summary and Conclusions.....</b>	 <b>45</b>

## FROM OUR PROJECT DIRECTOR: VISION, GOALS, AND THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE



**"If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astonish ourselves." T.A. Edison**

For me, this concise and precise quote of Thomas Alva Edison signifies not only the spirit of the "Access for All" Project (AFA) and its goals, but also the path it has gone through since its founding. During the AFA's seven years of operation it was able to grow from a personal dream, often seeming almost impossible, to an extensive and influential enterprise in which hundreds of participants and tens of students join together each year for mutual studies in order to create a better future. The AFA – and mainly its many participants – amaze me each day anew and strengthen my belief in the individual's ability to make a change in its life, its surroundings and the entire society.

When I founded the AFA seven year ago, I wished to open the gates of Tel Aviv University in order to share its accumulated knowledge with those whose access to higher education was blocked because of the Israeli economical-social reality. Out of believing that knowledge is the means to equalize opportunities and expand the space and the ability to operate within it for those who study, I wished to lead a course of action towards democratization of knowledge.

I did not know then what I know today: the mere opening of those gates, even before a single piece of information was provided, is enough to cause a major personal and social change.

The admission of the project's participants into the university marks for them their entry into Israeli society. As such it provides them with a place, with a sense of belonging, and a sense of cooperation, they never knew before. The meeting with the students, representing for them society's power-centers and policy-setters, and the strong and direct bond established between them, allow them to see themselves in a different light, one which highlights their power and strength. All these factors, along with the actual study which requires searching, investigating, doubting and re-testing their beliefs and operations, allow the participants to go through a profound empowerment process – personal, emotional and societal.

This process is trusted in the hands of the project's instructing students, whose role is not only to transfer knowledge, but also to act as empowerment agents. Therefore they must possess awareness and social

sensitivity and collaborate out of identification with the project's goals. In order to assure that, they go through a long selection process and vast training in addition to close accompaniment along the way. Furthermore, they too are the objects of a built-in and intensive empowerment process wishing to lead to "empowering the empowerers". Under this process' agenda the instructing students create, make decisions, form policies and enjoy freedom of action, and are also expected to think, to constantly doubt and manifest critical observance, both internal and societal.

Edison's motto accurately sums up all the personal and social processes transpiring in the AFA, which wishes to provide its members – both participants and students – with security, tools and a platform to do all the things they are capable of doing, and so to astonish themselves and their surroundings. As seen from this report, indeed they do.

The passing year was the second year of operation of the AFA project at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev (BGU). This year the number of the project's participants grew in over 50% and stood on 496 beginning participants and 431 graduates. In addition, a new study department opened, the medicine department, in which a group of continuing participants have been studying. We also started developing a continuing education and enrichment program for our participants, based on unique collaborations with local education completion and employment programs.

The immense success of the continuing education programs have proven to us that the AFA's participants are undergoing a very special experience in the project, in which they acquire an essential and useful knowledge, practical tools, and a sense of competence that enables them to put it all to use. But beyond that, the fact that 36 participants out of 160 candidates have integrated into education completion programs, proves that the project succeeds where many other failed – to provide its participants with a rehabilitating study experience and to lead them back to school.

I have no doubt that the variety of existing continuing education programs in BGU, and the successful collaboration we've established with them, have contributed to that achievement. I consider this our duty to continue and expand that collaboration and to encourage more participants to find an educational environment for themselves. As the project grows and expands it has become a true bridge between disadvantaged populations and the higher education system and an apparent instrument for minimizing social gaps.

The project's success in Be'er Sheva on its first year has encouraged us to expand its boundaries a bit and to allow youth from the Negev's development towns to take part in it. A small group of youth from Ofakim,

Sderot and Netivot have joined the project this year and revealed to us the huge need and vast thirst to knowledge among them. Also in this aspect we would like to continue and expand the project's operation into additional areas and to provide a solution for the entire Negev's population.

I'm proud to conclude another successful year of activities and am looking forward to opening the next academic year with additional participants, instructors, collaborators and partners.

I would like to thank all AFA's supporters, especially the Matanel Foundation, to our many partners, the social workers, the youth advancement workers and the street youth instructors, to the Ben Gurion University and of course our amazing team which reinforces Edison's words each and every day.

I wish us all further doing and growing,

Adi Koll.

## ABSTRACT

**Access for All (AFA)** is an original and innovative initiative whereby Ben Gurion University (BGU) opens its doors to disadvantaged populations and allows them to acquire essential and useful knowledge in study fields taught at BGU. The AFA's participants, young as well as adults, who are referred to the project by social welfare agencies, take part in special introductory courses tailored especially for them and taught by BGU outstanding BA students.

The AFA's participants are among the most disadvantaged populations in Israel; they live in the margins of society and struggle for daily survival. The AFA seeks to provide them with the knowledge and education as well as the strength, security and self confidence required for regaining control over their lives and exiting the cycle of poverty and helplessness. Furthermore, it hopes to restore their curiosity and joy of learning and provide them with the will and the tools required to keep on learning - to keep developing.

The AFA's participants are inflicted with many hardships, but a major component results from living in an environment that does not encourage learning and does not recognize the importance of education. Most of them have suffered disappointments and failures from their learning experiences resulting in frustration and bitterness toward the educational system. The AFA allows them to enjoy a different and positive learning experience, during which they acquire educational tools and develop thinking abilities while learning the meaning and importance of education in general and studying in particular.

The 2011-2 academic year is the AFA's second year of operation at BGU. This year has opened with 496 participants studying in 5 study groups – an increase of 70% from the previous year (in which 281 participants took part, studying in 4 study groups.) In addition we opened this year a new study field – medicine, in which about 100 women have studied, for whom it's the second year with the project. The percentage of participants continuing to a second year at AFA is 72% - a very high number, illustrating for us the participants' satisfaction with the project.

Most of the AFA's participants, 62%, are adults over 30, while 38% are youth under 18. A detailed description of the participants' recruitment process, their social background and a statistical analysis of their characteristics can be found in **part 1** of this report.

Each participant in the AFA takes part in one introductory course from one of the 3 project's departments: department of medicine, business and psychology. However, beside knowledge and educational tools, the AFA seeks to raise the participants' self-image, competence and motivation to change their path in life. It contributes to the participants' self-esteem and provides them with a sense of competence and a personal as well as social strength. Through the change in the participants' self perception and society's perception of them, the AFA seeks to encourage the participants into bringing about a significant change in their personal and professional lives and make them full and active members of Israeli society. A detailed description of the AFA's educational model can be found in **part 2** of this report.

To evaluate its influence and success, each year a close tracking is conducted following the participants' attendance and satisfaction rates and the contribution they attribute to the project in their lives. In addition, the satisfaction rate and general impression of the instructing students is being measured.

After summarizing the participants' evaluation questionnaires it's clear that their satisfaction rate is particularly high and reaches an average of 6.5 on a 1-7 scale. A detailed description of the evaluation process, as well as the perseverance and attendance results can be found in **part 2** (section 2.3-2.6) of this report.

The AFA's introductory courses are taught by BA students studying in the corresponding departments at BGU, who receive special training for working with disadvantaged populations. The students receive BGU academic credits for their work based on the belief that academic education should include, encourage, and initiate dialog between different populations within Israeli Society. 20 students participated in the AFA this year - every 4 students taught a study group of about 90 participants. The 4 students constructed the instructing team, which formalizes the courses' syllabus and each lesson's outline and schedule. The actual teaching was carried out by each instructing student separately, facing an audience of about 20-25 participants.

Beyond the lessons taught at the AFA, this year several informal gatherings between the participants and the instructing students were conducted outside of the university. The fact that the two AFA's target populations – the instructing students and the participants – reside in Be'er Sheva in the same neighborhoods, enable to establish very close relationships, and create a sense of community that is very noticeable in the project. Many of the instructing students arrive at the participants' homes as guests or meet outside the study hours for joint quality time. This unique meeting point between students who are usually originally from the center of Israel and adults and youth from the periphery, enables a thorough introduction into a different

population, and no doubt contributes significantly to an establishment of a more diverse and tolerant society.

Information about the instructing students and their training program can be found in **part 3** of this report.

The AFA is managed by a professional team headed by Dr. Adi Koll, the AFA's initiator and founder, who serves today as its director and academic instructor. The BGU branch's manager is Mrs. Lior Emuna who is in charge of the branch's ongoing operation along with managing its employees and its relationship with the welfare authorities and the university.

A detailed description of the operational team and the organizational structure can be found in **part 4** of this report.

This year, we began establishing an infrastructure for continuing education program for our participants. This endeavor resulted from the great demand coming from the participants to acquire and strengthen basic skills in areas such as: English, computers, and Hebrew language studies. Therefore, we continued our collaboration with Kibbutz Be'eri that assisted us in the summer courses' operation. We also expanded our offering of formal education programs – completion of matriculation exams and school years. In addition, collaborating with the Be'er Sheva Municipality, we offered out participants to integrate into programs designed to assist their incorporation into the employment cycle. Additional information regarding the continuing education activities can be found in **part 4** of this report.

2011-2 is the second year of operation of the AFA at BGU. Also this year major efforts were invested into the project's assimilation and its stabilization in the different circles in which it operates. The relationship with the different welfare agencies in Be'er Sheva, Ofakim, Sderot and Netivot were strengthened, as well as the local councils which greatly support its existence, and finally the relevant resources within the university.

**This report summarizes the AFA's activities between September 2011 and August 2012.**



# The AFA at BGU

Introduction to  
Medicine

Introduction to  
Business

Introduction to  
Psychology

3 departments  
headed by the 3  
department  
coordinators

Adults Group

Adults  
Group

Youth  
Group

Adults  
Group

Youth  
Group

Parents and Children

5 groups –  
each consists  
of 95  
participants on  
avg. and a  
team of 4  
instructing  
students



20 instructing  
students, each  
teaches a small  
group of 20-25  
participants

## **PART 1 - THE AFA'S PARTICIPANTS**

### **1.1 Background and Characteristics**

Social exclusion is a process in which certain population groups are pushed aside to society's brim and are prevented from fully participating in the social life in which they live. This exclusion is manifested in social seclusion; lack of integration; minimizing of collaboration; lack of influence and power of certain social groups; and in ongoing multidimensional deprivation causing the loss of the sense of belonging and identifying with the excluding society and its institutions.

On a personal level, social exclusion causes a discretion or total loss of the sense of belonging to society. On top of the objective reasons causing exclusion, the person internalizes labels and weakening images and thinks the ostracism he or she feels are real, natural and just. These people's isolation is doubled since they firstly feel ostracized by their fellow-men, secondly they disqualify themselves and accept responsibility to the exclusive state in which they, and often their family, live in.

Furthermore, people suffering from exclusion may feel weak, dependent and with no influence. In their consciousness, these people are invisible and voiceless. This conception brings about a 'silence culture' within the voiceless ones, a very different way of thinking and expressing oneself when compared to those whose voices are heard.

The AFA's participants belong to different Israeli populations; common to all is their existence on the edge of the Israeli society, so they must struggle in order to survive their daily reality. From interviewing and knowing the participants we learn that the problems and obstacles they face include severe financial distress; unemployment or temporal employment; lack of education and knowledge; physical and learning deficiencies; mental stress; lack of stable relationships; seclusion and alienation. All these influence their sensations and functioning and keep them on society's edge.

From questionnaires distributed to the AFA's participants, we learn they share several similar personality traits. Most of them report that they find it difficult to stick to their daily commitments and persist with activities in their personal lives or relationships. We realize they feel instability in their lives leading to bitterness, seclusion, social alienation and mostly lack of faith in their ability to bring about a major change which will carry them out of the poverty and distress cycle. Furthermore, we realize from analyzing the questionnaires that most participants suffer from poor and low self-image; from a sense of guilt and lack of personal capability; and as a result suffer from frustration and emotional and mental stress. In addition,

according to the AFA's team's impressions, its participants mostly suffer from lack of basic life skills - damaging their daily functioning.

Large percentage of the AFA's participants reported that they were expelled from educational systems at a very young age. Some of them can't read or write (about 7%); however they all speak and understand basic Hebrew. In preliminary interviews most participants admit that their past study experiences were paved with disappointments and failures and that they feel deep frustration over it, along with a sense of loss of opportunities to overcome these wide gaps.

## **1.2 Recruitment**

The AFA's operation is enabled due to a close relationship and fruitful collaboration with the welfare and educational authorities referring their constituents to study in the program and accompany them and the students throughout the study period.

All of the AFA's participants keep in touch with social workers working in their communities' social services departments. The marketing efforts and getting in touch with the different social workers are carried out by the AFA's management, following which the social workers spread the information among their constituents and offer the relevant candidates to take part in the project.

Candidates' referral to the program is done according to clear criteria of socio-economical background, social exclusion and a major distress. All of the AFA's participants come from "multi-problematic" families undergoing intense treatments by the social welfare authorities, some for as long as several generations. The family's definition as "multi-problematic" is derived not only from the multitude of hardships and their complexity, but also from them being intertwined, with one trouble often influencing the rest.

Following the AFA's candidates' referral to the program by the community's social workers, the candidates go through a sorting and approval procedure which includes a short personal interview designed to test their commitment and willingness to start an educational process. The participants' acceptance criteria were formulated by the caregivers' team as well as representatives of the AFA. As a rule, acceptance to the AFA does not require any previous education or qualifications, but it does require long-term seriousness and commitment, high motivation and the will to study and progress. These elements are being tested during the interviews conducted by the AFA's coordinators team.

Candidates who pass the initial interview (about 94%) are requested to pay a one-time fee, called "seriousness fee", nonrefundable in case of participation cancellation, for an amount of 150 NIS (80% of the

project's participants have already paid the full amount). Upon paying, the candidates are requested to sign a commitment contract in which they state that after missing 4 lessons they will be requested to leave the program. A participant fulfilling all of the AFA's requirements can continue studying in the program for as long as 3 years.

### 1.3 Statistical Data – Characteristics and Segmentation

The AFA's participants are divided into two age groups:

Youth – ages 14-18.

Adults – ages 20 and up.

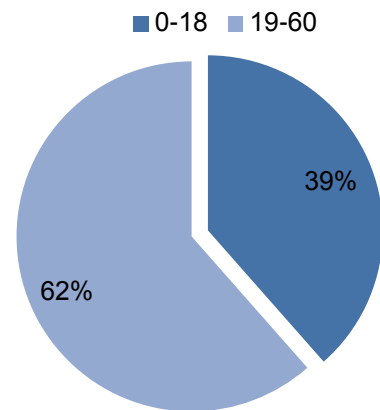
The average age of the participants is 36.5.

The participants' gender segmentation is 30% male and 70% female.

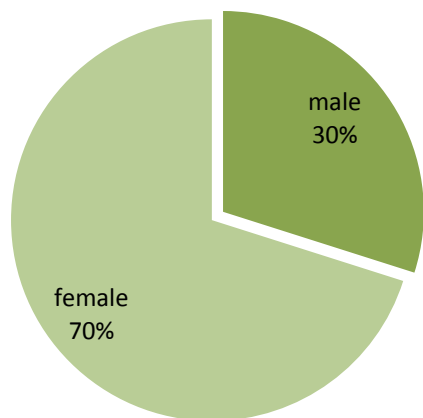
The participants' division into study group is mostly done according to age or gender, with the youth studying in separate groups. The mixed adults groups consist mostly of parents, and one of the groups consists only of parents of youth participating in the AFA.

The AFA's participants arrive from the town of Be'er Sheva and its surrounding area. They arrive at BGU with organized transportation picking them up at several locations around town and on the moshavs (small towns) belonging to the Bnei Shimon regional council. This year, as part of the project's expansion, a group of youth (both females and males) was recruited from the townships of Ofakim, Sderot and Netivot.

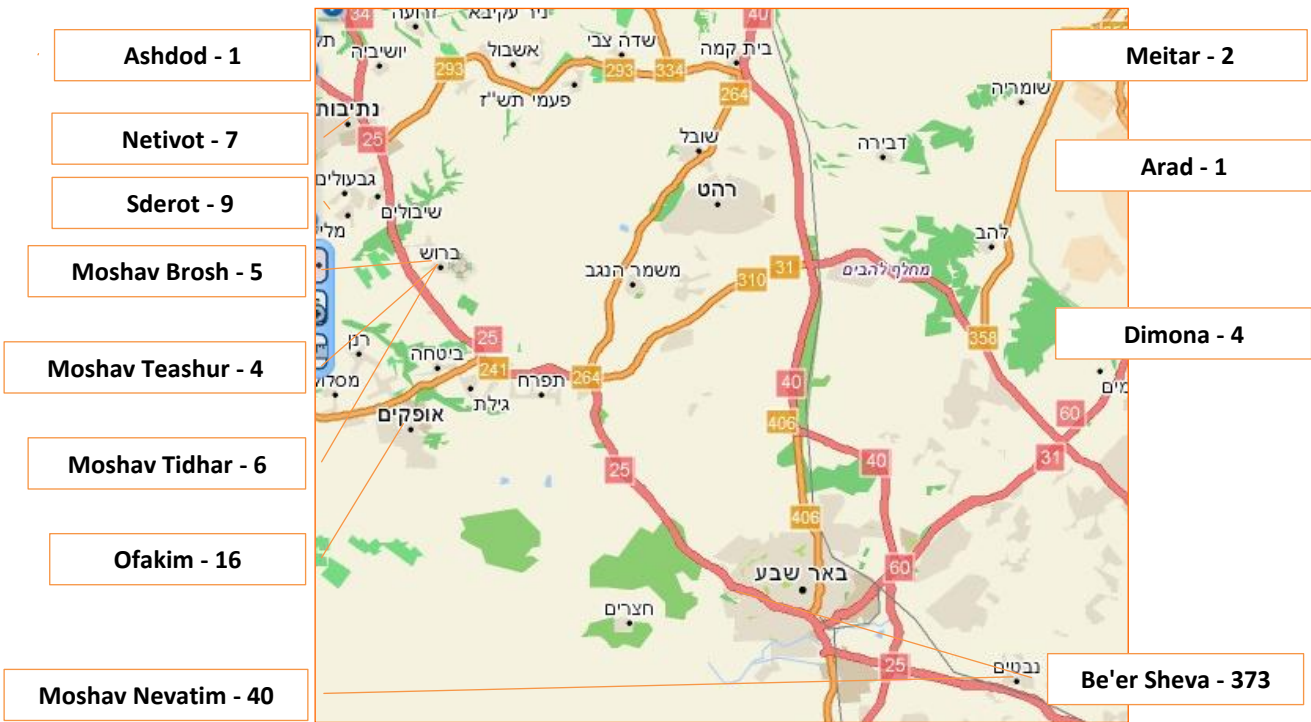
**Participants' Age Segmentation**



**Participants' Gender Segmentation**

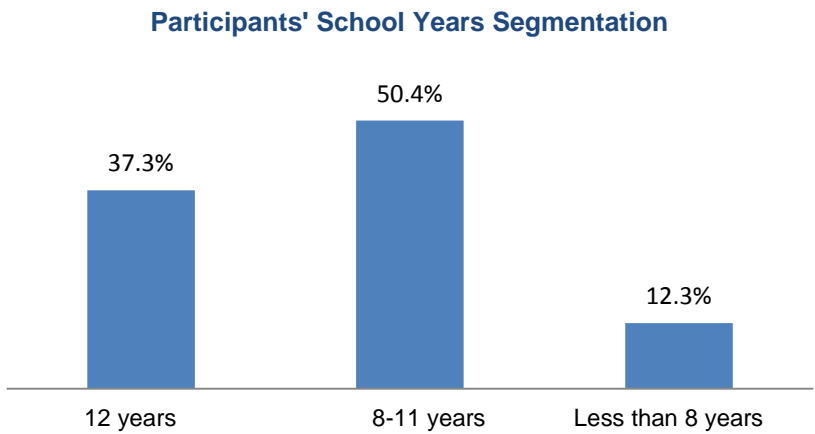


Following is the participants' geographic segmentation:



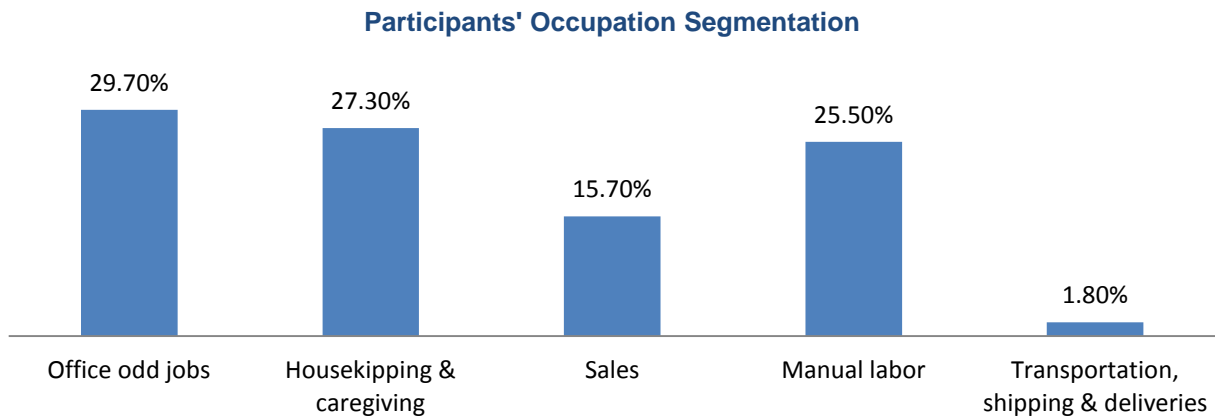
The AFA's participants lack formal education. Most of them haven't finished 12 years of school. The average school years of the AFA's participants are 10.2.

Following is the participants' school years segmentation:



Most of the AFA's participants define themselves as employed. About 40% of them do not work at all, while the rest are employed in non-professional jobs such as housekeeping (cleaning and taking care of children or elderly), manual labor (construction, factory work, carpentry etc.), office odd jobs, deliveries and transportation, and sales.

Following is the participants' occupation segmentation:

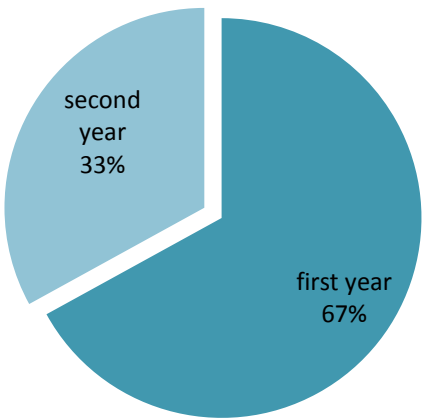


**Exhibit A includes a detailed list of the AFA's participants, divided according to their groups and study fields, including their names, ages, addresses, marital status, occupation and number of school years.**

The AFA's participants can choose to continue studying for an additional year in a different study field. This year, about 33% of the participants study for the 2nd year in the medicine and psychology departments, among them both youth and adults.

Following is the AFA's project seniority segmentation:

**Participants' Seniority Segmentation**



#### **1.4 Collaboration with the Welfare Authorities**

The AFA's operation is possible thanks to a close relationship and fruitful collaboration with the authorities referring participants to the project. The AFA's instructors are BGU BA students and most of them don't have therapeutic background or previous familiarity with the project's target communities. Most of the participants have led lives full of hardships and quite often these hardships float and return while confronted with the university.

The previous year's experience proves that the more the welfare authorities and the treating social workers are recruited to the project and commit to its success, the more the participants are committed to it and therefore benefit. In the cases where a close and intensive collaboration between the welfare authorities and the AFA's team was kept, the satisfaction, attendance and persistence rates were rising and the positive influence of the studies became obvious in other areas of life. Therefore, in order to guarantee the AFA's success, we formed several guidelines for this collaboration.

Prior to the beginning of the school year, the referring welfare authority is the one trusted with publicizing the AFA between its constituents and formalizing the initial participants list. Later on, the welfare authorities accompany the participants' recruitment stage starting from the AFA introductory events and ending with participating in the acceptance interviews and assisting in collecting the "seriousness fee" from those accepted.

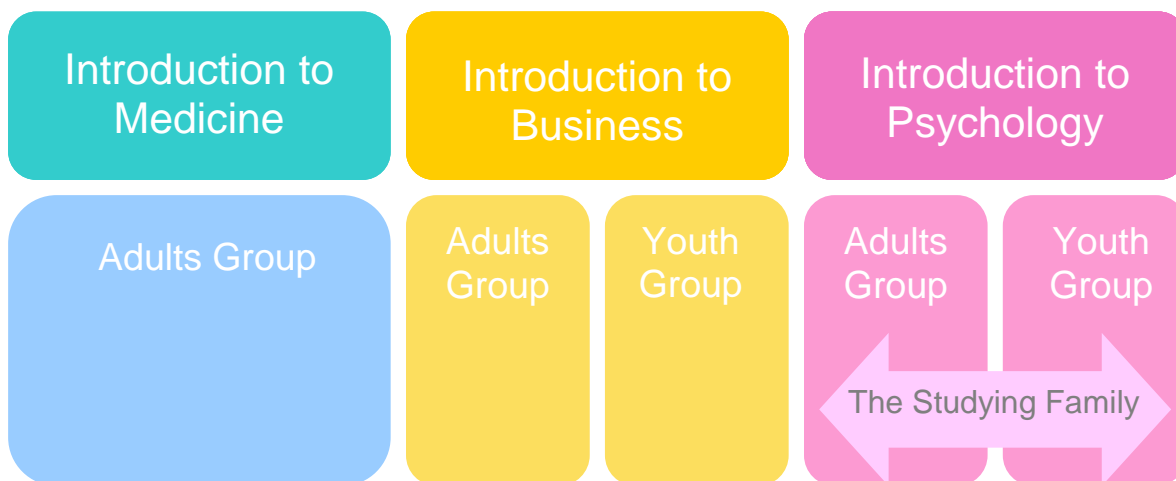
As the school year begins, the welfare authorities are requested to choose a representative to accompany both the participants and the instructing students. This representative acts as the students' liaison and assists in their initial training for working with the participants' groups as well as actively accompany the annual operation. The representative also acts as the mediating entity between the instructing students and the referring social workers in case of questions, problems, difficulties and successes.

The accompanying professional keeps in constant touch with the students' representative (the students' teams' external relations manager) and receives weekly attendance reports, reports about the studied content and about any special problem. As part of his or her role the representative passes the attendance reports and the special problems to the treating social/educational workers working with each participant.

In addition, during the training month (the first month of their studies, before they start to teach) an introductory meeting is conducted between the instructing students and the referring welfare authority. This meeting's goal is to present to the students the unique characteristics of their participants' group and to assist them in formalizing a syllabus that will comply with the groups' interests and capabilities.

During the school year, the social workers referring the participants to the AFA accompany its operation closely and send a representative to each lesson. The social worker's participation in the lessons (sometimes few in each class) contributes to the participants' motivation and their commitment and allows the caregivers to view their constituents in a different, more positive light, and in a different setting than in the labeling treatment framework. The social workers also assist the students in dealing with behavioral problems and submit feedback reports regarding the instructor's performance and particularly the tailoring of the study content to the participants' abilities and needs. **Exhibit B includes a list of the welfare authorities collaborating with the AFA.**

### 1.5 The study Groups



The AFA's participants are divided into 5 different study groups. 3 of those groups are adults groups (over 20 years old) and two are groups of youth (ages 15-20). The groups' division was based on shared characteristics and on their compliance with the study fields. In the psychology department two special groups take part, constituting together a special project we call "The Studying Family" in which parents and their children study together.

### Medicine Department

**Women group** - This group consists mostly of women who are violence victims referred to the program by the Family Violence Prevention Center or by the Be'er Sheva welfare agencies. Most of the women in the group have suffered before and some still suffer ongoing violence by their partners or other relatives. All



women are still welfare dependents today. The AFA seeks to create a supporting environment for those women and to provide them with strength, command and belief in their own abilities. All women in the group are second year AFA participants who studied in the psychology department last year and decided to continue their studies.

### **Business Department**

**Adults welfare dependents group from Be'er Sheva** - this group consists of adults welfare dependents of many years due to variety of financial, social, mental and other hardships. The group consists of in-rehabilitation ex-convicts from the Prisoners Rehabilitation Authority; ex addicts from the Drugs, Alcohol and Gambling Addicts Treatment Unit; and welfare dependents suffering financial hardships which cause them several other problems. Most of the existing programs in Israel treating those populations do not deal with education and knowledge but with aid and welfare and thus perpetuate the social gaps. The AFA seeks to provide them with knowledge but also to emphasize the importance of education as means for social mobility. The group consists of adults who dropped out of the educational system at a very young age, some can hardly read or write. Through the professional content taught the project encourages those participants to complete their studies and re-integrate into society.

**Youth group from Be'er Sheva and its surroundings** – this group consists of at-risk female and male youth (ages 15-18) referred to the project by the Youth Advancement authorities, the Youth Probation Services, warm homes for at-risk girls and boarding schools. This year, the recruitment area was expended beyond Be'er Sheva, and participants were recruited from the development towns of Ofakim, Sderot and Netivot.

Almost 20% of the children and youth living in Israel are at-risk. The participants in this group are all defined "at-risk youth", coming from families suffering severe financial distress. Some belong to an institution of sorts (a normal institution like school or an alternative environment) and some are considered detached youth, dropping out of every formal environment offered to them.

Adolescents at critical ages and personality-forming stages face existential problems like alienation; solitude; boredom; lack of challenges and meaning; lack of interest in whatever requires postponement of satisfactions and cannot be obtained immediately; and constant urge for excitement and pleasure. When obstacles are met during the identity-development process, they might feel confused, absent-minded, empty and depressed, or try to escape to a too-early conclusion regarding their identity, mostly toward negative

directions. From there they might arrive at drugs usage, dropping out, criminal acts and sometimes even attempts at suicide.

As part of the AFA, the youth are exposed to a heterogeneous social environment in which they learn interpersonal skills which will assist them in any future social interaction. The youth arrive from a different familial background and different social environments and are exposed to each other during the project, learning about themselves, about their coping with different interpersonal situations and about the others' diverse apprehensions. Through these different relationships the youth can develop social and interpersonal skills that are more vast and varied.

### **Psychology department**

**Special Project – Parents and Children** - Following last year and in light of the parents and children group's success, we opened a similar group in the psychology department this year. The parents and children project involves two groups of unique characteristics - a group of youth (ages 15-20) and a group of their parents. These groups study psychology on different weekdays (the parents study on Tuesdays, their children on Mondays), but also participate in joint lessons and activities (tours, joint volunteering days, group quizzes and more).

On top of the AFA's general goals, these two groups share their own unique goals:

1. Starting a dialog between the parents and their adolescent children around subjects taught in the AFA as well as subjects related to their daily lives.
2. Building a bridge between the parents and their children derived from mutual achievement and study.
3. Creating "The Studying Family" – more educated, more committed to its members' education.
4. Recruiting parents and children toward the rehabilitative effort and collaboration with the youth probation services and the welfare agencies.

The recruitment of youth and their parents for the group was a particularly complicated process. At times, when we found committed parents, their children refused to cooperate, and at times it was the opposite. We therefore combined into those two groups people from four different populations:

1. Young men under supervision of the Be'er Sheva Probation Service and their parents.
2. Young men and women treated by the Be'er Sheva Youth Advancement unit and their parents.
3. Families treated by the Child & Family Center in the community anchor.

4. Families referred to the AFA by the welfare agency of the Bnei Shimon regional council.

The majority of the parents studying in the project meet the general criteria of the AFA's participants – a difficult socio-economical status, lack of education, a sense of helplessness, alienation and low self-esteem. The welfare dependent parents deal with financial and existential hardships immensely affecting the inner-familial relationships, among others, and maybe most significantly – their children. Furthermore, the youth under probation services' supervision deal with an utmost complicated and crucial period in their lives, while their parents, who often feel as if they're paying for their children's sins ten times more, completely change their way of life in order to take care of the children and hence lose more of their financial and mental strength, which was limited to begin with.

As indicated, the two groups study separately so that each group's study content is tailored to its interests and needs. Although the content is not identical, the subjects are parallel – each week the groups study the same subject but with different particular highlights. Moreover, once every five or so meetings a joint study group is taking place.

## **PART 2 - THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

### **2.1 The Educational Model**

The AFA operates according to a unique educational model, developed especially for its participants out of consideration of their interest areas and needs and according to the program's goals. The AFA's lessons are based on a dialogic educational philosophy built around the relationship of “a teacher who's a student and a student who's a teacher” and on reciprocity, listening and responsibility. John Dewey, Martin Buber and Paolo Freire are few of the thinkers inspiring the development of the AFA's educational pedagogy wishing to bring back curiosity and joy of learning to the participants and provide them with the will and tools to keep on growing and developing.

In order to fulfill that goal, our curriculum is based on the participants' personal experience and on the subjects that stimulate them, encourage them to think and challenge them to do so. The curriculum is based on problem-solving which expands horizons and encourages critical investigation of different social problems. The participants are required to be active collaborators in the learning process and together with the students to form a community – a studying, thinking and creating community.

The knowledge transferred in the AFA focuses on strengthening the learners and improving their ability to remove obstacles delaying them and to influence their lives. This is an essential and practical knowledge which alongside general knowledge is designed for enrichment and stimulation. At the same time the participants receive tools that increase their will and capability to acquire further knowledge on their own (study skills; discussion capabilities; behavior in a group atmosphere and in places like the university; listening to others; accessing resources of information; introduction to different educational environments etc).

Major attention is given in the AFA to the relationships between the instructing students and the participants. As stated, in order for a dialog to develop the study environment must be supporting, open, accepting and patient, and the instructing students must display sensitivity, openness and responsibility. The instructing students should know the participants, their lives' circumstances, their contexts, their histories, where they come from, and to aspire to create relationships with them even outside the classroom's walls.

The chosen study fields: medicine, business and psychology, and the subjects they cover, comply with this educational ideology and its goals. The lessons' structure was also developed according to that philosophy: The lessons are conducted in small groups (about 20 participants), and mostly while sitting in a circle. The curriculum is formalized in advance but is going through many changes according to the participants'

requests and as the familiarity between the instructing students and the participants becomes more personal and intimate. The examples given in class relate to the content world and the daily lives of the participants and in every meeting a significant portion of the lesson is dedicated to a discussion between the group members.

The process undertaken by the AFA's participants is gradual, structured and perennial. During their first year in the program the participants are active collaborators in everything done inside the classroom but are not required to do any homework and their responsibility for learning is limited. During the second year, they are requested to perform different tasks between the lessons and even to teach some content to the group. In addition, the whole group is asked to deal with the practical meaning of the acquired knowledge and to think of their way of action and implementation. During the third year the participants will be expected to formalize personal and group goals inside and outside the study environment and to initiate activities designed to motivate other group members to improve their daily reality and act toward their future.

## **2.2 The Study Fields**

During the past year the AFA has been operating three departments: medicine, business and psychology. Each department offered an introductory course aiming to provide the participants with useful and practical knowledge required for their lives. The courses were held for two semesters and each course comprised of a total of 24 meetings of 4 hours each.

A separate and tailored syllabus was formed for each group according to its characteristics, the abilities and needs of its members. The syllabus was formalized by the courses' instructing students' teams.

### **The Medicine Department:**

The participants in the medicine department study in the “Introduction to Medicine” course dealing with clarifying basic terms in various medicinal areas: anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, etc. At the beginning the students conduct an extensive introduction with the human body, its systems and their operation and also common diseases, their treatment and the medical research conducted in order to find cures to those diseases. During the course the participants learn about preventive medicine, hygiene; proper nutrition and first aid and are also introduced to the Israeli health system and the patient's rights law. During the year the participants conduct tours to hospitals, to different labs in the university's medical school and meet with doctors and professors from the medical school.

### **The Business Department:**

The participants in the business department study in the “Introduction to Business” course exposing to them the market's mechanism and the different components of the Israeli market. They learn about the banks, their operations and how to deal with them, about smart consumerism, how to manage their own family budget and how to start a small business and manage it wisely. The course offers the participants basic knowledge in economy and basic financial terms. It also deals with marketing, advertising and business entrepreneurship and offers guidance regarding the job market, how to look for a job, how to write a CV etc.

#### **A participant graduating the Introduction to Business, adults group, tells:**

*During the Business course I realized that my family and my life are just like a small business – there are incomes, expenditures and I need to know how to manage them.*

*I finally realized what are my rights as an employee, how I can find a better job. We learned things that everybody should know...*

#### **A participant graduating in 2011-12 from the Introduction to Psychology course tells:**

*“I learned to look for information about stuff that interests me, I learned new methods to remember things, I realized things about our daily lives I was not aware of. I gathered knowledge, self-esteem and most importantly I learned to accept others. My point of view regarding things and people has changed. I learned to know myself, my partner and my children better through the things we learned in class, the whole family went through a change throughout this year”.*

### **The Psychology Department:**

Participants in the psychology department study in the Introduction to Psychology course, dealing with the question – what is psychology? and demonstrating to the participants its major branches: social psychology, cognitive, behavioral and physiological. The course exposes the participants to different theories by psychology's founding father, Sigmund Freud and other known psychologists and illustrates the daily meanings of their theories. Additionally, participants learn about the practical aspects of psychology such as decision making practices, group dynamics and different options for conflict resolutions. During the course the participants learn how a psychological research is conducted and visit an institute conducting different psychological researches.

**Exhibit C includes sample courses' curricula for the various study fields.**

### **Professional Workshops – the collaboration with Kibbutz Be'eri:**

this year our collaboration with Kibbutz Be'eri was expended, and we decided to conduct professional workshops for each group in its own field. The workshops were instructed by the Kibbutz members who are professionals in the different fields and were formalized in collaboration with the AFA coordinators and instructing students.

The main goal of the workshops was to conduct a direct meeting between the participants and field personnel dealing with these subjects daily who can provide assistance and share their own experience.

Adults psychology – since this group is part of "The Studying Family" project it was decided to emphasize the subject matter of parenthood in their workshops. These were instructed by clinical and educational psychologists specializing in family and adolescence issues. The workshops were most successful and combined professional content with personal content based on the instructors' experience.

Adults medicine – this group studied two first-aid lessons. These are sensitive lessons that must be instructed in the most professional way. Paramedics and nurses from Kibbutz Be'eri instructed the workshop using special accessories donated by the BGU's school of medicine for the workshop.

Youth business – this group participated in a branding and marketing workshop following which the participants were asked to establish a new business and to brand it. At the beginning of the workshop the participants were instructed via lectures following which was a practical workshop and at the end the

products were presented. The youth's experience was meaningful and is remembered most positively as realized through their mid-term questionnaires.



The Be'eri branding and marketing workshop – youth business group

### **Educational tours –**

As part of the curriculum several educational tours are conducted throughout the year outside the university. The tours' goal is to enable the participants to see closely and experience the operations and activities related to their study fields.

The women studying medicine group visited the MSR, the medical simulation center in Tel Hashomer. During the tour the participants could watch the surgery of which medical solutions are being offered in different situation, and also inspected a virtual operation.

The business group went to Jerusalem and visited the Bank of Israel and later toured the Israeli Knesset. In the bank the participants listened to a lecture about the financial market, monetary erosion, and the role of the Bank of Israel in general.

The adults psychology group conducted a tour in Jerusalem around the subject "dreams come true". They visited the Western Wall, the Nachlaot neighborhood and listened to a lecture by Rabbi Moshe Ya'akov about dreams in Judaism.





### 2.3 Graduation: end of the year events

Toward the end of the school year, the participants and the instructing students started their summary and farewell processes. Following last years' conclusions and lessons learned, this process was comprised of four steps:

**1** A knowledge summary lesson – each group went through a special lesson created by the instructing students' team in full collaboration with the participants. Its goal was to summarize the theoretical and practical knowledge accumulated throughout the year alongside the creation of a sense of satisfaction and achievement looking backward. The participants were divided into action teams and under the instructors' guidance created an event summarizing the studied materials. Each group chose the environment in which the event took place and the guidelines were: summarizing the content in an integrative fashion, implementing the knowledge, and motivating to action. The group studying business, for example, conducted a lesson about "innovations and inventions", in which the participants presented innovative business ideas as well as business plans, facing their instructing students, family and friends who came to encourage and appreciate the vast knowledge they gained this year.





**3** A personal farewell lesson – the instructing students conducted personal and group meetings with all of the participants aiming to summarize the year, to point out their achievements and set their future goals. The instructors reported that the meetings were most meaningful and allowed them to come full circle and process the experience they went through.

**4** The graduation ceremony – the school year concluded in a festive and moving ceremony conducted for each group, emulating similar ceremonies conducted at the university upon graduation. Apart from the participants and the instructing teams, invited to the ceremonies are also the family members, community members, referring social authorities, different university representatives and other dignitaries.

At the ceremony, the participants receive a graduation certificate indicating they graduated from an AFA introductory course, signed by the relevant BGU faculty head and Dr. Adi Koll. The event is considered a meaningful high point in the process the participants go through throughout the year, and for most of them this is the first time they ever graduated anything. The ceremonies represent the conclusion of the process, enabling them to share the achievement and experience with their relatives and friends.



#### **2.4 Attendance and Persistence**

The AFA's participants are characterized by unstable behavior and thus inability to stick with educational or other programs. The AFA's success is therefore measured first and foremost by its ability to cause the participants to regularly attend class and continue their studies throughout the year. The AFA's team is following the participants' attendance and participation closely and provides the accompanying social workers with attendance reports after every lesson. The courses' instructors call every participant who misses a class and make sure he or she will come back. The department coordinators conduct personal conversations with participants who miss several classes. Each participant is allowed to miss only 4 meetings

(out of 24) throughout the school year and even then they must inform their instructors in advance. Accordingly, an investigation is conducted following those participants who have left the AFA and their causes for leaving.

	Initial number of participants	Number of dropouts	Number of participants at the end of 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	Number of participants missing 1-0 lessons	Number of participant s missing 2- 3 lessons	Number of participant s missing 4 lessons
Business youth	100	18	82 (82%)	15	31	36
Business adults	106	11	95 (89.6%)	37	42	16
Psychology youth	92	17	75 (81.5%)	14	16	45
Psychology adults	98	9	89 (90.08%)	36	44	9
Medicine adults	100	10	90 (90%)	42	25	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>% Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>15.08%</b>	<b>86.6%</b>	<b>33.4%</b>	<b>36.6%</b>	<b>29.9%</b>

As the table shows, the current school year opened with 496 participants studying in 5 groups. At the end of the year, the participants' count was 431 (86.6%).

Clear from this table is the fact that attendance among youth is lower than among adults. This is a known phenomenon for projects directed toward youth who dropped out of formal educational environments because of their inability to persist and make long term commitments among other reasons. Therefore in this project as well, they find it had to fulfill the attendance requirements. As part of the educational strategy and based on the treating authorities' recommendations, the project is especially strict with the youth regarding attendance in order to develop in them responsibility and commitment which will assist them to advance in other areas as well. Past experience shows that participants who graduated the project successfully go back and integrate into education completion programs, join the army or the work force and manage to persevere better than their friends who did not take part in the project.

The increase in the number of dropouts this year – 15.08% compared with last years' 14.07% results from doubling the number of the AFA's youth groups. Last year the AFA included only one youth group while this year it included two groups who comprised a larger percentage of the project's population.

Among the adults population, on the other hand, the attendance improved compared to last year. It can be attributed to the strengthening of the relationship with the accompanying welfare authorities, and their significant support both on the attendance issue and the on-going accompaniment. No doubt, this collaboration has had its share in contributing to the participants' success at the AFA.

Following are the results for the 65 dropouts:

17 participants dropped out due to medical problems.

15 participants dropped out due to personal problems.

14 participants dropped out due to starting new employment requiring them to work during the evenings.

3 participants dropped out due to joining a different study program – professional training or matriculation completion.

1 participant dropped out due to improper behavior at the project.

15 participants dropped out after missing over 4 lessons throughout the year.

## **2.5 Evaluation**

The high demand for studies in the AFA and the high attendance of the courses' participants obviously indicate a high satisfaction rate, but beyond that the AFA checks the participants' satisfaction level and the contribution they attribute to the AFA in their lives through feedback questionnaires conducted twice a year – at the end of the first semester and at the end of the year. These questionnaires also aim to test the participants' level of interest in the study materials and the instruction level and performance of their instructors.

Following are the results of the quantitative questions asked in the feedback questionnaire given to all participants at the end of the year. (on a scale of 1-7, 1 meaning "not at all", and 7 "very much so"). **Exhibit E includes the recent questionnaires and a summary of the answers given to the open-ended questions.**

QUESTION	AVG. RESPONSES
How satisfied are you from each of the following aspects in the program you've been participating in this year?	
1.1 General satisfaction	6.5
1.2 Food and drink	6.1
1.3 Transportation	6.0
1.4 The field you've been studying this year	6.4
1.5 The location at BGU	6.7
2. How clear and comprehensible is the instructor?	6.8
3. How satisfied are you with the way the instructor has been treating you?	6.8
4. How pleasant the class and group atmosphere is?	6.2
5. Do you feel comfortable to participate and share in class?	6.1
6. Do you find the lessons interesting?	6.3
7. Do you feel that you learn new materials throughout the course?	6.1
8. How useful are the things you learned in the course?	6.2
9. How beneficial is participating in the course for its participants?	6.2
10. Would you like to continue studying in the AFA for another year?	6.6

## B. Parents and children questionnaire

Following are the results of the parents' questionnaires' quantitative questions, compared with their answers at the beginning of the year and the questions asked of their children. **Exhibit F includes the recent questionnaire and a summary of the answers given to the open-ended questions**

Parents questionnaire summary		Avg. answers @ beginning of the year	Avg. answers @ end of year	Grades Scale
1	How often do you conduct a long conversation with your children?	5.1	5.3	1: never 6: frequently
2	When you talk, who initiates the conversation?	3.7	3.9	1: only the parent 6: the child

					always initiates
3	What subjects do you discuss mostly?	errands	0.7	0.8	0: no 1: yes
		school	0.6	0.7	
		areas of interest	0.7	0.7	
		friends and relationships	0.8	0.9	
		dreams	0.5	0.7	
4	Do your children reveal to you their thoughts and feelings?		4	4.2	1: never
5	Do you accept their thoughts and feelings even when they defer from yours?		4.4	4.5	6: frequently
6	Do you feel valued and respected by your children?		4.9	5.1	1: not at all 6: always
7	Are you satisfied with your relationship with your children?		4.6	4.7	1: very unsatisfied 6: very satisfied
8	Do you and your children conduct joint activities?		0.7	0.8	0: no
9	Do you think the AFA will affect your relationship with your children?		0.7	0.8	1: yes

Children questionnaire summary			Avg. answers @ beginning of the year	Avg. answers @ end of year	Grades Scale
1	How often do you conduct a long conversation with your parents?		4.7	4.9	1: never 6: frequently
2	When you talk, who initiates the conversation?		4.2	4.3	1: only the parent 6: the child always initiates
3	What subjects do you discuss mostly?	errands	0.7	0.7	0: no 1: yes
		school	0.7	0.8	
		areas of interest	0.5	0.6	
		friends and relationships	0.4	0.5	
		dreams	0.3	0.6	
4	Do you reveal your thoughts and feelings to your parents?		3.2	3.4	1: never
5	Do your parents accept your thoughts and feelings even when they		4.6	4.6	6: frequently

	defer from theirs?			
6	Do you value and respect your parents?	4.9	5.0	1: not at all 6: always
7	Are you satisfied with your relationship with your parents?	5.1	5.2	1: very unsatisfied 6: very satisfied
8	Do you and your parents conduct joint activities?	0.5	0.7	0: no
9	Do you think the AFA will affect your relationship with your parents?	0.6	0.7	1: yes

It's notable that throughout the year there has been an improvement in almost all parameters, which indicates that the joint studies and activities of the youth and their parents in the AFA have contributed and strengthened the relationships inside the family as well as the children's grasp of their parents and vice versa.



## 2.6 Participants' Testimonies of Satisfaction

**Uzi. T., 63, divorced, father of two. Referred to the AFA by the Beit Yatziv welfare department in the Be'er Sheva municipality. Graduated his first year with the AFA.**

"I was born on March 14th, 1948 in Chile, where I grew up, served in the Chilean military and started studying in the university, but never graduated. I immigrated to Israel during the 70s and here's where my children were born. On 2005 I divorced my wife. I was 57 then, had no family in Israel, I suffered from narcolepsy, had no money, I was deep in debts and had no job. All these reasons have led me to live in the street. With God's help and the help of two social workers who fought for me, I was accepted to "Beit-Nathan" (homeless shelter). I lived there for 7 months until I received a public-housing apartment. During that period I thought a lot about my life – its failures and successes. I realized that all my life I was looking for the bad parts of the human behavior and the mistakes people do and that if I want to receive the good – I must search specifically for it. That year I was also hospitalized because of a heart condition and when I recovered I saw it as another sign for the fact that I stayed in this world to do good. I started volunteering at "Be'er Sova" (public kitchen) and in "Koach Latet" (organization providing home appliances to those in need) where I still work today. A year ago I got another chance which I never thought I'll get – to study in the university in the "Introduction to Psychology" course, something I've always wanted to learn. I never imagined that at my age and in my financial situation I'll be able to study again but the AFA gave me that chance and much more... At the AFA I got not only knowledge, but also new friends, attention, personal treatment and lots and lots of love."

## **PART 3 -THE INSTRUCTING STUDENTS**

### **3.1 The Operational Model**

This year the AFA's instructing team comprised of 20 students: 4 medicine students, 8 business students and 8 psychology students. Each student instructs a group of 25 participants on average. They are divided into teams of 4 who instruct participants with similar characteristics. Apart from teaching the actual lessons, the rest of the activities such as formalizing the syllabi and tailoring them to the target population are done as team work. **Exhibit G includes a list of the instructing students for 2011-2.**

As part of their AFA's participation the instructing students are required to exhibit high commitment and to invest emotional resources as well as plenty of time in the project. The students are committed to 3 meetings per week throughout the whole year. The first is the academic course taught by Dr. Adi Koll, the second is the team meeting in which all of the "backstage" work and the lessons preparation are done, and then there's the weekly lesson with the AFA's participants.

For their participation the instructing students receive different types of compensations. The business and psychology students receive academic credits for their AFA's participation (4 credits in accordance with their department's regulations). The medicine students receive academic scholarship from the AFA of 6,500NIS (they don't get academic credits since they are exempt from accumulating general credits for their degree).

On top of their training capabilities, their commitment to the AFA and its content, the collaboration and team work - the grades the students receive at the end of the year are also given for their personal tasks and their final assignment – writing a paper summarizing the process they went through throughout the year.

### **3.2 The Students' Recruitment**

The students' recruitment began in May 2011. The process included playing a short clip in which students who participated in the AFA last year talked about their experience. In addition, ads around the campus asked students to join the AFA.

The campaign received great reactions throughout the campus following which we were approached by almost 120 students asking to become part of the AFA.



The clip can be viewed here:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtZynDOeAMo>

During the month of May we conducted a first round of interviews after which we chose 50 candidates who were invited for another selection round. During the second round the students were asked to demonstrate instructional capabilities, originality and creativity as well as team work. At the end of the selection stage 20 students (4 males and 16 females) were chosen to lead the instructing team for the 2011-2 school year.

### **3.3 Training the Instructors: The Preparation Period and the Academic Course**

#### **A. The Preparation Period**

During the first months of the year the students went through a six-weeks training period only after which they started their actual instruction. This period was designed to prepare the students in the best possible way toward their first meeting with the participants. It included 4 major components: introduction to the AFA and its instructing methods; introduction to the target population; formalizing the instruction teams; and creating a team work model.

The preparation and training period began with a 3 days introductory seminar which was held in October in Kibbutz Be'eri in the Negev for all of the instructing students, coordinators and the operational team. Afterwards, the students became more familiar with the AFA's operational team and the educational model behind the AFA. With the assistance of the coordinators team, the students formalized the annual curriculum and learned how to write lesson plans and tailor them to the needs, interests and capabilities of their participants. They went through several instruction workshops with a public-speaking expert as well as several practical tryouts.

As part of the introduction to the target population stage the students conducted advisement meetings with the accompanying social workers and with past years' instructing students (who graduated from the AFA and completed their academic studies). They toured their participants' residence neighborhoods, met with the AFA's graduates and conducted introductory meetings with the actual participants.

The students conducted 2 additional tours: both to the "Ruach Bamidbar" (wind in the desert) village. The village has two wings – one is a drugs, alcohol and gambling addiction rehabilitation center, the other is a detention alternative for youth. During the tours the students taught several lessons in their study fields in order to practice their instruction skills and to examine their lesson plans prior to meeting their participants.

## **B. The Academic Course**

As part of their AFA's participation the instructing students are required to participate in an academic course accompanying their ongoing activities and taught by Dr. Adi Koll, the AFA's director and academic instructor. The course is taught in an academic seminar format. The course's instructing method is based on the AFA's educational model and includes, besides discussion groups and joint conversations, reading of academic papers and texts analysis, critical thinking and doubt-casting development.

**Exhibit H includes a description of the students' tasks, the structure of their final grades and the academic course' structure and goals.**

The academic course "AFA - Access for All" consists of 24 two-hour meetings lasting the entire academic year. The course has several goals, some of which are preparatory but some are aimed for personal development as instructors, citizens and human beings:

- To introduce the students to the target population and to prepare the students for their instructional tasks (teaching skills, interpersonal relationships, team work).
- To introduce the students to educational theories on which the AFA is based upon.
- To examine, formalize and strengthen the students' positions and commitment to social responsibility.
- To critically examine their fields of study and their departments' social commitment as well as acquire tools for mediation between the students' professional world and the participants' world.
- To introduce the students to concepts such as "empowerment", "knowledge as power" and "democratization of knowledge" in several contexts.
- To support the students while dealing with difficulties, questions and problems arising throughout the year.

Following is the academic course's curriculum divided to units:

1

**First unit – preparing for the AFA's instructional task**

1<sup>st</sup> meeting: What is the AFA? The AFA's guidelines

2<sup>nd</sup> meeting: Instruction workshop

3<sup>rd</sup> meeting: Introduction to the target population- Social and educational gaps

4<sup>th</sup> meeting: Dealing with extreme circumstances

5<sup>th</sup> meeting: Formalizing the work teams

2

**Second unit – what kind of education do we wish to provide?**

1<sup>st</sup> meeting: Philosophy of education, "Education and Democracy", John Dewey

2<sup>nd</sup> meeting: Philosophy of education, "Education as dialog -I and thou", Martin Buber

3<sup>rd</sup> meeting: Philosophy of education, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Paulo Freire

4<sup>th</sup> meeting: The educational framework on which the AFA is based upon

3

**Third unit – education - inequality**

1<sup>st</sup> meeting: Sociological study of the inequality in education in Israel – guest speaker

2<sup>nd</sup> meeting: Inequality in the Israeli educational system, historic view, education in Israel- the district of separate routes, Shlomo Svirski, Tel Aviv, 1990

4

3<sup>rd</sup> meeting: Watching a movie, The Gifted Ones, Hana Azulay Hasfari

4<sup>th</sup> meeting: Access to higher education in Israel - inequality

**Fourth Unit: Empowerment + Empowering the Empowerers**

First meeting: What is poverty? Different theories

2<sup>nd</sup> meeting: empowerment - as a tool to dealing with poverty and detachment

3<sup>rd</sup> meeting: How to incorporate empowerment in the AFA's lessons

4<sup>th</sup> meeting: Empowerment workshop

5<sup>th</sup> meeting: Empowering the Empowers

5

**Fifth Unit: Democratization of Knowledge**

1<sup>st</sup> meeting: Panel of professionals who advance knowledge access in their areas and combine social activities with competitive professional career

2<sup>nd</sup> meeting: Democratization of knowledge vs. democratization of power

3<sup>rd</sup> meeting: field tour

4<sup>th</sup> meeting: "Knowledge is power" - meaning and implementation

6

**Sixth Unit: The AFA – What's Next?**

1<sup>st</sup> meeting: The AFA's place and state within the BGU

### 3.4 Evaluation and Feedback

At the end of the school year the instructing students are requested to answer a feedback questionnaire summarizing their work with the AFA's participants and the AFA's contribution to them and their participants. Following are the results of the quantitative questions asked in the feedback questionnaire. The answers were measured on a 1-5 scale, 1 being “not at all” and 5 being “very much so”.

Questions	AVG. RESPONSES
In your opinion, did your participants benefit from taking part in the AFA?	4.3
How much, if at all, did the AFA contribute to your participants in each of the following:	
Ability to engage in a discussion	3.7
Ability to work in a team	3.6
Opportunity for self-expression	4.4
Sense of self-capability	4.5
Wish to continue studying in the AFA or elsewhere	4.5
Do you feel the level of importance your participants attribute to knowledge and education changed following their AFA's participation?	4.3
Did you benefit from taking part in the AFA?	4
How much, if at all, did the AFA contribute to you in each of the following:	
Introduction to different populations, realizing their unique problems and needs	4.6
Deeper understanding of the academic study materials	4.7
Development of instructional capabilities, message conveyance skills and public speaking	4.4
Team work and collaboration	4.3
Forming and strengthening positions and social commitment	4.1

**Exhibit K includes the feedback questionnaire and the answers to the open-ended questions.**

### 3.5 Students' Stories

#### **Nir A., third year business student, taught the youth business group**

As far as I was concerned, it was clear that I will start studying in the university right after the army, just like the rest of my friends, and there was nothing special about it. The AFA has changed that concept for me. I realized that studying in the university is not trivial at all. The participants have opened my eyes and made me realize two things: one is to appreciate what I've got and take nothing for granted. The other, more importantly, was to realize there were other people for which the idea of studying in the university was a wild dream. In the past I never really paid attention to people's background, only judged them based on their behavior. Today I realize the background from which they come is definitely a factor in the deepest levels – starting from the social level up to their faith in themselves and their continued path in life. Of course I knew their background has had some influence, but I didn't realize how much...

#### **Hamutal C., second year psychology student, taught the parent psychology group**

Today, in retrospect, when I'm thinking of who I was expecting to meet in my AFA group, I find it a bit funny. It seems to me that I imagined a stereotype of a drug addict, a stereotype of a battered woman, a stereotype of a very poor couple. At the end I met people – real, moving, interesting, touching. Some with a more difficult life story, some with less. But I learned that it doesn't really matter, a person is more than the sum of experiences he or she went through in life. I think this understanding makes me look at people on the street a little different today.

To go back to that point in time when I received the email from the AFA, inviting me to a meaningful educational experience and to an intimate meeting with people from society's brim, I never would have guessed I would finish the year with a sense that I've gained so many new friends. They may be much older than me (or as they put it: "you could have been our daughter"), they may be somewhere else in life, I might not even manage to keep in touch with them, but each time I think of Nissim, Shula, Sigal, Didi, Shlomo, Pnina, Yael, Orna, Pantanesh, Dina, Moti, Hagai, Anat, Marcel, Ra'anana, Shirly, Taly, Ilanit, Ariela and Etty, I have a huge smile on my face...

The AFA's instructing students' team 2011-2 during a Passover trip



The Mayor of Be'er Sheva, Mr. Ruvik Danilovich, during his visit to the AFA, paying respect to the participants in the adults business group





## **PART 4- THE OPERATIONAL TEAM**

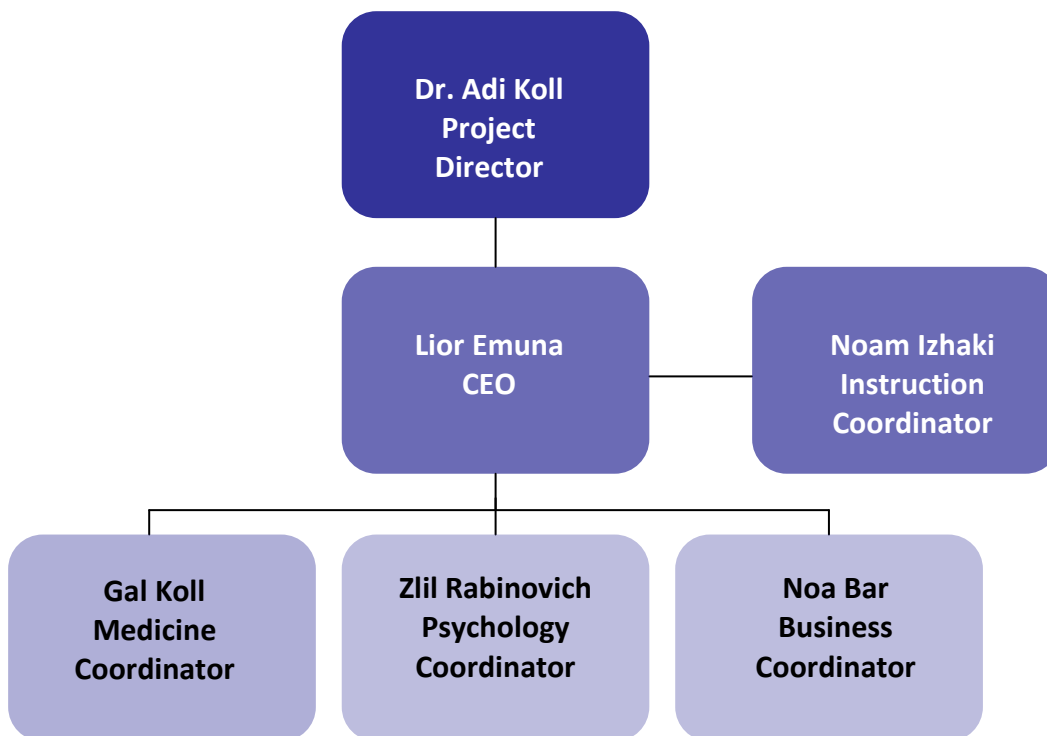
### **4.1 The Operational Team**

The AFA is managed by a professional team headed by Dr. Adi Koll who acts as the project's director and its academic instructor, and Mrs. Lior Emuna, its CEO.

A new role added this year was the instruction coordinator role. Acting in this role is Ms. Noam Izhaki, a former instructing student who previously taught the women group who studied psychology and also acted as the psychology department coordinator. The role was created due to a need in direction regarding the AFA's instruction, since its study content and instruction methods should be tailored to its unique populations. As part of her role, Noam is responsible for approving all curricula, for visiting the lessons and providing feedback to the instructing students.

The operational team also includes the 3 department coordinators:

- **Ms. Zlil Rabinovich – 3<sup>rd</sup> year student, psychology department coordinator**
- **Mr. Gal Koll – 2<sup>nd</sup> year student, medicine department coordinator**
- **Ms. Noa Bar – business department coordinator**



#### 4.2 Continuing Education

This year we started establishing an infrastructure for a continuing education program for the AFA's participants at BGU. The programs' establishment was based on past experience gained in the TAU project and also on participants' requests and needs brought up by them during our first year of operation. The project's participants are exposed to a lot of knowledge in different fields, and go through a positive experience of intriguing and challenging learning, awaking in them the wish to continue learning and to continue developing. The boost in participants' requests for further studies, professional training and employment made us realize the clear need among the participants for continuing programs.

Therefore, we decided to check the variety of options existing at BGU and in Be'er Sheva and to establish strategic collaborations in order to assist the participants to fulfill their wishes. We first sought to strengthen the summer courses which already started operating last summer in collaboration with Kibbutz Be'eri. The summer courses' goal was to improve the participants' basic skills in English, Hebrew and computers. Then we looked for education completion programs – 12 years of school's completion and matriculation exams' completion. This is how we found "The Graduates Program" of the Community Action Department at BGU. At the same time we were approached by representatives of the "Life and Employment Circle" program of the Be'er Sheva municipality who offered to integrate the AFA's participants into their programs.

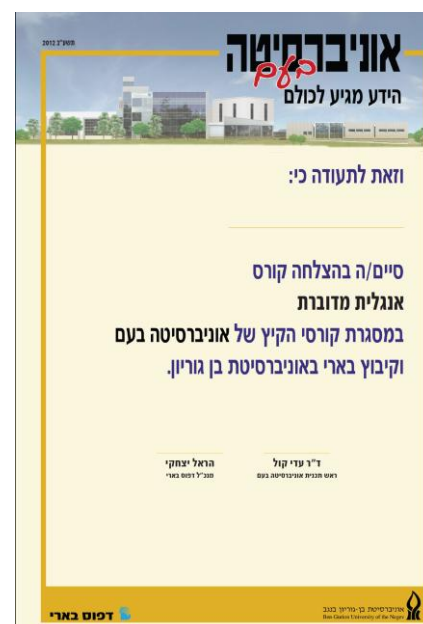
After a strenuous work of expectations coordination, tailoring the studies for the special needs and abilities of the AFA's participants, and formalizing work plans, we started rolling. Toward the end of the year we conducted exposure meetings for all the AFA's adults participants. In these meetings we presented the programs to the participants, and representatives of each of the collaborating organizations explained about their study programs and answered questions. The participants already expressed their interest in the programs during the meetings after which many registered to study.

#### Details regarding the continuation programs:

##### **"Summer courses" in collaboration with Kibbutz Be'eri:**

The summer courses started operating last year and at the end of September 2012 the second session was finished. This initiative was born due to the AFA's participants' requests to improve basic skills such as: Hebrew language, English and computers. The initial connection with Kibbutz Be'eri was established by our instruction coordinator Noam Izhaki who's originally from that Kibbutz, and who managed, with the help of her father, Harel Izhaki, who manages Dfus Be'eri, the Kibbutz's printing house, to recruit the Kibbutz's

members to volunteer and donate money to the AFA. Noam has also taken upon her the coordination and preparation work and together with a representative of the Kibbutz, Inbal Alon, formalized a curriculum for each of the 3 areas, tailored for the AFA's participants and including 10 meetings each. The Kibbutz's members, specializing in the different areas, volunteered to instruct the lessons and the Kibbutz decided to fund the study equipment, accessories and the refreshments for the participants. This year, 110 participants from the adults groups have taken part in the summer courses. They expressed great satisfaction from the courses and indicated they were looking forward to further enrichment studies. At the end of the courses the Kibbutz's members conducted a graduation event in which graduation certificates were given to the participants.



### "The Graduates Program":

"The Graduates Program" operates within the Community Action Department at BGU. The AFA's offices are also located in that department; therefore we were aware of the variety of programs operating in the university and outside of it. Our collaboration, which started as an initiative by Adv. Vered Sarusi-Katz, the head of the Community Action Department, started in the middle of the year. Together with Mrs. Orly Bar-Ami, "The Graduates Program's" manager, we formalized the participants' referral process and their integration into the different programs. Beyond that, the Community Action Department offered financial assistance to the AFA's participants, realizing the financial difficulties most of our participants experience. "The Graduates Program" offers a variety of programs. The first is "The Completion Program", in which participants can complete 10 or 12 years of school. The studies are conducted throughout an academic year and consist of 3 weekly meetings. This program enables the participants to expand their employment options as many work places require 12 years of school. In the future the participants can choose whether they want to continue and complete their matriculation exams.

The second program offered is "The Preparatory Program", offering matriculation preparatory studies for those who wish to complete their matriculation exams or to improve their grades. The matriculation fields studied are: Mathematics, English, Linguistics, Literature, Bible Studies and Geography. The program is tailored for each participant based on his or her needs; the schedule is flexible and supports combining studies

with work; and it supports the completion of all the basic fields required for a full matriculation certificate. The programs' teachers are veteran professionals trained in matriculation exams' preparation.

After exposing "The Graduates Program" to the AFA's adults participants, we were approached by many. Today, after the selection and interviewing process, 21 AFA graduate participants are registered to the completion program and 15 to the preparatory program. These high figures indicate to us that there's a strong will among our participants to continue learning and developing.

### **"The Life and Employment Circle":**

"The Life and Employment Circle" is a municipal program designed to take families out of the distress and poverty circle. The program deals with individuals and families who have developed patterns of inactivity and unemployment for years. Throughout the year we contacted Mrs. Ayelet Arnoni – in charge of collaborations from "The Life and Employment Circle". Together we chose the appropriate programs for our participants. Based on our segmentations, we realized that most of the unemployed participants were women ages 22-40. Many of them were unemployed because they were single mothers who couldn't find a job that could fit in with raising their kids. We were astonished to realize that especially for these women there was the "Grace for Employment" program which assists single mothers individually and professionally to find proper employment solutions. Another program, "Strive", is designed for young adults under 35 and includes a personal accompaniment process to provide relevant professional training based on personal preferences and compatibility. "The Life and Employment Circle" employs social workers who accompany the employment finding process personally and privately. Presenting the program to the AFA's participants resulted in a large wave of requests and about 50 of our participants have integrated into the different programs.

The attached diagram shows the number of participants taking part in the continuation programs out of the potential participants.

36 participants have joined "The Graduates Program" out of potential 160. 50 participants have joined "The Life and Employment Program" out of potential 160.

These numbers teach us that with a minor investment of resources we can offer our participants a world of opportunities for advancement, both on employment and on educational aspects. We wish to expand the AFA's continuation programs at BGU next year as well, and also expand our collaborations.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The 2011-2 school year has been a very successful year for the AFA. The project has grown and expanded on several fronts: the participants' volume increased – we finished the year with 431 participants (compared with last year's 281); we opened a new study department – medicine; and established an infrastructure for a continuing education program.

The participants' satisfaction rate was especially high as their questionnaires' results, appearing in this report, indicate. The high attendance rates presented throughout the year are also a clear indication. In addition, their strong wish to continue studying, as manifested in their enthusiastic integration into the continuing education programs, indicate they go through an exceptional and powerful experience.

The instructing students as well indicate that participating in the AFA was an enriching, empowering and contributing, certainly the most meaningful experience of their studies' period. Many of the students indicated that their experience with the participants taught them to know, open up to, and get attached to people they've never met before. The heavy work load together with the great satisfaction made them realize the mighty power of benevolence and of social involvement. The discussions accompanying their activities made them consider a subject they haven't been too occupied with before – the Israeli society.

This year we also decided to expand our boundaries and to look beyond the area of Be'er Sheva. The town's residents have limited access to studies and education, but as such it's much larger than the access the rest of the Negev's municipalities have. This year we created collaborations with agencies working with at-risk youth in Netivot, Sderot and Ofakim, and through them we formed a group of participants arriving at the AFA with special transportation we've allocated for them. Their great success in the project has led to the expansion of this collaboration and next year the AFA will also include youth from the town of Dimona, using transportation financed by its municipality.

In addition, we invested much effort this year in providing solutions to the needs and further requirements of the participants. Actually, beside the unique program we created for them together with Kibbutz Be'eri, the rest of the programs have existed before but our participants never approached them independently. Their great response, registration and integration has taught us that the main goal of the continuing education program should be the linking together and providing access to such program. For that we must supply them with self confidence and a sense of competence, provide them with a positive study experience, and accompany them in taking their first steps. The continuing education program had only just begun this year, and already we can see large percentage of participants wishing to develop and advance themselves. Next

year then we'll employ part-time a continuing education coordinator whose role it'll be to expand and improve existing collaborations, establish new ones and make them accessible for our participants.

Together with the many successes, we had our share of complex challenges this year. Doubling the number of youth studying at the AFA resulted in having to cope with several issues. The youth's motivation to join the project is low and mostly doesn't come from a strong will to study but from wishing to test and explore a new and unfamiliar place, somewhere they couldn't have entered before. Thus, they arrive in order to test and put the instructing students and the rest of the team under a constant examination. Large percentage of the youth drops out even before the third lesson and even those who persist don't do it consistently.

During the actual lessons the youth usually act impatiently, frantically, and express a lot of criticism therefore requiring much attention toward discipline and behavioral problems which harm the studying experience. Most of the youth find it hard to open up to the instructors so it's more difficult to establish the personal relationship with them that is fundamental to their project's success.

In addition, a special tailoring of the lessons' plans and the study materials is required for them to answer their needs and provide them with useful and practical tools. The instruction method must also be specially tailored and focus on work and active participation rather than passive learning.

Therefore, toward the next school year we decided to prepare differently for working with the youth and to create for them a slightly different program, consisting of unusual activities (tours, meeting with key personnel in their fields, outside activities and more) and setting short term goals on top of the final goal – the completion of the school year. We decided to grant the youth mid-term certificates marking their achievement after a short period of commitment and persistence in order to instill them with motivation to continue and to allow them to actively participate in each of the lessons. Throughout the year we'll re-test the program's compliance with the youth and arrive at the relevant conclusions.

It's important to note that in light of our first year's success, this year many collaborations were established and existing relationships have strengthened. First and foremost we'd like to note the collaboration with the Be'er Sheva municipality that became much stronger. The Mayor Mr. Ruvik Danilovich honored the AFA with his participation in the project's final ceremony and also conducted an introductory tour during the year in which he met with the participants and was impressed by the atmosphere inside the classrooms. In addition, regular meetings were conducted with the head of the Be'er Sheva welfare department, Mrs. Esther Amar, who gave a green light to financial and institutional support in the AFA.

During the upcoming year we would like to strengthen our collaboration with the BGU management and with its relevant departments. It's crucial that we find a way to expose the AFA to the entire university's community, to introduce to them the AFA's participants and vice versa. If we succeed in creating a real meeting point between those two populations, we'll be able to contribute to a better society, more equal and just.