

# Parent-Teacher Relations in Secondary Education

## Status Report and Recommendations

Report of the Committee on School and Family:  
Teacher-Parent Relations in a Changing Environment

-Executive Summary-

Unrevised Translation from the Hebrew original

Editors: Zipora Shechtman and Oded Busharian

Teacher

...In line with school goals,  
the administration has  
decided that... 13:35 ✓✓



Father

Wait a minute, I still  
haven't agreed to  
the goals. 13:40 ✓✓

Student

Hey, why are you talking  
as if I'm not here?  
13:45 ✓✓



Father

Right, we should also listen  
to what you have to say.  
13:48 ✓✓

Teacher

So perhaps we should all  
meet face-to-face and talk?  
13:50 ✓✓



# **Parent-Teacher Interactions in Secondary Education**

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School and Family: Teacher-Parent Relations  
in a Changing Environment

**Executive Summary**

Translated from the Hebrew original

**Editors: Zipora Shechtman and Oded Busharian**

**July 2015**

The Initiative for Applied Education Research  
The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities

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**The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities** was founded in 1959. Its membership currently comprises close to 100 top Israeli scientists and scholars. The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Law, 1961, declares that its principal objectives and tasks are to foster and promote scientific activity; to advise the Government on research activities and scientific planning of national importance; to maintain ties with foreign academies of science; to represent Israeli science at international institutes and conferences; and, to publish articles that can further science.

**The Initiative for Applied Education Research (the Initiative)** places up-to-date, scientific, critically-appraised knowledge and information at the disposal of decision-makers in the field of education. This kind of information is crucial for the intelligent formulation of policy and for optimal planning of interventions to improve educational achievements in Israel.

**The Initiative's vision:** Research knowledge is an essential component for planning public policy or comprehensive interventions. In the planning phase, critically-appraised research knowledge supports the formulation of policy whose chance of success is greater, and at a later point, enables rational public discourse to take place. The Initiative implements this vision in the field of education.

**The Initiative's method of operation:** The issues the Initiative addresses are those raised by decision-makers and it consults with senior Ministry of Education officials and other stakeholders. The Initiative's steering committee, appointed by the president of the Israel Academy, is responsible for the Initiative's work program and the peer-review processes of documents it creates.

The Initiative operates by means of expert committees and by convening joint symposia for researchers, professionals in the field and decision-makers. It publishes a variety of reports and makes them available to the public. Members of expert committees carry out their work on a voluntary basis.

**History of the Initiative:** The Initiative was established in late 2003 as a joint venture of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the Ministry of Education, and the Rothschild Foundation (Yad Hanadiv). Since the beginning of 2010, the Initiative has been operating as a unit of the Israel Academy. In the summer of 2010, the Israeli Knesset amended the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Law, regulating the Israel Academy's advisory role vis-à-vis government ministries seeking its consulting services. The Initiative directs the consulting activities on education related issues which the Israel Academy provides to the government and various authorities.

## **Expert Committee on School and Family: Teacher-Parent Relations in a Changing Environment**

At the request of the Ministry of Education, the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities established an expert committee to address the ways in which parental involvement in formal education can contribute to the development of adolescents in today's world. During the course of its work, the committee reviewed research studies, position papers, models, and policies from Israel and abroad, and met with professionals in the field, with the goal of being able to propose a frame of reference for positive relationships between schools and parents in Israel—relationships that can enhance most students' emotional development and academic achievements. When it completed its deliberations, the committee prepared this final report, whose content and recommendations have been endorsed by all its members.

This document summarizes theory along with impartial current research, and includes recommendations for further thought and action. The report was subject to peer review, has been submitted to the Ministry of Education, and is accessible to the public on the Initiative's website (<http://education.academy.ac.il>). The reviews of the scientific literature commissioned for the committee's work, as well as additional accompanying material, can also be found on the website.

### **Committee members:**

Prof. Zipora Schechtman, University of Haifa, Chair  
Prof. Ismael Abu-Saad, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
Prof. Audrey Addi-Raccah, Tel Aviv University  
Dr. Anat Gofen-Sarig, Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
Adv. Yael Kafri, Tel Aviv University  
Adv. Yisca Leibowitz, District attorney, Southern District (retired)  
Prof. Gustavo Mesch, University of Haifa  
Prof. Amiram Raviv, Center for Academic Studies, Or Yehuda  
Prof. Yaacov Yablon, Bar-Ilan University

### **Initiative staff:**

Mr. Oded Busharian, Committee coordinator  
Ms. Miriam Rest, Assistant to the coordinator

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all those who contributed to and assisted the committee in its work and in the composition of this report. During the course of its two years of work, the members of the committee met with many professionals who shared their knowledge and experience. Many others helped out “behind the scenes” with organization, coordination, sharing of materials, and more.

First and foremost, the committee would like to thank the former director general of the Ministry of Education, Ms. Dalit Stauber, who supported its work from the outset, as well as the current director general, Ms. Michal Cohen, who continued to promote the endeavor through all its stages, in concert with the senior Ministry officials.

The committee would also like to thank senior officials in the Ministry’s head office, who readily responded to our requests for meetings and shared their knowledge, data, wealth of experience, and insights:<sup>1</sup> Ms. Ela Algarisi, director, the Counseling branch; Dr. Ruth Ben-Zeev, national advisor and instructor, the Pre-Service and Internship Department; Ms. Irit Biran, deputy director, the Pedagogical Administration; Ms. Galit Dadi, national instructor, the Psychological Counseling Service’s unit for Parents and Family; Mr. Roni Dayan, director, Computer Applications Unit, the Science and Technology Administration; Dr. Judith El-Dor, director, the Learning Disabilities and Attention Disorders branch; Ms. Hanna Erez, national inspector for professional oversight, the Social and Community Unit, who met with members of the committee, spoke with them about community schools, and shared her knowledge of various programs aimed at fostering the relations between parents and teachers; Ms. Zohara Florsheim, inspector overseeing counselors for State-Religious Education, Jerusalem district and the Jerusalem Education Administration; Ms. Chava Fridman, director, Psychology Section, the Psychological Counseling Service; Mr. Noah Greenfeld, director, the Teacher Training Department; Ms. Dalia Halevi, national inspector, Language Instruction in Elementary Schools; Ms. Dany Journo, deputy director, the Psychology Section; Mr. Shaul Kastelnitz, pedagogical inspector; Ms. Ronit Katz, national advisor for Parents and Family; Ms. Ariella Keidar, inspector for the Tel Aviv District; Ms. Einav Luke, director, Assistance and Prevention Programs Unit of the Psychological Counseling Service; Prof. Zecharia Madar, former Chief Scientist of the Ministry, who helped launched the project, and Prof.

<sup>1</sup> The professionals listed below appear in alphabetical order by last name; the positions and affiliations listed are those in effect during the Committee’s work.

Ami Volansky, current Chief Scientist of the Ministry, who continued to support it; Ms. Nadia Massarweh, educational psychologist, the Preschool Department of the Educational Psychology Service in Nazareth; Ms. Karin Meixner, anti-violence coordinator and director of the Educational Psychology Service; Mr. Moti Rosner, deputy director, the Teachers' Administration, Teacher Professional Development; Ms. Karen Roth, supervisor, the Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Abuse Prevention Section, the Psychological Counseling Service; Ms. Betty Rytwo, head, Parents and Family Section, the Psychological Counseling Service, for her support of the committee's work, her time, advice, vast information and sharing about Ministry activities to promote relations with parents, and for her participation in the symposium organized by the committee; Ms. Hana Shadmi, director, Division A, the Psychological Counseling Service; Ms. Haya Shitay, director, Tel Aviv District; Ms. Orly Stern, coordinator, Counseling Division, Tel Aviv District; Ms. Tami Umanski, head, the Early Childhood Professional Development and Counseling Section; Dr. Sara Zilberstrom, director, the Pre-Service and Internship Department; and Ms. Shosh Zimmerman, retired director, the Assistance and Prevention Programs Unit, who spoke at the symposium sponsored by the Committee

Special thanks to the principals and workers in the field: Ms. Yael Ayalon, principal of the Ramat Ha Hayal School, Tel Aviv; Mr. David (Benzi) Ben-Zohar, principal of Municipal School 7, Tel Aviv–Yafo; Ms. Haya Meluka, parent facilitator; Ms. Limor Ofrat-Ostrovsky, director, the Science and Knowledge Center for the Gifted and Outstanding in Carmiel; and, Ms. Netanella Sasson, seventh-grade head teacher and grade coordinator at the René Cassin School, Jerusalem.

The committee expresses its gratitude to the representatives of the Israel National Parents' Association with whom they met: attorney Gideon Fisher, chair of the Association, and Mr. Zeev Goldblatt, chair of the Parents' Association in Givatayim. The committee also thanks the following Avney Rosh Institute professionals: Ms. Maya Bozo-Schwartz, director of research and development; Tidhar Gutman, of the R&D staff; and Dr. Itay Asher, former director of R&D, who arranged the introduction between the committee and the Institute.

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The committee thanks those who spoke at the symposium and have not yet been mentioned here: Dr. Meyran Boniel-Nissim, University of Haifa; Prof. Nancy E. Hill, Harvard University; Prof. Paul Tractenberg, Rutgers University; Prof. Moshe Israelashvili, Tel Aviv University; Dr. Iris Manor-Binyamini, University of Haifa; and Ms. Vered Altshuler-Ezrahi, KAMAH, the Teacher-Parents Project. We also thank Dr. Bilha Noy, whose lecture at the symposium and book, *Whose Child is This? On Parents' Relationships with their Children's School* enriched the committee with her expertise in the Israeli education system's relations with parents.

The committee conveys its appreciation these researchers as well, who helped through conversations and with information from their areas of research: Prof. Azy Barak and Prof. Sheizaf Rafaeli, both of the University of Haifa, and Dr. Bruria Schaedel of Western Galilee College.

The committee is also grateful to the authors of the scientific reviews: Mr. Omri Gefen and Ms. Lior Kalay Shahin of the Gevim Group; Dr. Raaya Alon, Dr. Hava Greensfeld, and Ms. Devorah Feldman, all of the Research Center at Michlala Jerusalem College; Dr. Yael Naot-Ofarim of the Kibbutzim College of Education Technology and the Arts; Dr. Gila Kurtz of the Center for Academic Studies in Or Yehuda; Ms. Gali Palti of Western Galilee College; and, attorney Tzviya Shir of Tel Aviv University who, in addition to the review she wrote, lent her expertise to the report's chapter on legal aspects of parent-teacher relations.

The committee expresses its appreciation to those members of the public who responded to its call for information: Ms. Malka Rivka Direktor, head of the Center for Learning Disabilities; Ms. Sivan Haft of the Counselors for Parents program; Ms. Irit Letzter, head of the Center for Parenting and Family at the Gordon Academy of Education in Haifa; Dr. Joseph Prinz of the Hadarim (guidance for teachers, parents, and students) Program; and Ms. Terri Sternberg-Zamir of the New Authority Center.

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The committee coordinator and members all wish to express their particular gratitude to Miriam Rest for her extensive assistance on both the research and

administrative ends; her wisdom and personality made a major contribution to its deliberations.

A huge expression of thanks to Dr. Itay Pollak, who was a senior coordinator for the committee from its founding until he left the Initiative.

The report has undergone a standard process of independent peer review. Its editors would like to thank the reviewers who helped enhance its clarity, quality, and autonomy. The entire committee bears responsibility for the report. Its conclusions were unanimously approved after a plenary discussion.

## **Peer Review**

The draft of the document summarizing the committee's work was sent for peer review in Israel and abroad. The reviewers' identities were not known to the committee members until the actual publication of the report. The review process was intended to provide an external professional, relevant, and unbiased critique that would help the report authors improve the document and make it useful on both the Israeli and international levels. We would like to thank the reviewers for their work.

The reviewers were (in alphabetical order):

Ms. Yaffa Pass, former head, Secondary Education Department, Israel Ministry of Education

Prof. Eva Patrikakou, De Paul University, United States

Prof. (Emerita) Rachel Seginer, University of Haifa

The three reviewers provided useful comments and proposed various additions and corrections to the draft. However, they were not asked to endorse the expert committee's conclusions or recommendations and did not see the amended text prior to publication.

Zipora Schechtman  
Committee Chair

Oded Busharian  
Committee Coordinator

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<sup>2</sup> The Table of Contents reflects the contents of the full Hebrew-language report.



## **Executive Summary: Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

This report summarizes the work of the expert committee established by the Initiative for Applied Education Research to study School-Family Relations in a Changing Environment. The committee was formed at the request of the Ministry of Education (MOE) in light of current social and technological changes with which it is confronted and that present it with unique challenges. The committee was asked to determine what the research and practice about teacher-parent relations can contribute to the development of today's adolescents.

The research literature has long recognized the impact of education by parents in the home and of the interactions between parents and teachers on students' functioning and achievement in school (Coleman, 1966). Recent decades have seen advances in the conceptualization of the types of involvement (e.g., Epstein, 2010; Epstein et al. 1997; Willms & Ho, 1999; Christenson & Reschly, 2009), in the study of their influence on adolescents (e.g., Hill & Tyson, 2009), and in the development of ways to cultivate them (e.g., Noy, 2014, in Hebrew; Epstein, 2013). An earlier Initiative expert committee studying "Relations between the Family and the Early Childhood Education System" (hereafter, the Greenbaum Committee) presented the theoretical background and practical findings relevant to parental involvement and to relations between the education framework and parents of preschool children (Greenbaum & Fried, 2011, in Hebrew).

In the wake of that committee's work, MOE officials requested that the topic be examined more broadly, this time with the emphasis on adolescents and how the new forms of communication (e.g., social networks, email, and instant messaging) made possible by new media technologies (e.g., the Internet and smartphones) can be applied. The present document expands the scope of the Greenbaum Committee's work in these areas.

The committee saw fit to expand on and refine two additional points considered by the Greenbaum Committee:

- It found that there is conceptual ambiguity in how both the research literature and the discourse among educators in Israel relate to the topic of parental involvement.<sup>3</sup> Particular effort was invested in creating a theory- and research-

<sup>3</sup> The Greenbaum Committee also related to this conceptual ambiguity (Greenbaum & Fried, 2011, p. 1, in Hebrew).

based glossary to elucidate the terminology that serves those working in the field. The committee hopes that the glossary will help create a common language for Israeli educators to use in discussing parental involvement in education.

- The committee's work points to the crucial importance of greater precision—that is, a clearer distinction among the various types of involvement and interaction and their adaptation to the child's developmental stage, the parents' capacities, and the resources at their disposal (Busharian & Rest, 2014, p. 38, in Hebrew).

## **Main topics discussed in this document**

The first chapter of the report presents theoretical aspects required for understanding the topic of parent-teacher relations in a changing environment. It opens with an elucidation of the various terms (a glossary) found in the literature (and in daily discourse) to describe parental involvement in education. It enumerates various concepts in use in discourse on education in Israel and distinguishes among them in order to establish a common language for the rest of the report (and for educators' work in general).<sup>4</sup> Next, it presents the Ecological Systems model to describe social systems and how this model can be applied to school-family relations. This is followed by presentation of the developmental context on which the committee focused—adolescence and its specific traits (more precisely, those that are relevant to school-family relations). This section deals briefly with the cognitive and emotional changes experienced by adolescent students and in general, with the changes that occur in the relationship between students and their parents and family. Finally, it reviews the research literature on trust, its construction, and its implications. This last is important because it has been found that building trust is significant for everything the committee addressed and for its recommendations.

The second chapter offers a snapshot of how the official establishment deals with parental involvement in formal education in Israel. Because the report's main objective is to assist and advise policymakers, the subject matter is presented chiefly from their perspective. In other words, the picture given attempts to reflect how the education system, through its various branches, addresses the different types of parental involvement in education.

<sup>4</sup> The elucidation is based on review and analysis of the research literature. The review and analysis appear in Appendix B.

The third chapter relates to the second point on which the committee was asked to focus—the place of new technology-based forms of communication within the context of family–school relations. It presents the key theoretical frameworks needed for examining technology-mediated communication, along with the characteristics of such communication. This review also considers the advantages and disadvantages for schools of using different communications methods especially in interactions between school and parents.

The fourth and fifth chapters turn to the question of how to tailor the relationship with parents and the actions expected of them to the parents’ characteristics and the resources available to them. Chapter Four deals with attuning interactions with parents as a function of their socioeconomic status and modifying it for cultures and subcultures that differ from the dominant culture (or, more precisely, the culture of the “sociological center”). Its objective is to enhance understanding of the types of involvement appropriate for each population and the methods for creating beneficial relationships between parents and educators, in general, and for specific sectors.

Chapter Five focuses on students with special needs and how the system can and should work with parents to help such children advance. This chapter includes a discussion of different groups of students with different types of needs. It reviews the current situation in Israel and presents specific findings related to children with different special needs.

The report’s sixth and last chapter reviews the legal aspect of the relations between parents and teachers. Given the nature of the legal discourse, the chapter addresses what happens when the relationship between parents and educators becomes conflictual (this issue was explained in greater depth at the symposium organized by the committee; see Busharian & Rest, 2014, pp. 29–30, in Hebrew). It includes an examination of Israeli law that refers to the division of responsibility between parents and teachers on issues such as the student’s wellbeing and education. The chapter also presents specific models for resolving disputes (Alternative Dispute Resolution or ADR) that have been employed in other countries and other fields. Factors that might impede their implementation in Israel are described, in the context of the asymmetry in the relations between parents and schools.

It is important to note that although the findings and recommendations of the present report are geared to educators, they do not diminish parents’ responsibility for their children and their education. The creation of an optimal relationship between parents and teachers requires effort and investment by both parties. It is vital that both teachers and parents internalize the notion that students’ welfare and success are their common goal and shared responsibility.

## **Initial assumptions and findings from the literature**

- The committee assumes that parents and the education system bear joint responsibility for children's education. The parents are the "experts" regarding their own children and must see to their wellbeing and happiness. The education system is a source of professional knowledge and is responsible for important elements of all children's education, wellbeing, and happiness.
- The committee assumes that the administrative unit (or educational framework) best able to combine education system goals, on the one hand and the necessary accommodations for each student, on the other, is the school unit itself, and that this effort must be undertaken in partnership with the parents.
- The impact of parental involvement varies as a function of the type of involvement, the characteristics of the student and family, the characteristics of the school and its teachers, and the context of the involvement. Nevertheless, the research shows quite clearly that parental involvement in formal education, when done in the right way and suited to the needs of both the student and family, contributes to the adolescent's development in all respects: academic, educational, social, and emotional.
- The joint and parallel responsibility of the parents and educational staff requires cooperation and mutual involvement, which in turn demand mutual trust and respect. This trust cannot be taken for granted, and its development generally requires a significant investment.
- It was found that parents' involvement in the formal education of their adolescent children is not similar to their involvement in their children's earlier education. The form of the involvement and the relationship between the parents and educators must be adapted to suit the adolescent's needs. These changes must include the following:
  1. Allowing the adolescents' opinions and wishes their proper place and weight, and protecting their privacy;
  2. Placing the emphasis on guidance regarding values and the adolescents' future goals, in contrast with elementary education, where the parents' physical presence in the school and involvement in its activities is needed;
  3. Helping adolescents achieve their developmental objectives: specifically, building an identity and separating themselves from the parents' home in preparation for independent adult life.

- Modern communication technologies have both technically and conceptually altered the channels of communication between parents and the school. Among other things, in permitting much greater mutual access between parents and teachers they play a role in blurring the borders between them, as well as the boundaries between interpersonal and mass communication.
- A significant technology gap—essential differences in how they understand and employ technology—divides Israeli parents and teachers, on the one side, from teenagers, on the other. Not only are adolescents more savvy about technology use, they have a different attitude towards learning than the previous generation. They are more likely to learn through the simultaneous use of multiple information channels; many of them maintain social connections by simultaneously using a large number of channels. Moreover, many teenagers live their social life online and conduct their interactions with their peer group and family via digital technology. These behavior and learning patterns must be addressed by all the systems around them and discussed by parents and teachers.
- The nature and mode of the cooperation between the parents of students with special needs and the education system should be adapted to the characteristics and needs of these children, their parents, and the schools they attend.
- Parents of students with special needs tend to be more involved in their children's education; the special education system in Israel also involves them to a greater degree and in a more appropriate fashion. In Israel today, however, many special needs children are mainstreamed in regular schools. The staff of these institutions do not usually have the training to establish and maintain an optimal connection with mainstreamed students' parents.
- The professional literature worldwide shows that parental involvement in their children's education, as well as the type of involvement that is most appropriate and beneficial to students, is influenced in part by the families' culture, educational worldview, and socioeconomic status. This finding is particularly significant in light of the cultural diversity and socioeconomic inequality that prevail in Israel.
- Compared to the norm in the Western world, Israeli legislation (or secondary legislation) is extremely meager on the subject of relations between the school and the family. There is also great diversity in how schools actually put the policy of parental involvement into practice. These differences may stem from the lack of clear guidelines on the topic.

- Primary legislation and secondary legislation in Israel lack clear guidelines as to the rights, obligations, and authority of parents and of educators as they set out to fulfill their (shared) responsibilities for the children's education.

## **General recommendations**

**Introduction:** The recommendations that follow are addressed to the headquarters staff of the Ministry of Education and its decision-makers, but include recommendations that relate to parental involvement at all levels: the system, the school, and the individual educator (mainly through the training mechanisms). Note that although our recommendations are geared to education professionals, the committee sees parents as responsible partners for all intents and purposes. The school staff's responsibility for creating and enabling opportunities for helpful parental involvement in no way detracts from the parents' own duty and responsibility for their children's education.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

### **Ministry of Education guidelines for schools:**

We recommend that the Ministry of Education provide schools with guidelines about the importance of optimal parental involvement, tailored to helping students progress on the educational, academic, and emotional planes. The Ministry should guide the school on ways to promote parental involvement and the bond with parents, modifying the relationship and involvement to the needs of the parents and students.

We recommend that the Ministry guide schools in the development of internal policies on this matter that deal with the topics enumerated below. The school principal should take the lead in designing policy, along with the teaching staff, students, and parents.

Building on the findings about the importance of modifying the interaction with parents to the students' needs and family characteristics, we recommend that the Ministry's directives to schools set guidelines and limits—general instructions about various aspects of the policy—but allow schools and educators flexibility in adapting the school's policy on parental involvement to the students' needs, their families' characteristics, and the environment in which the school operates.

### **Rights and obligations of Parents and Teaching Staff:**

- We recommend that the Ministry of Education set a national policy (through primary legislation or director-general memoranda) on parental involvement, in order to regulate parents' and educators' rights and obligations.
- We recommend that clear rules be set about the professional confidentiality of the information passed between parents and the teaching staff and between staff and students. These rules should make it clear to the staff what information may be shared with parents, what information they must share, and what information they are prohibited from passing on.
- The Ministry of Education should develop channels for regular notification of parents regarding their rights and obligations. We propose that these channels include (among other things) the following:
  1. Schools will be responsible for informing parents about their rights and obligations.
  2. A website will be set up with the relevant information in an organized and accessible manner.
  3. A center should be opened, possibly as part of the Ministry's Department of Public Inquiries and Complaints, to which parents can turn to clarify their rights and obligations. The idea is to establish a dedicated email address and telephone hotline that parents can contact to clarify issues related to this matter only (in addition to the department's function as an address for clarification of educational topics).

### **Teacher-training and professional development:**

The attention to teacher-parent relations should be expanded in every stage of teacher training—certification studies, student teaching, and in-service courses—in order to provide faculty members with the knowledge and skills to promote parental involvement. This training should include, in part:

- The development of positive attitudes towards parental involvement in formal education, including familiarity with the research literature on the conditions in which parental involvement is important and useful for students. This recommendation relates in particular to the need to develop teachers' familiarity with research results that demonstrate that parental involvement remains important to student achievements and wellbeing even during adolescence.

- Training teachers in methods and techniques to involve parents in the school's work in significant fashion, and in line with their child's stage of development. This recommendation includes imparting skills to develop a dialogue of "open communication" with parents, while emphasizing the need to relate to parents in a culturally sensitive manner.
- Thorough familiarity with different sectors of Israeli society and with how each perceives parental involvement. In this context, we refer to the recommendations made by the Initiative's expert committee on "Education for All—and for Each and Every One," in the chapter on addressing diversity in teacher training and professional development programs. That chapter and its recommendations contain an outline for expanding the attention to the topic of diversity in teacher-training and in-service programs, while granting it the appropriate place in every stage of educators' training and professional development.<sup>5</sup>

### **Training for principals:**

In line with the findings that school leadership is important for cultivating the interaction with parents, we recommend that this topic be incorporated into principal-training programs. They should include the development of a positive attitude towards parental involvement in formal education, as well as familiarity with the research literature about the conditions in which parental involvement is important and beneficial to students. In addition, principals should learn about the various strategies they can employ to promote parental involvement in education, the ways and means of involving parents in school decision-making, and the significance and implications of this partnership.

### **Trust between parents and the school staff:**

In Israel, there is a lack of credible information about the extent of parents' trust in educators, at the level of the entire system, of the school, and of the individual teacher. Instruments to examine this topic can be developed and added to the existing survey platform administered by RAMA (Hebrew acronym for the National Authority for Educational Measurement and Assessment). Remedial action would be taken in schools where a problem of trust between parents and staff is found, as stated in the chapter on trust.

<sup>5</sup> Arcavi, A. and Mandel-Levy, N. (eds.), (2014) *Education for All and for Each and Every One in the Israeli Education System*, Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and the Humanities, pp. 99–121, in Hebrew.

### **Encouraging research:**

We recommend that the Ministry of Education encourage research on the status of parent-teacher relations in Israel—both directly, by allocating resources, and indirectly, by providing access to its databases and encouraging research institutes. There is an especial shortage of literature on the following topics:

- Translating and adapting instruments to Israeli culture and society that examine the level of trust among educators, in general, and between parents and the school staff, in particular;
- Patterns of parental involvement within the ultra-Orthodox sector in Israel (in all its diversity) and parents' attitudes towards the education system (including their level of trust in the system and in their children's school). There is also a need for professional literature on mainstreaming students with special needs and ultra-Orthodox society's attitude towards this group.
- Patterns of parental involvement within the Arab sector in Israel (in all its diversity) and parents' attitudes towards the education system (including their level of trust in the system and in their children's school).
- The level of trust between parents and teachers in Israel, including an examination of the different schools, in the periphery versus the center, and as a function of ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, and specific cultural group.
- The extent of technological literacy and access in Israel as a whole and among various social sectors in particular.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL SYSTEM**

As mentioned, the Ministry of Education should guide the schools in the development of channels for parental involvement and provide them with the resources required. We recommend that principals be encouraged to assign high priority to parental involvement in formal education and to relations with parents, and to institute planned activities that promote parental involvement in line with, 1) the adolescents' needs and 2) their families' needs and resources.

### **Core strategic and organizational planning in the schools:**

Building on the recommendation that the Ministry of Education should direct schools to engage in core strategic and organizational planning with respect to

parental involvement, we recommend that the entire staff be included in this and in setting school policy towards parents. Core planning work should include the following:

- Methods for involving parents in school affairs, taking the students' needs and parents' characteristics into account
- Methods to allow parents to help the school achieve its educational goals
- Methods for involving parents in school decision-making, with the emphasis on the inclusion of parents from a different cultural or disadvantaged socioeconomic background
- The use of advanced modes of communication: detailed recommendations for organizational planning and coordinating expectations on this topic are presented below.

### **Aligning expectations and involving parents:**

Following strategic and organizational planning at the school, these issues should be coordinated with the parents and with the students themselves, so as to take their opinions into consideration.

### **Appointing a liaison at the school:**

We recommend that the school appoint a professional to help teachers and parents establish optimal interaction. This role is even more important when conflict arises between parents and teachers. The person in question must have the arbitration skills that can head off an escalation that might end up in court.

### **Family intervention programs:**

We recommend that the Ministry of Education encourage schools to become an address for families seeking help in carrying out educational tasks associated with their adolescent children. One way to do this is through (family) intervention programs in the school. Such intervention must be conducted with respect for the parents and the adolescents. These programs should focus on two types of work with the family:

- **Short-term guidance-focused intervention:** Sessions with parents to make them aware of and develop their understanding of adolescents' needs and

of optimal parenting techniques. Where more help is needed, counseling of parents and students may be in order.

- **Intervention with the focus on the parent:** The literature indicates that the parents' mental health and wellbeing are important for adolescent students on the academic, educational, social, and emotional planes. We accordingly recommend that (personal or group) interventions that focus on the parent's mental wellbeing also be offered.

### **Use of advanced communications technology:**

As a rule, there must be thoughtful and cautious use of new modes of communication to maintain regular contact with parents. If and when these channels are used to convey vital information to parents, it should be done with the student's involvement, whenever possible, and in strict confidentiality.

The choice of how these communication channels are used must take account of the means available to students and parents at each institution. So too, the issues conveyed and the methods used to transmit the information must be determined in advance, in concert with parents and students, and in consideration of the limits of the parents' and teachers' availability.

Because modern technology facilitates and creates situations in which extensive information is held in the online systems of schools and the Ministry of Education, there must be an investment in protecting this information and ensuring that it remains secure. We recommend that the MOE provide schools with all the conditions and resources (material and otherwise) needed to secure the information, after which the schools would bear responsibility for the matter. The Ministry should conduct strict periodic checks that the information is indeed secure as required.



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## Appendix A: Abstracts of Scientific Literature Reviews

### **Abstract: Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) – Applications in the Field of Education: Models used Worldwide and Lessons Learned**

*Dr. Yael Naot-Ofarim*

Optimal parent-school relations are seen as key to advancing students and their achievements. In this review, this assumption is explored by presenting recent research concerning the degree of influence parents' relations with the school has on the adolescent student and by examining methods for advancing fruitful relationships.

#### **Key findings:**

The literature discussing parent-school relations uses a range of terms to describe:

- a. The parties involved in the process: at times, parents, at times, the family, without always distinguishing between them.
- b. The type of relationship between the school and parents/family. These are referred to either as “involvement” or as “partnership.”
  - Involvement is a relationship characterized by the parents' adoption of a school-centric perspective wherein the parent's role is viewed as supporting the child's learning and achievement.
  - Partnership is a relationship in which the child and his wellbeing are at the center and wherein the parents' and school's cooperation is designed to promote this objective.
- c. Type of activities designed to promote the relationship—a wide range of spontaneous activities and initiatives exist for strengthening parent-school connections, including programs focused on child learning and training that focuses on parenting skills.

Research on parental partnerships is grounded in Ecological Development theory which explains child development through the mutual influence of the home and school subsystems and their influence on the child as well as the child's influence

on them. Ecology theory points to school-family partnerships, especially with regard to shared goal-setting and responsibility, as necessary conditions for promoting student success (particularly for students from at-risk families).

An analysis of the research reveals that most research adopts the involvement framework of relationships despite the use of partnership rhetoric.

- Research presents a number of involvement typologies. The most widespread typology for analyzing the quality of the involvement proposes six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and cooperation with the community.
- Research shows that family involvement has a positive influence on student achievement and behavior.
- A major axis used to examine parental involvement is the location of the activity: The research literature distinguishes between parental involvement at school and parental involvement at home. Research shows that involvement at home has the greatest effect on student achievement.
- Parental involvement at home is defined and examined using two categories: a. involvement that supports the child's learning and, b. 'abstract involvement' which entails instilling high expectations in the child and making a connection between present school work and choices to future ones. Research shows that involvement of the second type, i.e., 'abstract involvement' is more effective.
- Research reveals that parental involvement has a positive influence on student achievement regardless of socioeconomic status. Still, the extent of involvement and its type is related to socioeconomic status. The higher the socioeconomic status of the parents, the stronger the involvement in school. However, with respect to involvement at home, the research shows mixed results.
- Research reveals that parents of different ethnicities are involved to similar degrees in their children's education, but in different ways. Parents from non-dominant ethnicities are less involved in school. Research indicates that the same types of involvement affect achievement differently for different ethnicities. Additionally, research conducted in the U.S. suggests that parental involvement has a stronger correlation with achievement for white middle-class students.

- Parental involvement takes on different forms for different ethnicities and may occur in ways that are not traditionally perceived as involvement (ways engaged in by the dominant white middle class), as defined by both the school and in research . In developing an intervention program for parental involvement, it is vital to recognize the involvement strategies of each ethnicity and examine each of these in relation to student achievement.
- **Methodologically sound evaluative research on parental involvement interventions and programs especially for middle and high schools is lacking.** Researchers are divided as to the conclusions that can be drawn from existing empirical evidence. In answer to the question of whether they are effective, research replies “Yes, but,” current evidence is not reliable enough.
- Research points to a positive correlation between programs that focus on the link between student achievement and parental involvement in the home. Specifically, programs that center on furnishing tools to support the child’s learning in a specific subject (for example, the 7<sup>th</sup> grade math curriculum) were found effective. Additionally, it was found that programs advancing parent-school partnerships are effective for improving student achievement.
- Parental involvement programs found to be most effective for improving behavior were those that stressed dialogue over curriculum and two-way communication about student performance. Training programs for parents focusing on specific behaviors and programs supporting child learning in specific subjects also proved effective.
- Research reveals that building and sustaining relationships based on respect and trust are critical for improving the quality and extent of all types of involvement, especially parent–school communication. Development and cultivation of involvement requires recognition of the family’s cultural background and their needs. Ways in which families are perceived by school staff—as a resource or an obstacle—was found to be pivotal with respect to the quality of relations.
- Research reveals that teachers appreciate family involvement only when it accords with their ideal of involvement; that is, when family members cooperate in ways that correspond to the teacher’s views and needs. In addition, it was found that teachers recognize only a narrow range of behaviors as acceptable involvement.

- Research articulates the following barriers to family involvement: the family context (mainly their resources and logistical limitations); language; lack of understanding of school policy, practices and expectations; lack of knowledge regarding curriculum; exclusion.
- Guiding principles for structuring and sustaining partnerships are: Schools must be proactive, responding is not enough; partnerships must be responsive to the circumstances of students and families; schools must recognize and value the contribution of parents to the educational process; partnerships must empower all parents. Each parent must have a voice.
- Research points to three conditions for implementing effective partnerships with parents: a. strategic planning that structures parental involvement programs as part of the school development plan, b. sustained support including resources and training for all involved, c. involvement of the community at all levels of administration from needs analysis to supervision and evaluation. These must all be realized in a safe environment of trust and mutual appreciation.

**Abstract: Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)—  
Applications in the Field of Education: Models used Worldwide  
and Lessons Learned**

*Omri Gefen and Lior Kalay Shahin*

The school environment carries the potential for conflict whose source may be rooted in a variety of relationships—for example, conflicts between teachers themselves, between teachers and parents, teachers and students, teachers and the administration, and among students themselves. Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) strategies represent a cooperative approach to problem solving and includes, in part, negotiation, mediation and facilitation. This review focuses on relationships and conflicts between various non-student agents in the school—specifically, conflicts between parents and teachers.

The relationship between the home and school may be seen from different theoretical perspectives, ranging from one that views the home and the school as separate influences on the life of the child, to the view that these spheres of influences overlap. The way this interaction is perceived, in practice, affects the relationship between the parents and the school. The view of this relationship also

runs the gamut, from the model that expects parents to hand over responsibility for their children's education to the school all the way to a model of teacher-parent partnership.

The relationship between the home and the school is complex. These two parties can be perceived as rivals that hold different views and preferences, or the two parties can be seen as partners in the child's learning and development. There is literature which describes repeated patterns of conflict, and in contrast, there is another stream in the literature that encourages the creation of partnerships between the home and the school. In the interface between the home and school, there is inherent potential for both parties' growth, alongside the potential for conflict and harm to affect the interaction between the two. Research relates to conflict as an important dimension of parental involvement in the school, yet conflict is also an opportunity for an organization to grow and develop.

Tools of communication may help improve relations between parents and the school. The review presents a proposal for an alternative, more cooperative, method of managing the conversation between the parent and the teacher. The communication skills that have proven effective in managing the interaction between a complaining parent and a school principal are also presented.

In light of the law in the United States regarding the partnership between parents and the teaching staff in creating an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the child, the area of special education has warranted much research attention with respect to conflicts between parents and teaching staff. The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) determines that parents must be involved in the educational decisions that concern their children, thus amplifying the potential for friction between the parents and the school. In order to resolve conflicts between parents and school districts regarding student education, the law defined three mechanisms for resolving conflicts: due process hearings, mediation, and resolution meetings. Due process hearings are a court-like procedure in which the family and the school district present their case while a hearing officer decides how to resolve the situation. The goal of mediation is to resolve disputes with the help of a trained and impartial mediator, in a formal but less adversarial fashion as compared to due process. The mediator facilitates negotiations between the parties and attempts to ease the process of reaching a consensual settlement. A resolution meeting is designed to settle the conflict before it reaches the hearing stage and takes place within two weeks of the formal complaint being lodged. These practices are reactive in nature since they occur only after a conflict has emerged and escalated.

Research has shown that systemic changes in ongoing proactive practices can prevent and even resolve conflicts before they reach formal stages (Margolis, 1998; Mueller, 2004; Scheffel, Rude, & Bole, 2005). These methods include the implementation of alternative dispute resolution strategies, a partnership with parents and service agents, professional development, creative use of resources, communication, establishing trust, teacher and parent support (Mueller, 2004).

States and school districts in the US have attempted to implement diverse and innovative strategies to prevent conflict escalation and manage conflicts prior to or, as soon as, they appear. These strategies promote cooperation and prevent tensions that arise due to mediation and due process hearings. Among these strategies are:

- **Participant & stakeholder training**—imparting tools to parents, educators and service providers to improve their dialogue and negotiation skills, prevent conflict escalation and enhance their abilities to resolve future conflicts (e.g., collaborative decision making, negotiation, mediation).
- **Establishing common practices**—such as a council of stakeholders that collaborates on various issues, or the cooperative characterization of norms and regulations.
- **Establishing a parent-to-parent support mechanism**—parents of disabled children provide their peers with information, guidance, and support.
- **Appointing a case manager**—to address legal questions presented by parents and examine the conflict in order to identify and recommend the best possible solution to the dispute.
- **Appointing a telephone intermediary**—to assist in clarifying the issue at hand and to examine alternative ways to resolve the conflict as soon as it is identified.
- **IEP facilitation**—managing the dynamics of the IEP (Individualized Education Program) meeting to assure that both parties behave respectfully, that all the participants' points of view are heard, and that the participants stay focused on future actions.
- **Mediation hybrid models**—different versions that vary in the number of mediators, their training, and the scope of joint vs. separate meetings. The review presents different mediation approaches—pragmatic, transformative, and narrative mediation.

- **Appointing an ombudsperson**—a third party in charge of investigating complaints, proposing solutions, and negotiating more actively with the parties than would a facilitator or mediator to find a solution.
- **Third-party consultation**—consulting with a legal and/or special education expert in order to learn their positions in the conflict—the objective being to decide how to settle in the hearing.

The Ohio model of conflict resolution is designed to create a sound infrastructure for conflict resolution in schools and does so with the help of annual grants, conferences, access to university distance courses on the topic of implementing conflict resolution programs, and through regional professional development workshops. There is evidence of this model's effectiveness.

Conflicts between the home and the school also encompass conflicts between teachers and students. The relationship between the teacher and student can benefit the student from many points of view. Teacher-based counseling interventions that also include play therapy may contribute to the quality of the teacher–student relationship.

The most significant and salient aspect associated with ADR implementations in the education system is that during the past two decades, ADR has been frequently employed in the context of peer conflicts between students and its tools have been integrated into programs designed to improve dialogue and prevent conflict—among students, and in a partial manner, among teachers as well. In the U.S., in special education contexts, parents are not involved or included in ADR implementation apart from their role on placement committees.

This aspect reflects, in our opinion, a growing gap between the education system's needs and characteristics in the past, the present and leading into the future. In the past, parents may have been perceived as an external, almost irrelevant, part of the school community. Today, however, there is a growing trend of parental involvement, and the line between parental participation and parental intervention is blurred. For this and other reasons, this has led to an increase in conflicts between parents and school staff and the regional and national education system.

Israel lacks ADR mechanisms to manage conflicts between families and the education system. Some conflicts end up in court, while most remain unresolved or are resolved coercively and unilaterally. Either way, the end result is not necessarily the best alternative for both parties and may have a harmful effect on long term relationships and on the students themselves, not to mention the

direct and indirect impact on school climate. Assuming that parents' desire for influence will only grow stronger due to social changes, the absence of consensual conflict resolution mechanisms will only expand the gap and may even damage the education system's functioning.

### **Abstract: Current Knowledge about Beneficial Relations between Schools and Families of Special Needs Students and the Intervention Programs that Develop Them**

*Dr. Hava Greensfeld, Dr. Raaya Alon, and Ms. Devora Feldman*

The objective of the present literature review is to locate and gather information concerning parental involvement and relations between schools and the parents of special-needs students, and to survey intervention programs that research has found to be useful for developing the relations between such families and the school. The goal is to identify practical ways of enhancing relations between schools and families of students with special needs.

The review is divided into two main parts. The **first part** surveys the information found in the literature on the involvement of parents of adolescents with special education needs. It is further divided into a chapter discussing knowledge about the populations covered by the review and their specific characteristics, and a chapter on theoretical and research knowledge regarding the involvement of parents of special needs children, the types and impact of such involvement, and the variables found to be positively correlated with it. The **second part** of the review presents programs shown to encourage relations between schools and families of special-needs children, or, at least, projects in which contact with the parents is a key element (although not the main goal). We end with a number of conclusions and preliminary recommendations.

Many studies have found that parents' involvement in their children's education contributes to a range of emotional and cognitive indices for students. A high level of parental involvement is positively correlated with students' academic achievements (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; McNeal, 1999; Pomerantz, Moorman & Litwack, 2007); negatively correlated with behavior problems at school (Coleman, 1988; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Miller, Kraus & Veltkamo, 2005); positively correlated with the school's success in achieving its academic and social objectives (Barton & Coley, 1992; Jeynes, 2007; McEvoy & Walker, 2000); and, positively correlated with children's normal development and self-definition (Garcia, Torrence, Skelton, & Andrade, 1999; Gestwicki, 2000).

Recent years have seen a growing awareness that not all forms of parental involvement in education actually help students (Robinson & Angel, 2014). For example, in their meta-analysis of the literature, Hill and Tyson (2009) found a negative correlation between helping adolescent students with homework and their academic performance. For their involvement to be beneficial, parents must tailor it to the children's developmental and academic stage. Whereas younger children need direct and structured parental support, parents of teenagers should be involved in a way that respects the adolescent's independence and desire to develop independently.

This realization underscores the need to fine-tune the lens through which we view the field, with regard to the various patterns and formats that parental involvement may take, but also (and more relevant for our present interest) in examining the influence of various types of involvement on different populations of students, parents, and school systems. In the context of the present review, raising a child with special needs places a new and complex burden on the parental and family system, one with the potential to upset the family equilibrium. This is an ongoing fact of life and imposes, on both child and family, life patterns that differ from those customary in their environment, ones they are not familiar with and for which they lack advance preparation (Beruchin, 1990; Levy-Shiff & Shulman, 1990).

The review's main findings were as follows:

There are relatively few programs designed to promote relations between schools and the families of adolescents with special needs. No programs were found that encourage the involvement of parents of adolescents with cognitive developmental deficit, with sensory impairments (visual, auditory), with learning disabilities, with developmental delay, gifted students, and adolescents in residential facilities. Some programs for specific populations were identified, but without the parent-school component; these were not included in the present review unless there was a specific reason for doing so.

**Problems of generalization:** A close look at the programs that were identified indicates the existence of a broad range of intervention methods; however, since we are dealing with substantially different populations, it may be difficult to transfer and effectively apply a program employed with a certain population of special-needs students to another special-needs population.

**Absence of an emphasis on the parents:** Many of the programs described do not place any emphasis on the parents. The program that does address the parents

is not sufficiently detailed; there was only one follow-up study of the parents' attainments (Yoo et al., 2014); and the direct link between parental involvement and the program's success was not investigated.

**Factors that influence the intervention:** From a look at the various models and an analysis of the findings in a broad spectrum of studies, it emerges that the parents' outlook exerts great influence on the type of relations between the family and the school. This is the case for such interactions with parents both of normative adolescents (e.g., Levanda, 2009) and of adolescents with special needs.

### **Abstract: Implications of the Social and Cultural Distance between the School and Parents for the Parent–School Relationship and the Educational Outputs of Children and Adolescents**

*Gali Palti*

A major objective of education system policy programs in Israel and around the world is creating a beneficial relationship between the school and the parents of students, one that includes parental involvement in education in both the school and the home environments. Such a relationship can be realized in many and diverse ways, and these varied types of relationships can have different effects on students of different ages and circumstances. This review relates to the characteristics of the relationship between minority group and/or low socioeconomic status (SES) parents and the school, and examines the impact of this relationship on students' achievements. The review also relates to methods for creating an effective and enriching relationship between the parents from these groups and the school.

The review presents research studies that examine the relationship between the school and families of minority group and/or low SES students. Included are studies that address the shared and unique attributes of specific minority groups, and these groups' relationships with the school. Also presented is research concerning relationship patterns between the school and minority group parents and examines the influence of these relationships on the students' achievements. The review is based on two theoretical approaches: the critical approach and the multi-disciplinary approach.

The review revealed that in Israel and the United States, when it comes to involving and partnering with minority group parents, the agenda of schools still reflects a limited vision with reference to parental involvement on the part of

these groups. The parental-involvement-in-school model does not address the intersections of race, class, and migration that are relevant to the experience of many minority group parents. The schools' methods of working and their agenda are aligned with middle-class culture. Research findings show that parents from the dominant culture and of high SES are more involved in their children's learning in school than minority, low SES parents (i.e., participation in school activities and involvement in decision-making processes). With respect to parental involvement at home (emotional support for learning and help with homework), it was found that parents from every cultural group are relatively similar in the level of involvement in their children's learning.

Studies point to a complex picture of the relationship between minority group and/or low SES parents and their child's school. Parents from minority cultures have difficulties in the relationship with the school that stem from limited information about the school's policies and procedures, trouble with the language spoken in the new country, difficulty adapting to the new culture, differences in social and cultural capital, and different beliefs and views regarding their children's learning and education. Consequently, big differences result in the level of involvement in school that parents from different populations engage in. Research shows that minority group parents find themselves forced to cope with their incompatibility with cultural norms and their school's expectations of them. Schools and education systems have a will to uniformity and a disregard of differences and diversity between different groups of parents in society.

Other studies of parental involvement among minority group families broaden the concept of parental involvement. These studies present various methods, outside the traditional models of parental involvement in school, and show how parents can be involved in their children's educational development. This research indicates that minority group and/or low SES parents possess great motivation to be involved in their children's education and have high educational aspirations and expectations regarding their children's achievements. In general, these families bring with them different styles with respect to values and commitment to their children's education, those that differ from the mainstream. It is apparent that parents from all groups are prepared and able to support their children's education, while their efforts may take on different emphases due to the differences in social capital.

In the professional literature, great emphasis is placed on the relationship between parental involvement in the education framework and children's achievement and success. There are studies that demonstrate a significant positive correlation

between specific types of parental involvement and high academic achievement among all students in elementary school and in the transition to middle school. Other research shows that there are no unequivocal findings with reference to the positive effect of parental involvement on the achievements of students from minority and/or low SES families. At the same time, it is evident that initiatives to involve parents and children in reading together, checking homework, and cooperative communication between children, parents and teachers, raise students' academic achievement.

The review reveals that, in general, programs to increase involvement of minority and/or low SES families focus on changing the behavior of these parents and not on changing schools' methods of how they work. Studies indicate that attempts to close the achievement gap require consideration of the complex family–community–school interaction. Achieving success in school is a complex process that is dependent upon both the parents' actions and the teachers' actions, and most importantly, on the interaction between them. Research shows that schools which mobilized community collaboration for the benefit of the school succeeded in promoting parental involvement among minority group parents in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Community schools with an active and dialogue-based approach positively contribute to, and have an effect on, minority group students' outputs and even empower the parents and the entire community.

The review includes suggested methods and recommendations for increasing involvement among minority group and/or low SES parents: Relating to the needs of minority group families and finding ways in which the parents can contribute to the school, embracing the families' cultures and receiving the school's administrative support, recognizing things held in common but also those that are different between students and families from different backgrounds, strengthening the school staff's ability to work with minority group and/or low SES families, providing support to immigrant parents with reference to school policies and procedures, creating practices to bring parents closer, employing intercultural mediators and intermediaries, preserving a small school and cultivating the parents' voice. Studies show that when schools vigorously increase actions to encourage involvement (such as building meaningful roles for parents, inviting parents, and sharing responsibility with them), they respond positively and the actions create and build relationships that lead to change. The importance of working with minority group families is in the creation of a spirit of partnership for the mutual benefit of the school, the families, and the community.

## **Abstract: Uses of New Channels of Communication: Data Gathered from Stakeholders—Teachers and Parents**

*Dr. Gila Kurtz*

In recent years, along with the development of Internet technologies, the use of new channels of communication between schools and parents has increased. Applications such as email, social networks, instant messaging, institution-based information and communication systems (e.g., ITC—Immediacy, Transparency and Control, IBSMS—Internet-based School Management System, etc.), and wireless communication such as smartphones have the inherent potential of deepening parental involvement in the school and of even changing the role of teachers and parents in the process of educating the young generation.

Recognizing the importance of the topic and owing to the scarcity of existing empirical research evidence, the expert committee of the Israel Academy of Science’s Initiative for Applied Education Research unit, which is studying the topic of “School and Family: Teacher-Parent Relations in a Changing Environment,” commissioned a working paper on the topic of new channels of communication between teachers and parents. Its objective is to outline an initial and up-to-date status report of how new communication channels are used, their scope, types, and implications for parental and teacher involvement in their children’s/students’ process of education.

The findings are based on seven sessions held with a focus group in which 42 teachers and parents from a range of educational institutions participated—from preschool to secondary school.

A mapping of communication channels reveals that email is used most frequently between parents and teachers. The second most frequent communication channel (particularly in secondary schools) is the institutional route (for example, ITC and IBSMS). Text messages, instant messaging and WhatsApp messages are the third most frequent means of communication. Communication via social networks such as Facebook were reported to be used less often. The new communication channels generally serve as a tool for teachers to convey information to all parents—through school messages, updates and ongoing announcements. At the same time, when a particular problem arises regarding a specific student, a personal message is sent to the parent, and alongside the new channel of discussion, a traditional channel of communication such as a telephone conversation or a face-to-face meeting takes place.

Mobile communication, specifically smartphones, are changing the “rules of the game”—in terms of the frequency of discussion between parents and teachers, its structure as personal discussion and as group discussion, its visual representation and especially the fact that school-related issues accompany smartphone owners (both teachers and parents) everywhere, all the time, and without a break.

Technology is seen as shaping patterns of discourse between teachers and parents and summoning greater parental involvement, with the proviso that their interlocutors (particularly, teachers) possess sufficient skills in operating these applications. The main advantages of the newer channels of communication are: accessibility of up-to-the minute information, flexibility and time-efficiency. It appears that the advantages of digital discourse outweigh its two main disadvantages: the great investment of time it demands from teachers and the loss of intimacy (occasionally even stress-producing) in the relationship tapestry of teachers-students-parents that results through the enablement of technology.

### **Abstract: The Legal Bases for the Relationship between School and Students’ Parents in Different Countries and their Implications for the Parties’ Obligations, Rights and Authority**

*Adv. Tzviya Shir*

This review presents the legal bases that characterize the relations between parents and the education system in the United States (federal and state), Britain and Germany and compares them to the situation in Israel. Each chapter of the review relates to a different country and details findings and examples from the legal literature, legislation and rulings in the various courts of the country in question. The chapter sections are divided by topic according to various conflicts which are presented as background to the foundations of the legal relations that are reflected in the analysis of the legal decisions. In addition, and as much as possible, the review shows the influence of the foundation of the relations on the rights, obligations and authority of the parties involved, and the expression they receive in the field of education and law. The study concludes with a comparison between the state of affairs in Israel and the findings from the review with respect to other countries.

The review indicated that the countries in question differ from one another with respect to the foundation upon which they build the relations between parties to a dispute between parents and students on the one hand, and the education system, on the other. It can be succinctly summarized by pointing out that the differences

between Israel and the other countries stem, in part, from the Israeli legal system that is influenced by a number of different legal systems and includes elements of several systems. Thus, for example, the difference between Israel and the U.S. can be explained by the lack of a structured constitution and a long-standing heritage regarding the sanctity of individual and civil rights. The difference between Israel and the U.K. can be explained by the many laws that relate to education that are on the books in Britain but not in Israel. The difference between Israel and Germany can be explained in that German law combines two types of legal instruments, the administrative and the civil-tort, while in contrast, in the new Israeli legal system the two operate independently and in parallel.

In the U.S., the main foundation for relations between schools and parents is constitutional, which receives greater weight in any claim even when monetary-tort or other relief is requested. Courts examine the circumstances surrounding every case on its merits and investigate whether students' constitutional rights, defined as the rights of every citizen, have been violated by changes compelled by the education framework. In this context, it can be concluded that the courts in the U.S. function as the guardians of citizens' constitutional rights vis-à-vis the authorities, whether in cases of discrimination or on an individual level, with respect to the interpretation within the constitutional right, and they infuse policy with content suited to the constitutional regime.

In the U.K., the basis of relations between the parties is defined in complex, multi-layered and very detailed law such that the role of the courts is, for the most part, limited to interpreting the law and procedural tests of the appropriateness of previous proceedings and whether they were conducted according to administrative legal rules (excepting special education issues). Constitutional law is used primarily in the higher courts and as an exception to the rule. This method leaves less room for significant legal interference in the activities of the authorities than the American system, and judicial review is (mainly) limited to the reasonableness of the proceedings for implementing policy but does not lay out the policy itself.

In Germany, legal rulings are based on administrative law, which is tempered by the continental inquisitorial system, manifested in the detailed examination of the circumstances of the each case. The German system differs greatly from the legal system in Israel and the other countries surveyed, and demonstrates the courts' excessive intervention in the authorities' judgments and decisions.

In contrast, the situation in Israel cannot be characterized by pointing to one or another major source as the basis for the relationship between the parties. The basis

of the relationship between parents and the education authorities is twofold and combined. The status of parents in Israeli courts is split and double, respectively, and includes components from administrative and constitutional law and elements of civil law, depending on the issue at hand. It is therefore not possible to precisely pinpoint the status of parents by relying on the conventional division between principle and procedure or between constitutional law and tort law, contract law or criminal law.

The review found that in Israel there exists, in parallel, relations between the parties on an administrative basis when the causes of the action relate to students' rights or to education policy that affects a large community, and a relationship on a general basis that is "not administrative" when the causes of action relate to bodily injury or to other specific issues. Rulings that combine attributes of broad policy together with special and specific circumstances which, according to the court, justify relating to their merits as well, relied both on the administrative basis for the relationship and on the "not administrative" basis, and combined procedural review in considering the reasonableness of the authorities' decision with consideration of the merits and its conclusions, and the legal instruments from the relevant legal area used, which is "not administrative." Further to Gibton's<sup>6</sup> conclusions, it is likely that the stratagem of administrative petition and institutionalizing the administrative courts system created a "hybrid basis"<sup>7</sup> for relations between parents and education authorities that permits the courts legal review of the authority's actions based on both the administrative and the "not administrative" bases and as such, allows them a wide berth for both legal review and intervention in policy and in procedural processes.

As a result, parents who apply to the courts are required to indicate the defects in the education authority's procedures or in the reasonableness of their decision, or to claim a violation of a fundamental right—each according to the matter at hand and with respect to the issue in dispute, and to the extent of influence that the decision is expected to have on the broad policy. The court can be expected to intervene in the authority's judgment anywhere that flaws in procedure or in the reasonableness of the decision can be shown. It is also likely to intervene in the merits of the decision on issues related to bodily injury or to other claims in which it can be shown that a relationship not based on rights alone, or whose circumstances justify the application of instruments on a "not administrative"

<sup>6</sup> Gibton, D., "Which student concerns the law?" *The IDC Law and Business Journal* 14, September 2011, 32-33. (Hebrew)

<sup>7</sup> Credit for this term belongs to Justice Barak in CA 294/91 in "*Kehilat Yerushalayim*" *Burial Society v. Lionel Aryeh Kestenbaum* 46(2) PD 464 (Hebrew)

basis. It would seem that the “hybrid basis” may, on the one hand, increase the uncertainty, though on the other, it may permit the courts a wide berth for review, enabling intervention in policy itself, should they choose to take advantage of it.

Finally, the review suggests future research on a number of topics, for example, on labor relations in different countries between teachers and their employers, relations that are based on completely different foundations than arrangements that obtain in Israel, and on claims which culminate in settlements made outside the court, claims that contain relevant information on the relationship between the parties but do not include rulings from which we can learn, and these warrant additional research.

## **Appendix B: Conceptual Analysis: Different Types of Parental Involvement in Education**

One of the first conclusions that emerged from the committee's discussions was the need to clarify the concept of "parental involvement in education," its various connotations and the diverse concepts associated with it. It proved necessary to go into detail and define clear and practical actions and reciprocal relations between the educational staff and students' parents. In this appendix, we attempt to conduct this conceptual clarification. Please note that we do not intend a theoretical-philosophical or linguistic discussion of the relevant concepts, but rather a definition and clarification of how they are employed in this document. Nevertheless, for their use to be helpful, the conceptual divisions must be based both on theory and prior research in the field, as well as on practice. Thus, we begin with several conceptual analyses by relevant scholars, followed by the theoretical model on which we rely and the concepts we employ. This will be accompanied by examples of various practices associated with each concept. For readers' convenience, we will henceforth refer to "parental involvement in education" as a catchall phrase for all the types of contact between the school and the family and the actions that parents may take to help their children in all respects.

### **A Review of conceptual analyses in the literature**

Over the years, and especially during the last two decades, there have been a number of analyses of different categories of relationships between parents and the school, as well as of different forms of possible parental involvement in their children's education. Because various scholars came to the topic from different perspectives,<sup>8</sup> we encounter diverse classifications and even very different definitions. The literature in the field (Milne, Myers, Rosenthal & Ginsburg, 1986; Fehrmann et al., 1987; Astone & McLanhan, 1991; Miller & Green, 1992; Madigan, 1994; Muller, 1993) suggests that we should address parental involvement as multi-dimensional structures. Nevertheless, the fact that each scholar employed different indicators makes it more difficult to understand the field. Below we summarize the treatment different researchers give the various dimensions of parental involvement.

<sup>8</sup> For example, some scholars studied what causes parents to be involved (in any way). Others examined the influence of parental actions on student achievement. Still others looked at the impact of programs that encouraged parental involvement and investigated which were effective.

In her highly influential analysis of 1992, Joyce Epstein presented six types of parental involvement in their child's education:

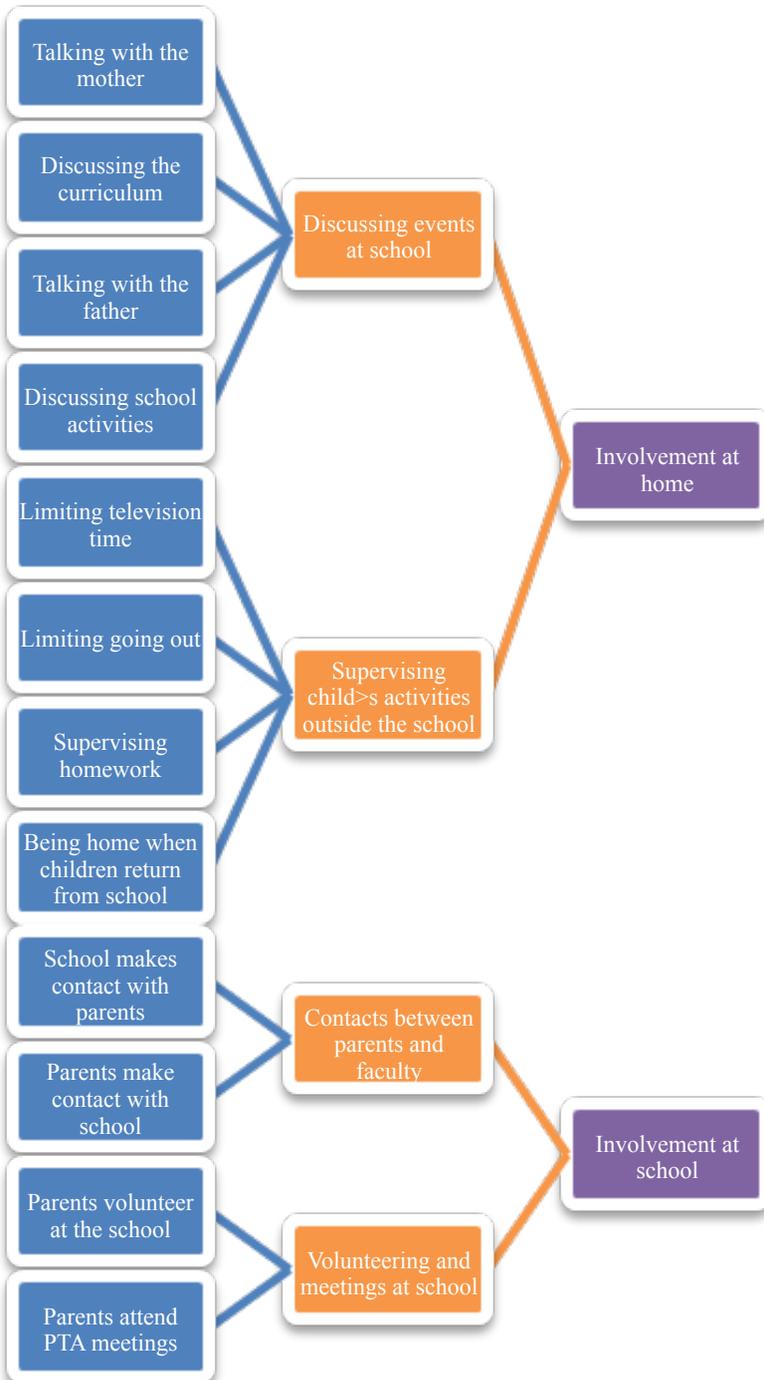
- Parenting: creating conditions at home that help the child develop, with no specific connection to matters associated with their schooling and education.
- Learning at home: parents' involvement with their children's education at home, such as helping with homework and projects or providing technical support so they can complete their assignments.
- Communicating: making contact with the school and teachers in order to stay up to date and to consult about and resolve problems affecting the student.
- Volunteering: participation in school activities organized by the teaching staff, whether as audience or in a more active fashion.
- Decision-making: taking part in decision-making at the school, including parents' committee membership, conferences with the teachers, and other channels the system affords.
- Collaborating with the community: organizing or taking part in educational projects (or activities that support education) in the community and encouraging the student to be involved in them, including help with resources and logistics.

Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) investigated the various references to and definitions of parental involvement in the literature and distinguished four categories thereof. They classify them into two types of parental involvement in the home and two in the school.

Parental involvement at home may involve talking with the child and relating to what is happening at school, or supervising the child's extracurricular activities. Parental involvement in the school consists of communicating with the school staff, and of volunteering in the school and attending meetings.

In a study that looked at parental involvement from the perspective of their children, Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) identified twelve indicators of parental involvement: talking with the mother, discussing the school program (curriculum), talking with father, discuss activities (at the school), limiting television time, limits on going out, monitoring homework preparation, being home when the child returns from school, school contacts the parents, parents contact the school, volunteering at the school, and attending PTO (parent-teacher organization) meetings.

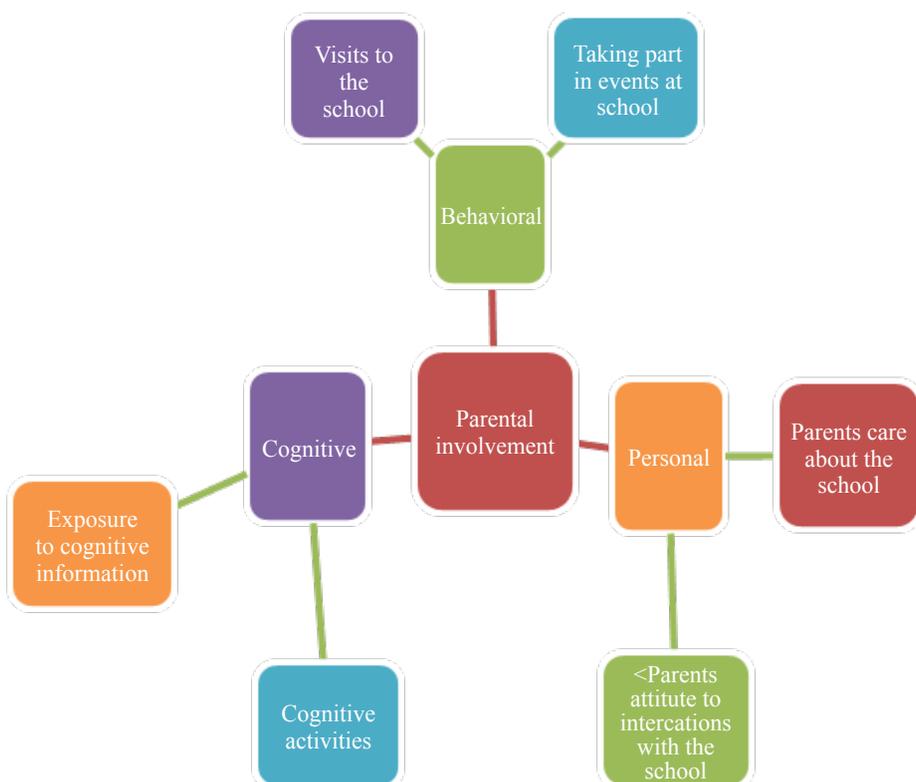
**Figure 1: Indicators of parental involvement, according to Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996**



Rebecca Marcon (1999) divides Epstein’s (1996) categories into active and passive parental involvement. Active involvement is voluntary and includes helping out with activities at school and visits beyond those that parents are required to make. Passive involvement is chiefly a matter of communication and includes conferences with teachers and agreeing to home visits.

Wendy Grolnick and Maria Slowiaczek (1994) define parental involvement as the parents’ allocation of resources to the child in three specific areas. Involvement can be embodied in the parents’ behavior, such as visiting the school and taking part in meetings with teachers. Another form of involvement is on the personal level, based on the child’s feelings and the way the child experiences the parents’ attitude towards the school. The third area is cognitive involvement, which means exposing the child to cognitive stimuli via activities and information. The assumption is that exposure of this sort helps the child practice the skills required to succeed at school.

**Figure 2: Domains of Parental Involvement, Grolnick & Slowiaczek 1994**



## **An analysis of the literature review**

Despite the differences among these scholars' approaches and definitions, we can discern three main axes on which they locate the different types of involvement.

- **The system addressed by the involvement:** One distinction has to do with the system that the parents' involvement seeks to influence and modify. It may focus on changes at home (such as helping children with their homework or creating a climate that supports learning), on changes at the school (such as volunteering for activities there), or on changes in the communication between these two systems (such as programs to increase trust between parents and teachers or to give teachers a better understanding of the parents' culture).
- **The initiator of the involvement:** Another axis along which the various forms of parental involvement in education can be located relates to who initiates parent-school relations. The distinction here is between involvement started by the parents and involvement initiated by the teachers in which the parents are a passive factor—participants or onlookers. The former case embraces a broad range of activities, from contacting the teacher in order to prevent potential problems, through parents' active collective involvement in projects (such as participation in a parents' committee) in order to influence school policies and decision-making. Teacher-initiated parental involvement may include home visits, inviting parents for conferences at the school, and school-run family intervention programs. Another possibility, of course, is joint initiative by the parents and the system, such as the establishment of a parents' committee with the support of the system and the principal.
- **The goals of the involvement:** A third axis along which the types of involvement cited in the literature can be arranged describes the goal of involvement—what it intends to contribute or change. Parental involvement may focus on academic or educational changes that will foster scholastic achievement. It may aim at structural changes, such as providing time and space at home for students to do their homework, or revising their class schedule in the school. Finally, it may look to emotional or social changes, such as increasing the child's school involvement or dealing with behavior problems. Note that here the reference is to the immediate goal of involvement, even if it is only an instrument to achieve something else. In other words, if the involvement addresses some emotional indicator, but the ultimate aim is to improve a social indicator, we would still classify the goal of involvement as emotional. If the parents wish to increase the student's involvement with

the school only in order to enhance their child's achievements, it would still be classed as an emotional rather than an academic goal.

Examining these axes in the light of the ecological model (presented in Chapter One), we see that the first axis, that of the system addressed by the involvement, fits that model very well. In the ecological model, the child's development is influenced by each of the micro-systems with which he comes into contact, so a change in any of them will be significant. What is more, the contact between the school and the family is a meso-system, and its modification, too, can influence the student's development.

The second axis—who initiates the involvement—fits in less well with the ecological model. Nevertheless, it is important for two reasons. First, it is present in the discourse about parental involvement in education, both in Israel and globally. Second, the question of who initiated the involvement can have a major impact on the reaction it warrants and how it is received. For example, the professionals may see an attempt by parents, at their own initiative, to modify the class schedule at school as an unwelcome intrusion. But if this attempt is the fruit of a joint initiative by the school administration and the parents, the odds are better that it will be welcomed.

The third axis, which refers to the goal of the involvement, relates to the two systems that are not part of the first axis—the structural or exo-system and the micro-system that is the child itself. A structural change in the school system also alters the exo-system—the school context with which the child does not come into direct contact. Clearly, emotional and academic changes relate to the child himself as a system addressed by the intervention.

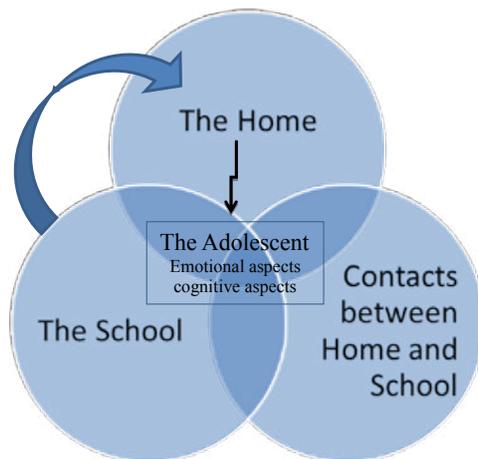


Figure 3: The figure depicts the three systems of parent-teacher relations. The arrow marks a connection initiated by the education system and is intended to influence characteristics of the student’s home, in order to ultimately affect his emotional attributes.

The interaction of these three axes produces at least 27 domains in which parental involvement can be located (or 27 arrows in the illustration), as shown in the table.

<b>System Influenced</b>	<b>Initiator of the Involvement</b>	<b>Goal of the Involvement</b>
Home Home Home	Parent Parent Parent	Structural change Emotional progress Academic progress
Home Home Home	Joint Joint Joint	Structural change Emotional progress Academic progress
Home Home Home	Teacher/system Teacher/system Teacher/system	Structural change Emotional progress Academic progress
School School School	Parent Parent Parent	Structural change Emotional progress Academic progress
School School School	Joint Joint Joint	Structural change Emotional progress Academic progress
School School School	Teacher/system Teacher/system Teacher/system	Structural change Emotional progress Academic progress
Home–school relationship Home–school relationship Home–school relationship	Parent Parent Parent	Structural change Emotional progress Academic progress
Home–school relationship Home–school relationship Home–school relationship	Joint Joint Joint	Structural change Emotional progress Academic progress
Home–school relationship Home–school relationship Home–school relationship	Teacher/system Teacher/system Teacher/system	Structural change Emotional progress Academic progress

## Appendix C: Symposium Agenda<sup>9</sup>

<b>8:30-9:00</b>	<b>Arrival</b>
<b>9:00-9:05</b>	Greetings: Ms. <b>Shoshana Zimmerman</b> , Ministry of Education
<b>9:05-9:10</b>	Opening remarks: <b>Prof. Zipora Schechtman</b> , Haifa University, Expert committee chair
<b>9:10-10:50</b>	<b>Session 1: Constructive relations between parents and teachers during adolescence and their importance</b> Chair: <b>Prof. Zipora Schechtman</b> , University of Haifa, Expert committee chair
<b>9:10-9:35</b>	Is there hope for improving family–education system relations during adolescence? <b>Prof. Moshe Israelashvili</b> , Tel Aviv University, Committee member, Parent-Teacher Relations in Early Childhood
<b>9:35-10:25</b>	Family involvement in education: Challenges and opportunities during adolescence <b>Prof. Nancy E. Hill</b> , Harvard University
<b>10:25-10:50</b>	Cooperation between parents and experts (multi-professional team) in schools for special education <b>Dr. Iris Manor-Binyamini</b> , University of Haifa
<b>10:50-11:15</b>	<b>Break—coffee and cake</b>
<b>11:15-13:35</b>	<b>Session 2: School-family relations in Israel: Conclusions from experience in the field</b> Chair: <b>Attorney Yael Kafri</b> , Expert committee member
<b>11:15-11:55</b>	Parents’ relations with their child’s school: Insights from the past and directions for the future <b>Dr. Bilha Noy</b>
<b>11:55-12:45</b>	Parents, schools and the community: What is the parental role in education, what are its legal sources and what affects its implementation? <b>Prof. Paul L. Tractenberg</b> , Rutgers University
<b>12:45-13:15</b>	Seeing the voices: A guided discussion with a parent, a teacher, and a guidance counselor, led by <b>Ruth Altshuler-Ezrahi</b> , Mandel Institute

<sup>9</sup> Links to photographs and presentations from the symposium can be accessed under the “News and Events” tab of the Initiative’s website.

13:15-13:35	The Ministry of Education's plans and activities regarding school–family relations <b>Betty Rytwo</b> , Psychological Counseling Service—head, Parent and Family Unit, Ministry of Education
13:35-14:20	Break (a light lunch will be served)
14:20-16:30	<b>Session 3: Parent-teacher relations in the new technological environment</b> Chair: <b>Prof. Gustavo Mesch</b> , Expert committee member
14:20-14:55	Mobilizing technology to improve the connection between the family and the school: Advantages and disadvantages <b>Meyran Boniel-Nissim</b> , University of Haifa
14:55-15:30	Use of new media channels by parents and teachers: Findings from the focus group <b>Dr. Gila Kurtz</b> , College for Academic Studies in Or Yehuda
15:30-16:30	On the possibilities and limitations of promoting parent–teacher relations; Discussion moderated by <b>Prof. Amiram Raviv</b> , with the participation of <b>Betty Rytwo</b> , Ministry of Education and expert committee members: <b>Prof. Ismael Abu-Saad</b> , <b>Attorney Yael Kafri</b> , and <b>Prof. Gustavo Mesch</b> ; <b>audience questions and responses.</b>

## **Appendix D: Call for Submissions by the Public**

Israel National Academy of Sciences and Humanities

The Initiative for Applied Education Research

**The Committee on School–Family Relations:  
Parent Teacher Relations in a Changing Environment**

### **A Call for Submissions of: Descriptions of Intervention Programs on Teacher–Parent Relations**

In response to a request by the Ministry of Education, the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities has established a committee to study teacher–parent relations in secondary schools. Its brief is to draft policy recommendations for the field on the basis of up-to-date research and practical experience in Israel and abroad.

The committee is asking educators and parents to submit descriptions of programs that have been run in secondary schools in Israel whose aim is to cultivate beneficial relations between parents and the teaching staff. The committee would like to learn about the challenges addressed by such programs, their modes of operation, and their impact on the ties between parents and teachers and their contribution to students in various domains (academic, emotional, and others).

The committee will weigh the possibility of incorporating the submissions on specific programs into its final report or in some other framework (such as a symposium at which those who submitted such reports will be asked to present the program and its outcomes).

The deadline for submissions is Thursday, December 26, 2013. Full details regarding the requirements for the document are available from the “News and Events” tab on the Initiative’s website: [education.academy.ac.il](http://education.academy.ac.il).

Oded Busharian, the committee coordinator, can be contacted directly.

## Appendix E: Committee Member Bios

### **Zipora Shechtman (Committee chair)**

Professor (Emerita) and until recently head of the Department of Counseling and Human Development in the Faculty of Education at University of Haifa. Prof. Shechtman is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (APA), the American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA) and the International Society for Research on Aggression. Until 2012, she served as deputy editor of the APA's professional journal, *Group Dynamics*, and is a member of editorial boards of prominent journals focusing on groups, including: *Psychotherapy*—the International Journal of Group Psychotherapy and Group Dynamics Research.

Prof. Shechtman's research focuses on the processes and results of group counseling and treatment of children and adults, group counseling and psychotherapy for children and adults suffering from social, emotional and behavioral difficulties, factors of and treatment methods for aggressiveness and violence in children, and on the bibliotherapeutic process and its results.

Prof. Shechtman holds a PhD degree in education and educational counseling from Washington University (US), received in 1984.

### **Ismael Abu-Saad**

Professor in the Department of Education at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; founding director of the Center for Bedouin Studies and Development; holds the Abraham Cutler Chair in Education at Ben-Gurion University. Prof. Abu-Saad serves as a member of the Adva Center's board of directors, is a member of the New Israel Fund's International Council, and a member of the board of trustees of the Sharett Prize in Arabic Literature. Previously, he was a member of the National Task Force for the Advancement of Education in Israel (the Dovrat Committee) and a member of the academic committee of the National Research Project on Disadvantaged Students in Israel, a project conducted under the auspices of the Ministry of Education's Office of the Chief Scientist. His research addresses inequality in education, social change and education among indigenous societies, culture and administration in multi-cultural societies, and Arab education in Israel. He serves on the editorial board and is a guest editor for various professional journals including: *Hagar: Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities*; *Palestinian Review of Society and History*; *Holy Land Studies: Interdisciplinary Journal*; and, *American Behavioral Scientist*.

Prof. Abu-Saad holds a PhD degree in educational policy and administration from the University of Minnesota (U.S.), received in 1989.

**Audrey Addi-Raccah**

Senior lecturer in the Educational Administration, Policy and Leadership program at Tel Aviv University; serves as the program head. Her areas of research include social inequality and the sociology of teaching, and educational administration. In her research, Dr. Addi-Raccah pays special attention to issues of inequality in education systems, the feminization of administration, on the work of principals and more recently, on the relationship between the school and the surrounding environment and community.

Dr. Addi-Raccah holds a PhD degree in sociology from Tel Aviv University, received in 1997.

**Anat Gofen-Sarig**

Lecturer in the School of Public Policy and Government at Hebrew University. Dr. Gofen-Sarig serves as the School's Publications Committee chair, the chair the Scholarships Committee and is a member of the University's academic committee of the Research Institute for Innovation in Education. Her research addresses "exceptions to the rule" and the relationship between them and public policy while focusing on breakthroughs in the social sphere, inter-generational leadership, lack of responsiveness to policy, and on the organizations charged with implementing policy.

Dr. Gofen-Sarig holds a PhD degree in public policy from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, received in 2007.

**Yael Kafri**

Specializes in education law, teaches courses in the field of education law in the Educational Administration, Policy and Leadership MA program at Tel Aviv University. Until the end of 2012, she directed the "Law and Education" area in the "Law in the Service of the Community" program and was a staff member of the Human Rights Clinic run by Tel Aviv University's Law Faculty. She previously worked with the legislative teams in the Rotlevy Committee (The Committee on the Rights of the Child) and in the Dovrat Committee (National Task Force for the Advancement of Education in Israel). In that capacity she was involved in preparing proposed legislation in the areas of educational equality and quality, public education and professional legislation for education employees.

Ms. Kafri holds an MA degree in educational policy received from Tel Aviv University.

### **Yisca Leibowitz**

Adjunct professor in the Faculty of Law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; mediator working within the framework of the Gevim Institute. For 14 years, from 1995 to 2009, she served as the district attorney for the Southern District. Previously, she was the legal advisor for the State of Israel's economic mission in New York, and directed the Criminal Division in the State Attorney's Office. Adv. Leibowitz holds an LLB in law from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, received in 1971.

### **Gustavo Mesch**

Dean of the Social Sciences Faculty at the University of Haifa; professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Professor Mesch is a senior research associate at the University of Haifa's Social Research Center and edits the section on communication and media in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. He researches the areas of Internet and society, adolescents, urbanization, crime and deviation.

Professor Mesch holds a PhD degree in sociology from Ohio State University (U.S.), received in 1993.

### **Amiram Raviv**

Educational and clinical psychologist; dean of the School of Psychology, Or Yehuda Center for Academic Studies. He is Professor Emeritus at the School of Psychological Sciences at Tel Aviv University, and was formerly the head of the Psychology program and head of the Clinical Child Psychology specialty. He also served as the chief psychologist of the Ministry of Education's Psychological Counseling Service. The areas he researches include topics such as children's coping methods under stressful conditions, different aspects of school and educational psychology, psychological counseling in traditional (written) and electronic media, adolescent and parental behavior in seeking out psychological help, and children's cognitive development. In recent years, Professor Raviv has been involved with several research teams working on psychological aspects of coping with intractable conflict. In addition, he has for many years practiced individual treatment and counseling, writes training materials for parents and grandparents, consults in the writing of children's books geared toward fostering cognitive development, and puts together parent training programs for radio and television.

Professor Raviv holds a PhD degree in psychology from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, received in 1974.

### **Yaacov Yablon**

Associate professor in the School of Education at Bar-Ilan University; head of the Educational Counseling program. He conducted his post-doctoral specialization as a Fulbright Scholar at Harvard University (U.S.). Prof. Yablon studies affective aspects of behavior and learning and his research focuses on the risk behaviors of students in school, on prevention programs and on education towards peace. He was the coordinator of the Initiative's committee on "From Research to Practice in Early Childhood Education."

Prof. Yablon holds a PhD degree in education from Bar-Ilan University, received in 2003.

### **Initiative staff**

#### **Oded Busharian, Committee Coordinator**

Mr. Busharian earned a bachelor's degree in the combined Philosophy, Economics and Political Science program at Hebrew University (2007); and a master's degree in Political Science from Hebrew University (2011). He received the dean's scholarship and rector's prize for academic excellence in his graduate studies. He also worked as a research assistant and teaching assistant in the Political Science Department at Hebrew University. In the framework of the Initiative for Applied Education Research, he coordinated the team of experts on treatment interventions for children with behavioral problems or disturbances, and is currently coordinating the committee of experts on school-family relations in a changing world, as well as the steering team for a meeting on inequality and education.

#### **Miriam Rest, Assistant to the Committee Coordinator**

Ms. Rest earned a bachelor's degree in Linguistics and Sociology-Anthropology at Tel Aviv University (2011) and a certificate from the Koteret School of Journalism (2011). She is currently pursuing a master's degree in European Studies at the European Forum of Hebrew University. She previously worked as a research assistant at Delphi Global Analysis, a Washington-based consulting company providing consultation to public and private clients on issues pertaining to the Middle East and energy. In addition, she served as coordinator of content development at the Adult Unit of the Mandel-Israel Foundation; in this framework, she was responsible for the knowledge generated at the unit and for storing this knowledge.