

The Niot Project

האגודה לקידום החינוך, ירושלים (ע"ר)
The Society for Advancement of Education



Accomplishments during 2012

- 129 students received subsidies for diagnosis of learning disabilities.
- 15 student workshops and 31 teacher training workshops were held.
- Private gifts, together with municipal and governmental support, totaled \$150,000.

Dear Friends

Just a little more than a year and a half ago, a few months after we lost our beloved son Niot, we reached an agreement with the Society for Advancement of Education (SAE) on the establishment of the Niot Project.

Our goal was to keep Niot's memory alive with a memorial composed of hundreds of students coping, as Niot did, with learning disabilities and other learning issues.

The Niot Project took off at the beginning of 2012 in SAE's three high schools and five residential educational campuses.

Today, after just one year, it can be summed up in the words of Erez Ambar, the principal of Boyar Educational Residence in Jerusalem: "I have never seen an educational project that has accomplished so much in so little time."

Diagnosing the Problem

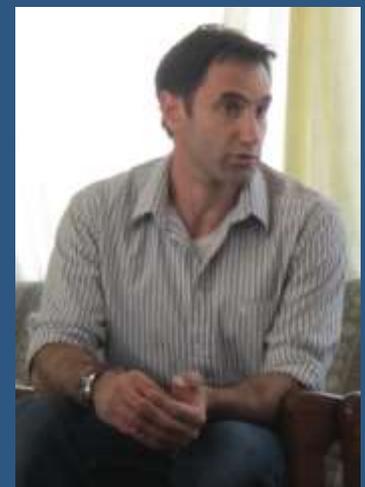
One of the first needs we addressed when we started the Niot Project was the diagnosis of learning disabilities and attention-deficit disorder.

Professional diagnosis of these problems is the first step in putting together a program of interventions that can help students reach their learning potential. They are also a condition for receiving Ministry of Education adjustments for these students when they take their "bagrut" high school graduation exams and extra teaching hours to help them in school. The school system does not fund such diagnoses for high school

students and a high-quality diagnosis can be prohibitively expensive for parents. As a result, a large number of students encountering difficulties in their studies in SAE high schools had not undergone diagnosis and were thus not receiving the extra help and adjustments they needed. Thanks to the money we raised, 129 students received subsidies for diagnosis.

Furthermore, this funding enabled SAE to contract with the Jerusalem Municipality and a top-quality diagnostician in order to offer a special low price even to families who do not require a subsidy.

"I have never seen an educational project that has accomplished so much in so little time."



Erez Ambar, Principal of Boyar Educational Residence in Jerusalem, participating in a Niot Project training day.

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"It's enough for me that a girl comes up to me with a sparkle in her eyes and says, 'I knew what to do on the test!'"

Miri Rose, Teacher at Dror High School, in Jerusalem.

Investing in Teachers

From the start, the Niot Project has invested in teacher training. During the past year I have sat in on two day-long teacher training seminars organized by Eden Israeli who, as SAE's learning disabilities coordinator, has been the vanguard of the Niot Project.

The teachers and residential campus counselors were eager to learn strategies, interventions, and educational tools that can help them work in heterogeneous classrooms and social groups with students with special needs (who frequently, out of frustration, evince non-cooperation).

At these training days the SAE teaching and counseling staff members learn about the psychological background of learning disabilities and participate in workshops in which they learn hands-on means for creating motivation through encouragement and an accumulation of successes.

Some of these workshops are led by Eden, who has more than fifteen years of experience in the field, while others are given by guests, among them teachers and counselors who worked with Niot himself.

Notable among these are Phillip Ben-Gigi, who also serves with me as a member of the Niot Project Steering Committee, and Ronen Ya'akobson, a coach and psychologist.

Both of them were key figures in Niot's success during his time at Dror, one of SAE's high schools.

In 2012, a total of 31 teacher training workshops and day-long seminars were held by the Niot Project.

Workshops for Students

The Niot Project also sponsored fifteen student workshops focusing on alleviating text anxiety, on Hebrew grammar and English, and on learning strategies focused.

These workshops generally consist of six meetings of one and a half hours each.

Miri Rose, a teacher at Dror who knew Niot, led a number of the learning strategies workshops during the past year, while she was on a sabbatical from regular teaching.

She relates that one school counselor came up to her in astonishment and said that a girl who had attended Niot Project workshop had suddenly begun to bloom in school.

Previously, the girl had sat in class but had not participated in lessons and seemed to be unable to absorb any of the material.

"She's beginning to answer questions!" the counselor said. Miri adds: "It's enough for me that a girl comes up to me with a sparkle in her eyes and says, 'I knew what to do on the test!'"

Miri says that she believes that more workshops are needed and that teachers have to be made more aware that they are available.

She adds that during the past year she encountered many teachers and students who were not aware that such workshops were available.

She also notes that the workshops took place after school hours, at times when students with attention issues have trouble focusing on their studies.

In the coming year we will endeavor to increase awareness of these workshops and to find a way to integrate some of them into the school day.



SAE students acquiring effective learning strategies in an afternoon workshop.



SAE learning disabilities coordinator Eden Israeli making a Niot Project presentation to a group of education superintendents from the USA.

Looking to 2013

Another goal for 2013 is to hold workshops for the parents of learning disabled students.

A child who receives help in school but returns home to parents who do not understand his or her special needs can lose all desire and ability to succeed. It is thus vital that parents be made part of the process.

Since many students at SAE schools come from Israel's geographical periphery, we were not able this year to hold such workshops, but we plan to do so in the year to come.

This year we will proceed with implementation of what I see as the central mission of the Niot Project—the establishment of a comprehensive system of interventions and assistance for children with learning problems, within the schools and managed by a coordinator charged with keeping close tabs on each child in need.

One of the lessons we learned during our years working with Niot to help him overcome his learning disabilities is that each child is a world unto himself. Each learning-disabled student requires an individually-tailored and flexible program.

This can only be accomplished if a member of the school staff serves as a resource to whom students, teachers, and parents can all turn and with whom they can work to create a broad and comprehensive program.

The coordinator has to track the success of the intervention program and identify points of difficulty.

During the coming school year we will examine, hone, and evaluate this model, so that we will eventually be able to propose it to other schools.



Thank You

I would like to conclude on a personal note. This letter will reach you just before the Pesach holiday. We lost Niot during Pesach two years ago, and the Seder night was the last night we spent with him.

The idea that there would be no better way to keep Niot's memory alive than to help other students like him came to us as we sat shiva, the week of mourning.

We did not expect that the idea would become a reality so quickly.

We are especially grateful to Eitan Moran, SAE Director General of who has, from the very first moment, taken on the project as a personal mission, along with the rest of the SAE staff.

We wish you a happy holiday of freedom and hope that the generosity you displayed in 2012 will continue this year.

We need your help in order to enable hundreds more students to love to learn and believe in their ability to do so.

Sincerely,
Haim Watzman
For the entire Watzman family

Contributing to the Niot Project

Dear

SAE (Israel)	PEF (USA)	NIF (USA)
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Enclosed is a donation in the amount of ₪ / \$ _____. It is designated for **the Niot Project** at the Society for Advancement of Education-Jerusalem (SAE).

Please send me a receipt certifying that the donation is tax deductible.

Sincerely,

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