

# **The Weitzman-Bat Yam Initiative: Summary of the Childhood and Adolescence Phase Summative Evaluation Study**

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# Abstract

## Background

The Weitzman-Bat Yam Initiative (hereinafter: the Initiative) was launched in the 2006-2007 school year at the initiative and with the funding of Jane Weitzman, a philanthropist and board member of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). The Initiative was implemented by JDC-Ashalim in collaboration with the Bat Yam municipality and the Ministry of Education, and at a later stage, the public benefit company *Yuvalim* and the *Moriah Fund* joined the Initiative. The goal of the Initiative was to help participating students succeed in their studies and thereby promote the overarching goal of the Initiative – successful integration of the students in society as adults. The Initiative served 174 students from three consecutive years, comprising three main groups: Ethiopian Israeli students, students from other immigrant families (non-Ethiopian), and natives of Israel. The Initiative offered the students both individual and shared solutions in response to their needs in various areas throughout their school years. The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute (MJB) conducted an evaluative study of the Initiative for the duration of its 14 years of implementation (from 2006 to 2020). This report presents a summative evaluation of the Initiative through its implementation during the participants' childhood and adolescence, until the age of 18.

## Study Goal

The goal of this study was to conduct a summative evaluation of the Initiative and to examine (1) the development of the Initiative and its implementation during the participants' childhood and adolescence, until the age of 18; (2) the goals of the Initiative, its strengths, the challenges involved in its implementation, and its value for the students; (3) the inputs and outputs of the initiative; (4) the outcomes of the Initiative in terms of the academic achievements of the participating students from the *Hammer Darca High School* and the *Bait V'Gan Darca High School*, as reflected in their matriculation exam scores.

## Study Methods

The study was based on qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative research design included four semi-structured in-depth interviews with office holders in charge of implementing and managing the Initiative as well as analysis of data from previous research reports and internal working documents of the Initiative. The

data were collected in July 2021 and analyzed using the Atlas.ti Web software, based on the thematic approach. The quantitative research design included analysis of the solutions offered in response to the students' needs throughout the implementation of the Initiative as well as analysis of the matriculation exam scores of the participating students. The quantitative analyses were performed using SPSS, version 24.

## **Study Findings**

The Weitzman-Bat Yam Initiative was established with the aim of promoting social mobility and equal opportunities between students from disadvantaged population groups and students from more privileged populations. The Initiative focused on solutions in response to the needs of the students in the academic field as well as to their emotional and social needs. Solutions in response to the medical, paramedical, and economic needs of the students were also provided. The Initiative targeted primarily the participating students and, at the same time, offered solutions in response to the common needs of both parents and students. Students from the *Hammer Darca High School* and the *Bait V'Gan Darca High School* and Ethiopian Israeli students from these and other schools were the main target population of the Initiative.

It appears that the Initiative has had a significant impact on the students' academic achievements, on their social and emotional status, and in other areas as well. Its value for the students, their families, and the community in various aspects of life is clearly evident. It thus seems that the Initiative has achieved its goals, specifically its overarching goal of promoting the successful integration of the participating students in Israeli society as adults.