Evaluation of the Tafnit (Turnaround) Program
Summary of Principal Findings

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About the Evaluation

The program evaluation was conducted from January through June 2006. To some degree it is a **short-term evaluation** within a defined timeframe, however certain aspects of **in-depth** and **retrospective evaluations** were incorporated.

The evaluation has four focal points of examination:

- **A descriptive-qualitative evaluation**: A qualitative evaluation whose objective is to identify how the program operates and how its diverse components contribute to achieving its goals, and if applicable, to define of the "secret" of its success.
- **Evaluation of the internal control of the Tafnit program in elementary schools:** Internal control is one of the main components in the program's basic assumptions and the main tool in following up achievements. The present evaluation examined the program's evaluation methods, including the process of building, administering and analyzing the tests, and grade collection and processing.
- **"Conceptual" evaluation**: Analyzing the program's theoretical assumptions.
- **Evaluation of long-term effects**

Method of evaluation

To this end, we employed diverse evaluation tools and methods and professionals from a variety of spheres. **A combination of an in-depth and lateral evaluation:** an in-depth evaluation was conducted in 14 schools, comprising seven high schools, six elementary schools and one middle school. The schools are located in the south, center and north of Israel (albeit their majority was located in the south). Three of the schools were high schools in the Bedouin sector and the remainder were Jewish schools. Questionnaires were administered, covering a far wider cross-section of schools, and grade analysis was conducted in accordance with national data.

The evaluation components:

(a) **Learning the program**: Analysis of bibliographical material and learning about the program, its different components, work methods, theoretical background, basic assumptions and its scope of implementation from the program's people,

(b) **Interviews and in-depth interviews**: Interviews were conducted with representatives of the program's various stakeholders: 13 interviews were conducted with senior representatives of the education system and from outside it, 97 were conducted with

school representatives, 148 with students, 38 with parents, and various interviews were conducted with the program's developers and instructors.

(c)   **Observations**: 75 observations were conducted in the Tafnit program's classrooms, five in training classrooms which operate the Tafnit program; nine were conducted during the administration of the standard mid-year and end-of-year examinations, and seven observations of the special encounters with significant others which comprise parents, teaching staff, school principal and students (**in Tafnit's language** "combining circles" of significant others)

(d) **Questionnaires**: The questionnaires, which were basically identical, were developed, administered and analyzed. Minor changes were made in accordance with the different age groups. The questionnaires were administered in 14 elementary schools and high schools in sample classrooms in which an in-depth evaluation was conducted, and in a wide-ranging group of additional schools. A total of 1,078 questionnaires were analyzed (see appendices).

(e) **Data processing relating to grades**: Control over data processing conducted by the Tafnit program and secondary data processing.

About the report

The evaluation report summarizes the data in their entirety. The present report presents a summary of the principal findings as it was formulated on the basis of the remaining sections. These sections present the various findings by subject matter.

About the program

Introduction

All the descriptions relating to the program and its scope of activity and objectives are based on five references detailed at the end of the section, and on interviews conducted with the program's leaders and developers.

At the end of the 1990s the Ministry of Education together with the Madarom educational endeavor (a joint endeavor of the Sacta-Rashi Foundation and the Ministry of Education) conducted national achievement tests in the south of Israel. Result analysis of these tests showed that in some schools the achievements of students in the basic subjects of mathematics, Hebrew and English language were lower in comparison with national standard requirements. Findings also show far-reaching scholastic gaps between students in the lower grades in some schools. The gaps widened as the students moved on to higher classes.

In 2000 the Ministry of Education-Southern Region and the Sacta-Rashi Foundation began operating the Tafnit program in the southern region. The program's objective was to generate improvement in the students' achievements and thus narrow scholastic gaps. At its inception the program operated in the framework of the Madarom educational program, with the cooperation of the boarding school program and other bodies.

In 2000 the program was operated in 54 schools: 45 elementary schools, 8 high schools in the southern region and one middle school. A total of 2,484 students participated.

In the 2003 school year the program developed into a nationwide program, and in the 2005 school year - the sixth year of its operation in schools throughout Israel - it comprised 196 schools: 142 elementary schools, 16 middle schools, 37 high schools and one college. At present some 22,520 students study in its framework (an evaluated number at the time of the writing of this report). The program is based on an accelerated method of narrowing scholastic gaps (Educational Campaign - an intensive and accelerated short-term learning process developed by Nissim [Max] Cohen [in Hebrew Mivtsa Limudi]). The program in elementary schools, middle schools and high schools: (Tafnit for Matriculation – "Last Hurdle" (The Hassam program)**,** and the Start program for matriculation (designed to prevent dropout) is based on this method together with additional developments and modifications that were also created and developed by the program's team.

Summary of Principal Findings

This section presents a summary of the main points detailed and validated in the course of the report. In this section we will present only limited quantitative data that appears in the course of the report for the sole purpose of illustration. In the report itself all data is detailed, including illustrations and explanations.

We would like to point out that during our evaluation of the program we enjoyed full and extensive cooperation from all those involved: people active in the program in diverse roles, and people from the education system (supervisors, principals, teachers and other partners). Cooperation was not taken for granted as the evaluation was intensive and of a broad scope. This cooperation is part of the work model that creates the project's environment: accelerated work with all partners in order to achieve the program's goals.

• Consistency and Scope of Activity

Consistency is the program's key word. Later in this section we will show that the program is carefully constructed and that this construction is strictly adhered to in almost all localities. On numerous parameters the degree of flexibility that the schools enjoy in operating the program is limited. As a result, we found consistent and similar findings. Even in the initial period, when Tafnit operated on a limited scope, and in later periods when its scope became wider (except for a few focused reservations, mainly a result of difficulties encountered in two localities) these findings were found in a systematic and well-controlled analysis of grades, in questionnaires administered to some 1,000 students and in comprehensive field work in the Jewish and Bedouin sectors in the south, center and north, in elementary schools, middle schools and high schools, conducted by four different evaluators.

There are, of course, exceptions to the rule, and conditions under which the students did not reach expected achievements. All these are detailed at length later on in this section and the ones that follow.

As mentioned earlier, over the years the scope of the program's activities grew, as the following graph shows.

Graph No. 1: Distribution of the number of students in the Tafnit program over the years according to the program's reports

Total number of students who participated in the program
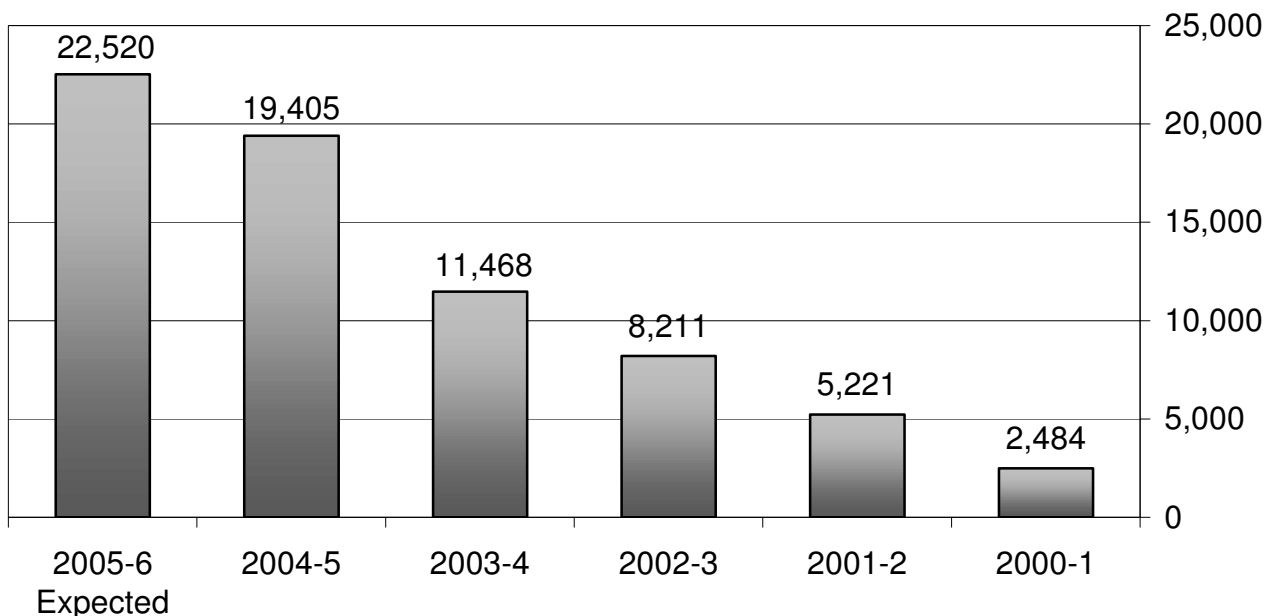
- *Dropout*

Despite the program's expansion, the dropout data is extremely limited. In Tafnit for Matriculation – "Last Hurdle" program (The Hassam program), the percentage is marginal (for example, in Beersheba only 3 of 655 students dropped out and the data is similar throughout the country). Over the years only 21 of 1,693 students dropped out of the Start program, a figure constituting slightly more than one percent; some of these students dropped out due to "positive" reasons (for example, shifting to a non-vocational class), and some due to irrelevant reasons (for example, moving to another school). The majority dropped out as a result of behavioral problems, and others because they left school.

- *Target population*

Findings show that in point of fact the demands posed by the Tafnit program and its implementation in the context of its target audience are well suited. In other words: students with the lowest achievements in elementary school, students who have one subject preventing them from attaining a matriculation certificate (in the Tafnit for Matriculation – "Last Hurdle" program (The Hassam program), students who are potential drop-outs - at least half of whom have at least 7 failing grades in their school report card

prior to their participation in the Start Tafnit program designed for preventing dropout. The schools work according to Tafnit's guidelines. First and foremost, the program works with students who are low achievers. Some of the interviewees also regarded the program as related to students lacking in self-confidence, or those who suffer from other learning difficulties. Compatibility was also maintained in cases in which the school believed that it was unsuitable, particularly in some of the cases of students with learning disabilities. (Note: the Tafnit program does not see itself as a program designed for dealing with severe learning disabilities but as a social learning program. in fact, findings show that the operational principles assist in the success of some of the students with learning disabilities – the subject was not examined methodically and we are unable to define its scope. However, it emerges that regarding this population, the extent of difficulty the program faced is high). This issue comprises students with severe behavioral disorders, students who meet the threshold conditions but do not cooperate with the program's clear-cut requirements, students who participate in other programs at school, and in some cases, new-immigrant students (see details on these issues later in this section). On the other hand, schools also identify the Tafnit program with (indirect) help given to strong students who had previously been neglected: while the program deals with low achievers, the stronger students benefit inadvertently.

- ***The process of introduction and integration into the school – an encounter between cultures following a dialogue***

The process of introduction and integration into the school and the education system can be described as an **intercultural dialogue**. Findings show that the Tafnit program, in the explicit structure it dictates (see later), compels the field to create intentional direction towards it. In other words, for the school and the education system to assimilate the program, they must change. They must practice flexibility in their routine work, learning habits, and make changes in the system's structure and their perceptions. On the other hand, Tafnit's degree of flexibility is limited (for example, one age group). Since success has been shown in schools, the latter seek to expand the program's scope of activity. As this is the case, the organizational culture of the schools changes and incorporates Tafnit aspects. Some schools term themselves "schools in the spirit of the Tafnit program."

Tafnit's capability of well integrating the program derives from its strictly constructed work model but also from the fact that it **addresses a need**: it is often presented as a program that offers a concrete solution to a previous need or even as a solution to similar

objectives of the school principal, supervisor, etc. In other words, the program is presented as a "shelf product" that addresses a real need of various stakeholders.

Consequently, concepts such as "a marriage", "inseparable ways" are often used in describing the relationship between Tafnit, or the Tafnit director, and the educational body. It appears that Tafnit works towards proper integration of those concerned (a Tafnit director or representative and a member of the school staff who is taken by the idea, etc.). But is also an affiliation that has a shelf product of the kind that provides solutions, and thus from a program that perhaps began as a personal connection, it became one that is perceived as a program that provides a systemic organizational answer (see fuller details in the section on the program's structure).

In addition to the fact that Tafnit operates within a framework which can be termed "**push**", it is introduced in full force, mainly in the first year, offering a combination of requirements and significant financial funding. We will see that in this context **"the secret of success"** lies in the program's strength in generating success in the scholastic sphere and its refusal to compromise.

The main manifestation of cultural integration lies in **Tafnit's language,** which is well-known and used in schools. In addition, there is noteworthy adherence to the programs, schedules and class activities and organization.

Over the years there has been some expectation for separation – for the continuation of independent activity and recruitment of resources by the schools, but the schools we met encountered difficulties in implementation, and greater criticism was leveled at the program over time.

The full integration of Tafnit in schools **causes the latter to raise expectations from the program,** such as dealing with social issues and expanding its inculcation of learning skills.

Training and instruction: The coordinating team leading the program in schools is given professional and extensive training. A similar process took place in training – the work model with teachers is similar to that expected of students, and is in accordance with the definition given by the program's people: "experience that determines consciousness".

All these helped a great deal in the actual work. On the other hand, the teachers are given limited training (since it is expected that the program's coordinator – a member of the school staff who is given extensive training – will lead and provide continued instruction in school). Success in work and in delivering the messages is evident (see later).

- ***Program structure***

As a rule, findings show that the schools met the program's guidelines, the various participants were fully aware of the principles and can be observed repeatedly in observations.

Several aspects relating to the program's structure, i.e., several operational mechanisms, add to its success.

Intimacy appears as the most significant structural factor. Working in small groups and an intimate atmosphere affords both children and teachers enjoyment and constitutes a tool for improving achievement (through the ability to concentrate in the classroom, individual attention, etc.). For example, in the Bedouin sector the manifestation of the individual teacher-student relationship is particularly stressed. The students are more willing than usual to ask questions, and motivation for work is heightened on both sides in Tafnit on this dimension. In addition, all sectors note **accelerated learning**, which is based on strong teacher-student ties as a significant strong point. This learning is also related to enhancing learning attention and chances for success. This is also true in relation to learning marathons. **Dynamic mapping (in Tafnit's language), and ongoing control** are also mentioned as the main tools that enable reliable follow-up and control, obligating teachers to meet tasks they set themselves <u>at the beginning of the year</u>. This was the case among leaders in the Ministry, teachers and students, but for teachers and students it also constituted a heavy burden and caused frustration due to the additional study hours and numerous tests it involved. **The program's structure** was also mentioned **as its main advantage**. The fact that it incorporated clear-cut rules according to which work was to be completed, a common language and specific knowledge helped a great deal in its success. This knowledge was documented in writing in manuals, presentations and other documents.

Additional mechanisms facilitated success: **special meetings of all significant others that addressed material needs and mapping.** In a small number of schools, mainly from

the Bedouin sector and one Jewish school, the parents feel that the subject of meals and transportation (in the Bedouin sector) was not addressed, no special encounters of the significant others were observed, and parental involvement was observed mainly in the context of negative aspects of behavior, but the project and its development was less known.

An additional difficulty lies in the **addition of study hours in the afternoons:** the addition of hours appeared as the program's main difficulty, albeit it is also the main factor in the successes mentioned earlier. In this context numerous recommendations emerge. Difficulties appear in the context of students, particularly in that of students from the Bedouin "Pzura" (scattered dwellings) sector. They also emerge in the context of teachers, particularly in relation to the Bedouin sector. An additional problematic dimension is the **stage of return to the homeroom classrooms**, a stage in which there is a certain kind of "**absorption**" of students into the general public, and a risk of regression in achievement (actually findings show a drop in achievement among some students, but the majority improved in comparison to the initial stage: some 28% of all low achievers are now outstanding students; their grades are 85 and above on external standard tests after they returned to their homeroom classrooms).

- *Effects*

Findings show that the program had numerous effects which will be described later in this section.

One of the most notable findings was that **Tafnit works on parallel levels and principles. Similar output was found in students, teachers and parents.** It appears that the program delivers a unified message which assists in assimilating the various messages into the process. This can be condensed into a message of commitment to the process, investment, responsibility, ability and involvement. The program is resolute in preserving the place of all factors in the process; unlike other critics, parents and teachers hold a distinct place in the educational process. The program empowers their place and does not "shift them around so they do not interfere." This is the reason we found similar effects on different populations, and probably also on children.

• *Assimilation*

The secret of Tafnit's success lies in its ability to operate and influence schools on three dimensions: longitude, latitude and depth, while inculcating tools relevant to schools in the future. Therefore, we believe that the probability of its assimilation into the system is high. As always, this is related to conditions. In order to preserve and use the tools the schools need to improve mechanisms; the main difficulty emerging in this context is **resources**.

The assimilation issue: One of the main questions that arise in the context of evaluation of Tafnit and similar programs is whether the program is integrated into the school in such a way that perceptions, knowledge, tools and skills become an inseparable part of the school. The question is to what extent the school wants and is capable of operating the program and its derivatives on its own, once the program is completed. This issue is particularly relevant in light of the limited funds available to the program. The program cannot continue working intensively through outside help. Over time it is expected that schools will be able to take full responsibility for it.

The majority of school principals report that they would like to operate the program independently once it is completed. Currently there is a certain degree of expansion in administering the program for the entire age group, and this year there are some principals who report on work in the spirit of Tafnit, without the help of Tafnit itself. They feel they possess partial tools and skills, that there is an improvement in standpoints, but due to a lack of additional funds (allocation of hours and remuneration) the task will be difficult. Most schools claimed that they still lack tools, or reported that not all the teachers are familiar with the principles of the program and were not trained in its spirit, which will cause difficulties in its independent operation in the future. In other words, the basic demand for independent operation relates to massive teacher training. Nevertheless, a limited number of team members who said they would not continue working in Tafnit next year, despite the fact that the program is good, claimed that the teachers' work load was too heavy, and that the program did not clearly address learning disabilities.
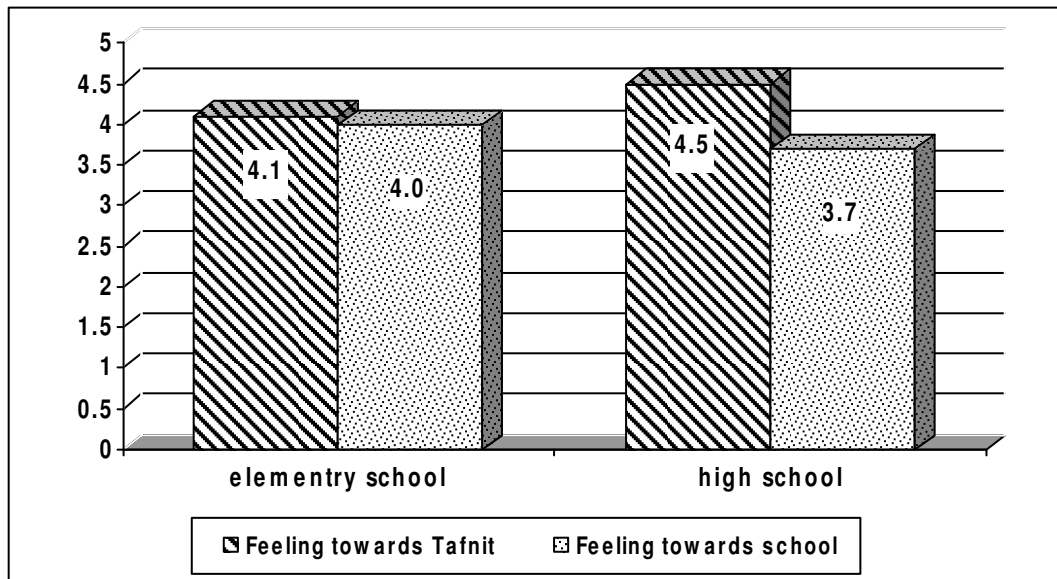
The main tool available to schools is **the change in knowledge and standpoint that the program generated among teachers following their exposure to the program and its successes. In addition, they noted that they gained work methods and tools,** and used them in other contexts. Numerous teachers reported that they used the mapping tool in regular classrooms as well; they reported on **empowerment and the reinforcement of**

their feeling of ability to cope with behavioral problems in general, and not only with Tafnit's students. Teachers reported on **the creativity** they acquired in Tafnit, **cooperation** in analyzing knowledge affected their work in Tafnit. It appears that **the sphere of methods and tools is the main one in which assimilation elements were found in schools. Teachers report on transferring work methods and ways of teaching to other classrooms,** among them, tolerance that stemmed from the perception that "everyone is able", successful tests in the Tafnit program spirit in other classrooms, strict adherence to planned objectives, etc.

- **Effects on students**

Satisfaction: Student satisfaction from the program is high to very high (depending on the population), and higher than satisfaction from school in general, which is also considerably high. When students were asked in questionnaires what Tafnit is for them, 99% gave positive answers in different spheres. This satisfaction is accompanied by enjoyment and fun vis-à-vis learning

Diagram No. 2: Comparison between satisfaction from school and the Tafnit program

elementry school: Feeling towards Tafnit 4.1, Feeling towards school 4.0
high school: Feeling towards Tafnit 4.5, Feeling towards school 3.7

☒ Feeling towards Tafnit   ☒ Feeling towards school

- *Scholastic achievement*

Improving scholastic achievement is the program's initial objective. Findings show that on all levels (students, teachers, parents, administrative staff) and in all programs (Start, Hassam and the program for narrowing gaps in elementary and middle schools) the program and its contribution is identified first and foremost with a contribution to improving achievement, and reports show that **a rise in the achievement level of students who participated in the program is considerable.** This is supported by grades. Findings show that Tafnit is successful in improving the scholastic achievements of low achievers who constitute the program's main target audience. It was successful in moving them from scholastic failure and a likelihood of dropping out of school to relative success over time. All the partners recognize many other contributions made by the program, however scholastic assistance is highest on the list. Significant improvements were found in the following:

Scholastic achievement - Elementary schools

The most significant improvement in student achievement was notable at the <u>stage of the Learning Campaign (accelerated short-term learning process)</u> We would like to point out that these are normative and not standard indices. The standard indices are valid for examination together with the end-of-year indices. Nevertheless, this datum is important as it creates expectations in students and teachers, and a strong link to the program. After investing efforts in the entire age group findings show that the <u>level of knowledge of the weaker students takes a dramatic upward leap, generates the narrowing of gaps between the achievements of weaker students and the entire class, and the level of knowledge of the class as an entirety improves.</u>

After this stage and as the years go by, achievement is maintained, and the achievement of the class as an entirety is high. The achievements of the students are higher than they were at the beginning of the year, but the gap between the weaker and stronger students widens in comparison with achievements after the first year. Findings show that the assimilated model manages to move the low achievers to becoming average achievers and even outstanding students, and this holds true for the long term as well.

Grade-related findings in elementary schools (see fuller details in the section on grades) :

In general terms one may say that examination of the program results in elementary schools over a four-year period of activity - in which only the first year involved

accelerated learning, while during the remaining years activity was routine (with no accelerated processes), enjoying only a 60% overall scope of resources in comparison with first (accelerated) year of activity - shows that the program contributes a great deal to improving the achievements of the year's lower achievers on diverse dimensions as follows:

(a) Activity in the first part of the accelerated model (including the accelerated stage of narrowing gaps and age-group acceleration), operated only during the first year, succeeded in dramatically raising the level of knowledge of low achievers to the extent that the gap between them and the remaining students was almost closed; it also improved the level of knowledge of the entire age group.

(b) In the first and second stages of the model's operation (second stage – preserving achievements, with no accelerated learning processes, termed "a successful age group") 28% of all low achievers in the age group (with an average grade of 41) prior to the program's operation, improved and became outstanding students with an average grade of 85 or above.

(c) 41% additional students of all the age group's low achievers (average grade 41) prior to the program's operation, improved and attained average grades (65 – 84).

(d) In the long term, activity in the various stages of the assimilated model succeeded in advancing (as noted above) some (28%) of the weakest students, to the status of outstanding students. In addition, activity in the model succeeded in promoting the weakest students to the status of average achievers, and this was also true in the long term. Consequently, during the process the vast majority of low achievers managed to intermix with the remaining students, while others did not.

(e) Activity in the model in its second stage of operation succeeded in part in maintaining the status of outstanding students (grade 95 and above) among low achievers who attained outstanding grades.

(f) Activity in the model succeeded in improving the grades of the age group's highest achievers (some 75% of all students) by 11 points (from an average of 72 prior to the process to an average of 83).

(g) Activity in the model succeeded in improving the average grade of the program's students by 17 points (from an average grade of 64 to an average of 81).

Scholastic achievement - High Schools - Students in Tafnit for matriculation - "Last Hurdle" program– (the Hassam subject)

Findings show the program's extremely high success rate throughout its years of operation. The percentage of students who successfully pass matriculation exams is 92%-99% in different years, and the percentage of 12th grade students who were awarded a matriculation certificate is 75%-91%. Concurrent with the high levels of success one can see a slight drop in the percentage of students in 2005 who were successful in matriculation exams in the 11th and 12th grades (a drop to 92% in comparison with 96%-99% in previous years) and a drop in the percentage of 12th grade students who were awarded a matriculation certificate in the same year (a drop from 91% to 75%).

In addition, high average grades on the matriculation exams were found throughout the years of the program's operation (79%-90%).

Scholastic achievement - High Schools - Students in Tafnit's Start program for matriculation – preventing dropout

Existing data show that the program doubtlessly enjoys a great deal of success, since over 50% of the students who were potential dropouts were awarded a matriculation certificate during the first graduate cycle. Their average grade is far higher in comparison with their initial starting point (an average of 70).

The Start program grew fairly rapidly: from 24 students in 2001, to 1,629 in 2005. The dropout percentage is relatively high compared to the Hassam program, but since we are dealing with an essentially different population this dropout rate is expected. It appears that the Start program serves as a significant challenge to its participants.

- **Improvement in achievements in additional subjects not studied in the program's framework**

Many interviewees (students and teachers alike), particularly in elementary and middle schools, claimed that the program had an effect on improving achievement in other subjects, due to the confidence and feeling of ability the students gained vis-à-vis success, the accumulation of knowledge and skills relevant far beyond specific subjects, the tools acquired by teachers, and a joint transfer of teaching and learning methods to other subjects.

Contribution to personal and social spheres

Both the qualitative data and the questionnaires show that **the program has a great deal of weight in the sphere of personal contribution to the students in addition to its scholastic contribution.** The questionnaires show a feeling of achievement, a contribution to the future, help, fun and enjoyment.

- **Believing in one's self**

The program's students believe that they will succeed in their studies, and therefore they believe they will continue studying in the future.

The contribution of the Tafnit program: Approximately half of the graduates and the majority of participants see a connection between the fact that they studied in the Tafnit program and their belief in their future success. The Bedouin students believe that Tafnit has ensured their first step in the direction of future success.

Findings show that **Tafnit helped in breaking down the students' false notion about their inability in the scholastic sphere, and their lack of prospects for future success.** Almost all respondents see themselves fulfilling a positive normative role when they graduate from high school (among the Bedouin and Druze there is a high frequency regarding higher education, and among the Jews, a high frequency regarding military service).

One of the most important manifestations in this context is **the development of their consciousness that scholastic success depends on the extent of effort** (individual responsibility and focused inner locus of control). This was found among numerous students, albeit not among all. It is self evident that this consciousness is a precondition for scholastic success, or success in any other activity. We would like to point out that this is also notable among the Start and Hassam programs (Tafnit for Matriculation – "Last Hurdle" program, students. In addition, reports from interviews testify to **a change in**

behavior and the adoption of new behavioral habits (less absenteeism, less aggression, higher motivation to study). In the programs that operated within the high school and middle school frameworks additional dimensions of effect emerged: **improved motivation, consciousness of the fact that scholastic success will help students to better integrate into society as adults in the future, a desire to enlist in the IDF after graduation (in this context, it is impossible to prove with certainty that Tafnit was the only motivating factor), and the degree of the students' willingness to continue their studies in various fields. It appears that there is consciousness of individual traits and taking responsibility for their actions.** These effects were more noticeable among students who participated in the Start program, which unquestionably comprised more components related to social and personal elements in addition to mutual scholastic ones in comparison with the Hassam program students.

- ***The interpersonal level***

five dimensions of influence were found on this level:

(1) Improvement in the Tafnit students' social status ("social esteem").

(2) Improvement to the extent of closeness that the students felt for their teachers.

(3) A drop in the students' disciplinary problems.

(4) Social coalescence on an age group basis.

(5) Lowering of the level of violence among students.

In addition, the Tafnit program students, mainly in elementary schools, reported that **they felt more comfortable when approaching their teachers** on various issues. See also in relation to behavioral changes above, and particularly reports on the decrease in violent behavior.

- *Effects on teachers*

Positive effects were found on the teachers exposed to the program:

- **Breaking down notions about the capabilities of weak students**
- **Assuming responsibility for actions and results**
- **An increase in their motivation to teach**
- **An increase in the level of individual responsibility that teachers feel regarding their students' success**

It is clear that these dimensions are critical to teachers' professional work. At the same time, **breaking down the false notions** of students regarding their abilities also breaks down the false notion of teachers on this issue. This was particularly noticeable among elementary school teachers and only slightly in middle school teachers. **Within a brief period** (approximately six weeks of narrowing scholastic gaps in an accelerated learning process, stage one) **the Tafnit program succeeded in breaking down the teachers' perception regarding the inability of weak students, affording them understanding that there are ways to advance students** in different learning stages.

Assimilation and internalization of knowledge, standpoints and perceptions which the program presents to teachers is apparent. This internalization is manifested in the work conducted both in Tafnit and non-Tafnit classrooms. Numerous teachers report on their use of components taken from "dynamic mapping," a change in their standpoint towards students, and greater openness towards the success of weaker students.

The Tafnit program afforded teachers the consciousness that **in order to help students they need to take more part in analyzing the child's needs**. This role is not only the task of the educational counselor or social worker but also a role to which the teacher should be a partner – getting to know their students, their difficulties and family background, etc., and thus provide them with an individual solution according to their needs. In addition, **according to the school staff the Tafnit program "forces" teachers to be more creative in their work,** in the sense of finding solutions for advancing students and working together with their colleagues, thus bringing about stronger professional cohesion. **Explanation for the success of internalization**: teachers saw that their efforts were rewarded, which in turn enhanced their motivation and commitment to success, as shown previously.

On the professional level, findings show a fundamental dimension of influence: the inculcation of new tools and work methods. This influence is mainly substantial in elementary schools, but also in middle schools and high schools.

On the interpersonal level, findings show a more profound acquaintanceship with students and their families and a stronger feeling of social cohesion on the part of the teachers, following the program. The children feel that Tafnit's teachers and instructors are supportive and that they have someone to turn to in all matters. They feel the same about their parents, but they attribute this less to the Tafnit program.

The Tafnit program in fact challenges the teaching profession, accelerates its pace, making it into more up-to-date and dynamic and more committed, and by doing so helps teachers to reinforce their profession as a sphere that requires expertise, and no longer trivial.

Nevertheless, difficulties did arise. **A considerable number of teachers reported that the degree of investment was great, and often remuneration was not worthwhile.** The teachers' workload is relatively heavy.

- **_Effects on parents_**

Findings show that Tafnit affected parents in five parameters:

- **Intensifying parents' help and support of studies**
- **Intensifying the extent of the parents' interest in their children's scholastic situation**
- **Bringing about a change in the parents' consciousness of their children's capabilities**
- **Reinforcing the parents' ties with the school**
- **Nullifying the parents' need to fund their children's extra tuition**

The program affected a large group of parents, mainly by **intensifying their consciousness of the importance of helping and supporting their children, and taking responsibility for the learning process.** This was found mainly in elementary and middle schools. Here too, similar to teachers, breaking down the notion about their child's capability, raised parents' consciousness of and involvement in their children's scholastic situation.

It appears that the Tafnit program shattered the "glass wall," the seemingly natural split between home and school. In some senses it affected the entire family unit since the parents reported on transferring the attitudes and standpoints they acquired through the program to their younger children.

All the students' parents in all high schools evaluated were satisfied with the program.

- **_Effects on the school_**

As mentioned earlier, in many cases the program became an **intrinsic part of the school.** It **contributes to positioning the school in the locality by improving grades** and by its learning how to **implement, with the tools it received from Tafnit, a dynamic follow-up comprising analysis, follow-up, and providing solutions according to needs.** The Tafnit program constitutes an auxiliary tool for schools for **integrating special-needs populations into the classroom learning process. It helps schools in processes that involve teamwork and pooling resources.**

This contribution is compatible with the system's overall trends to transfer administrative skills, fund management, assuming responsibility and control to the school.

Analysis of the standard exams in mathematics administered in elementary schools

In general terms, **findings show a high correlation between examinations which the program develops and administers and the requirements set by the Ministry of Education's curriculum** (including the three priorities, a, b, and c, by the end of 2004; as of 2005 according to the new curriculum – there are no priorities). **In other words, it may be assumed that students who succeed on the exam are conversant with the learning material expected of their age group.**

Examinations are based on the rationale and preliminary thoughts that in most cases match the principles of structuring tests and age requirements (for example, the order of items, the quality and suitability of questions is appropriate in most cases, examination of different processing levels, different learning and thinking skills side by side with conversancy and clarity as detailed in the body of the report). With regard to 2005, findings show that in most cases subjects that were not covered in the mid-year examination were covered in the end-of-year one. The process of developing examinations was extremely strict.

Students report that the examination was "average' in difficulty – challenging on the one hand, and not impossible on the other.

The main difficulties described vis-à-vis the examination relate to the level of complexity or relatively severe difficulties. Thus it may be assumed that in a certain sense the examinations are strict in relation to the age group requirements, and therefore success reflects conversancy with the curriculum.

Administering the examinations:

 Findings show that the preparation of the examinations' supervisor, its administration by the supervising staff and checking examinations were carried out in most cases in accordance with procedure. Nonetheless, various difficulties emerged **<u>rarely</u>**, relating to the teachers' heavy load during the examinations and strict adherence to the procedure of the examination itself, or on rare occasions a tendency to hint to students regarding their mistakes.

Regarding preparation, findings show that schools were prepared for the standard examinations and administered them in accordance with Tafnit's guidelines. The main thrust of the guidelines relates to the scholastic and logistical aspects. Findings show that

in some schools students were prepared psychologically in order to alleviate their anxiety level prior to the examination. This is evidently not a structured part of the program, but the schools felt a need to incorporate it. Following are details related to the findings in this context.

Regarding supervision, it may be said that except for a small percentage of special cases in schools, findings show professional and pleasant behavior on the part of the supervisors, despite the fact that their entrance into the elementary schools was new and involved an element of threat. The supervisors' staff arrived on time. The classrooms were prepared and the examinations began on time. In the majority of schools findings show that in most cases the supervisor, in addition to his/her job of supervision which involved reminding students to remain silent and preventing copying, helped the teacher in addressing students with special needs. Help for these students, such as reading aloud, was arranged in advance.

Attendance during the examination:

In most cases findings show that mainly at the beginning of the examination, and during its first third, the school principals and coordinators were present in order to greet the students and deliver a reassuring message regarding the students' mastery of the learning material. During the examination findings show greater variance between schools regarding the extent of the staff's attendance. In all schools the homeroom teacher and the supervisor were present as prescribed by the guidelines. In addition, members of the teaching staff, at times instructors (people in their year of national service), or teachers were present. These people helped the homeroom teacher in answering the students' questions during the examination.

In all classrooms the gap existing between the number of students who were entitled to help and their number observed de facto, which was much lower, was notable. The teaching staff was overburdened, a situation which continued almost all through the examination.

Regarding the nature of help provided by the teaching staff: In the majority of cases, despite the pressure exerted by students, the teachers and instructors helped mainly in reading the questions aloud and providing only their verbal interpretation, but there were cases in which they almost hinted or hinted de facto about a mistake, such as saying things like "think again."

In the observation and examination of the process of checking the examinations conducted several days after the examination was administered, findings show that

checking the examinations was conducted in a most exacting and strict manner, both from the point of view of the examining team and that of organization. The reports and the statistical analyses were conducted by the Tafnit program and sent as feedback to the schools together with the examination forms, all in accordance with predetermined and given procedures. In addition to the examinations, Tafnit also produces a report on findings, delivered to the supervisors and the school. The report comprises specification of grades on the class/age group level at the beginning and end of the process. This includes the class/age group average, various data regarding grade distribution, percentage of absence and success. The schools also receive reports on the trend of the students' answers (in percentages, not per student).

Analysis of the basic assumptions

As mentioned above, the Tafnit program has several basic assumptions which are detailed at length in the first section of this report. The first is that for low achievers the main variable for meeting the program's objectives is the "modification of false notions", and instilling confidence in students, parents and the school staff that students who are currently low achievers can succeed and integrate into regular classrooms. A brief summary of the derivative basic assumptions: (i) "everyone can"; (ii) it is possible to develop in children an ability to better utilize their potential, (iii) the existence of learning processes according to universal criteria within a relatively short period, while investing a great deal of effort on the part of the students, (iv) schools should be offered challenging learning programs, focused on a limited number of subjects and students, and (v) activities through a coordinator who is a significant figure for both students and teachers, with whom they will develop a diffused relationship.

The data presented in the report exist in their own right. **It may be said with certainty that almost "everyone can"**. We showed extremely significant percentages of success in all programs and in all age groups, with a minimal dropout percentage.

However, at present we can only speak of "almost" and not everyone, since at present it appears that there are specific isolated and focused groups with which the program, in its present pattern of activity, does not always succeed. This relates in particular to some of the students who have learning disabilities, and to some of the new immigrant students. Tafnit is extremely successful in working with new immigrants when they are integrated into the program in its first year. At that time numerous resources are allocated, among others, to these groups. In the following years, when resources are limited, more difficulties emerge in work with new immigrants.

We would like to indicate the difficulties involved in integrating students with learning disabilities into the dialogue with schools. The quantitative data published by the program testify to success with the group of students diagnosed as students with learning disabilities. For example, at the end of 2004, 54 students with learning disabilities were tested on a standard exam, and their average grade was 74. It appears that numerous difficulties exist but in some cases there are successes as well.

It appears that the program should develop additional focused solutions for these students, solutions whose implementation depends on financial expansion.

The fact that the program's skills are also transferred to other learning subjects is significant of the fact that the program's work processes succeed in building in both staff

and students building blocks that help in other scholastic contexts. The report also shows that the basic assumptions about the structure of learning - accelerated learning and structured control -constitute building blocks that are crucial for its success.

Recommendations

- We recommend adopting Tafnit's work model in elementary schools and the two high schools programs: the Tafnit program for matriculation – the Hassam subject and Tafnit's Start program for matriculation – preventing dropout. We do not have sufficient data to recommend the program in middle schools.

- We recommend adopting components of the Tafnit program in other educational contexts as well, including assuming responsibility, the emphasis on control and follow-up in accordance with universal criteria, accelerated learning and the accelerated narrowing of scholastic gaps, modification of consciousness, etc.

- We recommend reinforcing teachers' training in schools. The training given to teachers at school is incomplete, and not always uniform. In any event, at present it is given only to Tafnit teachers and not to others. In view of the successful model of training coordinators, we recommend operating this model in teacher training.

- We recommend helping schools in computerized management of grades. Schools receive numerous data for control requirements, but these are not stored in a way that makes for easy retrieval. In order to facilitate ongoing mapping and control it is important to use computer tools wisely.

- We recommend continuing to develop more focused models for work with special populations: new immigrants who join the program in later years, and students with learning disabilities. In cases of learning disabilities, the system expects better solutions. Current extant knowledge shows that there are appropriate tools for this need, and it is a pity not to integrate them into the program. In focused contexts it is important to provide solutions for coping with disciplinary problems in high school, with the subject of teachers from the north in the Bedouin sector (who encounter difficulties in remaining in the marathons), and with the problems related to meals and transportation in the Bedouin sector, and particularly with children from the "Pzura." In the Bedouin sector, more focused work with teachers regarding their role in school in the context of parents is of particular importance (not only involvement during times of crisis but involvement for its own sake).

- We recommend building a structured model when Tafnit has concluded its work at school. The model will be based on work with the entire age group and on its expansion to additional age groups. However, the schools feel that they do not have sufficient tools and knowledge for operating the program after Tafnit has concluded its work.

- We recommend finding solutions for difficulties that often emerge during examinations. The load borne by the staff attending the majority of examinations and the way in which those present may hint to students regarding their mistakes.
- In Tafnit's work model in elementary schools we recommend reinforcing the accelerated process of narrowing gaps proven as most effective, not only during the first year of activity, but in the coming years as well; this should be done at least once in two years in the same subject (a recommendation made by one of the school principals in the program). This will also address new students who joined the school, who suffer from scholastic gaps, and will enhance the students' output.