Evaluation of the Tafnit (Turnaround) Program

Brief Summary

July 2006

Evaluation and writing (in alphabetical order):

Michal Doron, Hagit Ben Ephraim, Fawzia Ghnaim, Dorit Levine

Data processing:

Julia Gomush, Marina Guroshet

Analysis of standard tests:

Dr. Amnon Glasner

Management of evaluation:

Na'ama Bar-On, Dr. Miri Levin-Roslis

Head of the Center for Growth in Education:

Prof. Shifra Sagi

Background

Evaluation of the existing program, conducted during the first six months of 2006. In some ways, this is a short-term evaluation, but it includes aspects of in-depth assessment, as well as retrospective evaluation.

Method: In the framework of the evaluation, the program's documents were analyzed; nearly 300 interviews were conducted with the various parties involved in the program; close to 100 classroom observations, tests, instructional activity and meetings were conducted; questionnaires were composed and distributed and the responses of 1,087 pupils were analyzed; and there was secondary processing of data pertaining to grades.

About the program

The program was initiated during the 2000-2001 school year (5761) through a collaborative effort of the Sacta-Rashi Foundation and the Ministry of Education. The **goal** of the program is to generate an improvement in the achievements of pupils by reducing learning disparities. The program is based on the method of accelerated reduction of learning disparities (the learning campaign) developed by Nissim (Max) Cohen. The programs currently in operation are based on this method, together with additional improvements and adaptations developed by the program staff.

This summary presents only the main findings. All of the findings are described at length in the expanded summary and in the body of the report.

Summary of Findings

1. Consistency and scope of activity - The program has been found to be very clearly structured and this structure is carefully maintained in nearly every location. The schools' flexibility in operating the program is low in many parameters. ***Over the years, the program's scope of activity has grown considerably – from 2,400 to 22,000 pupils in six years, and the reported dropout rate has been very low.***

2. Target population - It was found that in practice there is a correlation between the demands the Tafnit program sets for the achievements of participating pupils and the program's implementation in the context of the target population. This correlation is also maintained in cases in which the schools feel that it is not particularly appropriate for pupils who have other difficulties (such as learning disabilities, serious behavior disorders, new immigrants and others). On the other hand, the schools also identify the Tafnit program with (indirect) assistance for stronger pupils who were previously

neglected – the stronger pupils also benefit from the fact that the Tafnit program helps the pupils who have low achievements.

3. <u>The entry and implementation process in the school</u> - The Tafnit' program's entry into the school can be described as a **dialogue between cultures**, during which the school's work habits change and, in turn, the work vis-à-vis Tafnit is expanded. Significant aspects of the program's ability to successfully enter the school derive from the fact that the program **responds to a real need**. In addition, the Tafnit program operates in a format that can be called "**push**" – it enters full speed, especially during the first year. It then offers a combination of requirements with significant funding. **Training and instruction** – There is serious professional training for the team of coordinators who lead the program in the schools. The teachers, on the other hand, receive more limited training (under the responsibility of the program coordinator for the school).

4. <u>The program's structure </u>- It has been found that the schools conform to the program's framework of principles. The aspects and mechanisms of the program's structure that facilitate its success are described at length in the report. These include: the intimacy, the accelerated learning, the dynamic mapping (the system of selection and assessment), the ongoing oversight, the structural quality of the program, meetings with parents at the school – "integrating spheres" and the response to material needs. **Difficulties** have also arisen in regard to some of these aspects and mechanisms: In a few schools, the parents feel that there are no solutions for nutrition and transportation. And in the Bedouin sector, an integration of different spheres has not been observed and the level of parental involvement is low - mainly in regard to negative aspects of behavior, and less in regard to knowing about the program and its progress. There is an inherent difficulty in adding school hours in the afternoon – a difficulty that also is a source of success. Another point of difficulty comes at the stage when the pupils return to their original classrooms – a stage when they are "swallowed up" or in danger of being "swallowed up" in the crowd and in danger of having some of their achievements erode.

<u>Impact</u>

General

The Tafnit program operates on parallel levels and on parallel principles. Similar results have been found among pupils, teachers and parents. It seems that the program sends a uniform message that helps assimilate the various messages in the process.
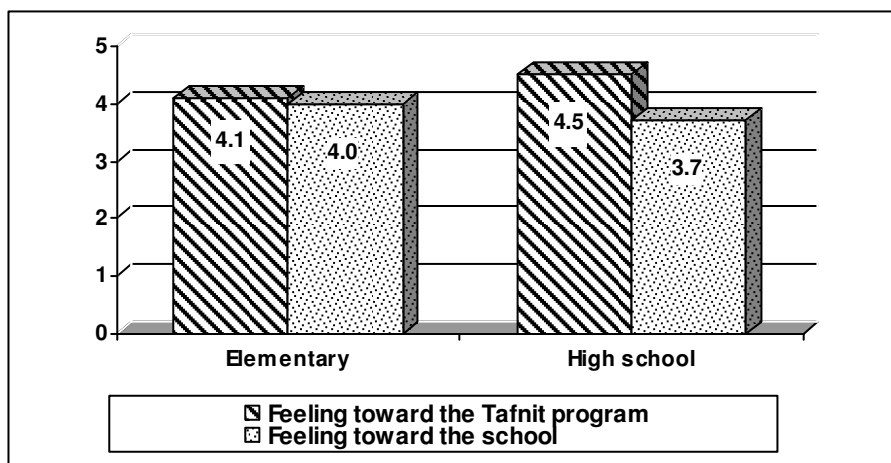
The secret of the Tafnit program's success is its ability to act and influence the schools in three dimensions: length, breadth and depth, while providing tools that have future relevance for the schools. Therefore, we

think there is a good likelihood of the program being assimilated into the system. Most of the school principals report that they would like to continue to operate the Tafnit program independently after it concludes, and there is already expansion in certain aspects. Principals feel that they have partial tools and that there has been an improvement in outlook, but that it will be difficult to continue to operate the program without an additional budget (allocation of hours and compensation).

Effects on pupils

1. The level of satisfaction expressed by the pupils is high to very high (depending on the population), and it is higher than the satisfaction with the school in general, which is also quite high. ***When the pupils are asked in questionnaires what the Tafnit program means to them, 99% give positive responses, expressed in various areas. This satisfaction is accompanied by fun and enjoyment around the learning.***

Graph 1 – Comparison between satisfaction toward school and toward the Tafnit program

Elementary: 4.1 (Feeling toward the Tafnit program), 4.0 (Feeling toward the school)
High school: 4.5 (Feeling toward the Tafnit program), 3.7 (Feeling toward the school)

☒ Feeling toward the Tafnit program
☒ Feeling toward the school

2. **Learning achievements**

   The primary objective of the program is to improve the learning achievements of pupils with low achievements. It has been found that at all levels (pupils, teachers, parents, administration and staff) and in all of Tafnit's programs, Tafnit is identified first and foremost with contributing to an improvement in achievement; and an analysis of the grades of participating pupils substantiates the reported improvement in the level of achievement.

   Elementary schools: The most significant improvement in the pupils' achievements is apparent during the stage of the learning campaign. After this stage, and as the years go by, the achievements are preserved and the entire classroom's achievements are high. The pupil's achievements are higher

than they were at the beginning of the studies, but the disparity between the weak and strong pupils widens compared to the achievement of the first year. The findings show that the implemented model succeeds in transforming pupils with low achievements into pupils with middle-level achievements and even into excellent students in the long run.

Tafnit program for matriculation pupils – "***Obstacle subject"t: The program has been found to be very successful, during all the years of its operation, in terms of the percentage of pupils who pass the matriculation exams (92-99%) and the percentage of 12th graders who matriculate (75-91%).*** There was a small decline in the percentage of 11th and 12th grade pupils who passed matriculation tests in the 2004-2005 school year (92% compared to 96-99% in previous years) and a decline in the percentage of 12th graders who matriculated that year (from 91% to 71%).

Tafnit "Start" program for matriculation pupils – ***Dropout prevention***: The available data shows that the program is very successful: ***More than 50% of the pupils labeled as "hidden" dropouts received a matriculation certificate during the first year. Their average grade (70) is very high compared to the point from where they started. It has been claimed that the program contributed to improving achievements in additional subjects that were not studied in the framework of the program*** thanks to the confidence and feeling of capability the pupils acquired in their ability to succeed and the knowledge and skills they accumulated.

3. The program has been found to contribute in the personal and social realms, particularly in the contexts of self-confidence, in contravening the pupils' erroneous perceptions about their inability to learn and their lack of chances for success in the future, in developing the recognition that success in school depends on the extent of investment (personal responsibility and focus on self-discipline) – among many, but not all of the pupils – and in changing behavior and adopting habits of behavior, and in other aspects as described in the report. On the interpersonal level, five dimensions of influence were identified: an improvement in the social status of pupils participating in the Tafnit program ("social acceptance"); improvement in the extent of closeness the pupils feel toward their teachers; a decrease in discipline problems among the pupils; social solidarity based on the school class; and reduction in the level of violence among the pupils

Effects on parents

The Tafnit has been found to influence parents in six dimensions:

1. Increasing the parents' assistance and support for studies

2. Increasing the parent's interest in the child's learning situation in school

3. Changing the parents' perspective regarding the child's ability

4. Strengthening the parent's connection with the school.

5. Eliminating the need for parents to finance private tutoring for their children.

6. Increasing awareness of the importance of providing assistance and supporting their children, and taking responsibility for the learning process.

It seems the Tafnit program has broken the "glass wall" that exists in the ostensibly natural disconnection between the school and the home. In some sense, this entails an impact on the entire family unit and not only on the parents, who report transferring the approach and outlook they received via the Tafnit program to their younger children.

Effects on teachers

1. Generating a change in awareness among teachers in regard to the capabilities of weak pupils

2. Raising the level of the teachers' responsibility for their actions and results

3. Raising their level of motivation to teach

4. Raising the level of personal responsibility the teacher feels for the success of the pupil

5. Assimilating and internalizing the knowledge, views and outlook the Tafnit program presents among teachers

6. Acquiring new skills and work tools

7. Deepening the teacher's familiarity with the pupil and his/her family and increasing the sense of social solidarity the teachers feel after the program.

The Tafnit program challenges the teaching professional, puts it on a different pace – a more dynamic and contemporary pace, with more commitment. By doing so, it helps teachers position their work as a profession, as field that requires expertise and is not trivia as commonly thought.

Effects on school-wide level

1. The program contributes to positioning the school in the community through an improvement of grades.

2. Implementing tools they received from the program, especially in the area of dynamic follow-up, including diagnosis, monitoring and providing solutions according to needs.

3. The program is also helping the schools to integrate pupils with special needs in the classroom learning process. The Tafnit program helps the schools in the areas of teamwork and pooling forces.

Analysis of standard tests in mathematics administered in elementary schools

A high correlation has generally been found between the tests the program develops and administers and the requirements posed by the Education Ministry's curriculum. That is, it can be assumed that the pupil who succeeds in the test is proficient in the learning material expected of him/her at his/her age level. The tests are composed based on forethought and rationale that usually correspond with the principles of composing tests and age-related needs.

On the administering of tests at the school - It has been found that the preparation of the test monitors, and the administration and checking of the tests by the team of monitors have been generally executed according to the procedures. Nonetheless, various difficulties have occasionally arisen – mainly a heavy burden on teachers during the tests and strict attention to the test procedure itself or (rarely) a tendency to provide hints if mistakes are made.

Analysis of basic assumptions

The Tafnit program has a number of basic assumptions. The initial assumption is that for pupils with low achievements the main variable in realizing the program's goals is "changing the erroneous perception" – instilling confidence in the pupils, the parents, the teachers and the school staff that pupils who are currently low achievers can succeed and be integrated in regular classes.

The data presented in this report stands on its own. Indeed, it is possible to state with certainty that almost anyone can succeed. We demonstrated rates of very significant success in all of the programs and in all of the age groups, with a very marginal dropout rate.

However, we can now talk about "almost anyone" and not "anyone" because it seems that there are isolated, specific groups for which the program in its current format is not always successful. In particular, this pertains to some of the pupils with learning disabilities and to some of the pupils who are new immigrants, after the program's first year.

Main recommendations

- To adopt the Tafnit program's model of work in elementary schools and the two programs for high schools.
- To also adopt components of the Tafnit program in other educational contexts, including the responsibilities, the emphasis on control and follow-up according to universal criteria, accelerated learning and the accelerated reduction of learning disparities, generating changes in awareness, and more.
- To expand the training of teachers at the schools.
- To assist the schools in computerized management of grades.
- To continue to develop more focused models for work with special populations.
- To build a structured model for applying the Tafnit program outside of the school.
- To find solutions for difficulties that sometimes arise during tests, the burden on the staff, which is present during most of the tests, and the way in which they are liable to provide hints to pupils regarding a difficulty in their answers.
- In the Tafnit program's work model in elementary schools: to intensify the processes of accelerated reduction of disparities that have proven to be most effective, not only during the first year of activity, but also for the subsequent years.