



ILAN RAMON SPACE TEAM OPENING EVENT November 13, 2008

Being admitted to the highly selective Space Team - with a personal membership card - was the exciting beginning for the 200 lucky middle school students invited to the opening of the Ilan Ramon Space Team for 2008-9!

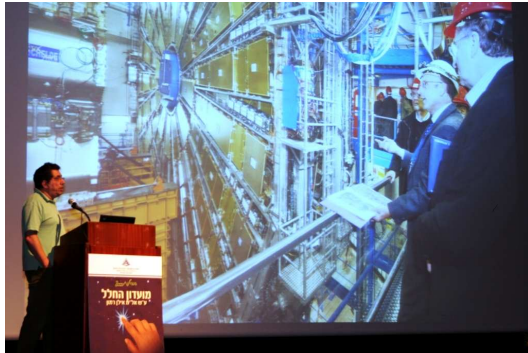
Meeting in the Auditorium of the Israel Arts and Science Academy on the beautiful Schusterman campus in Jerusalem, students were inducted into this high honor, a collaboration of the Israel Center for Excellence through Education and the Technion's Asher Space Research Institute. Accompanied by teachers and regional coordinators, they were introduced to the wonders of space.



"Could I REALLY Be An Astronaut?"

Students were challenged to live up to the designation of "the excellent of the excellent" by Mr. Nir Hacoen, director of the Israel Center for Excellence through Education. He described his own personal acquaintance with Israel's first astronaut, Ilan Ramon, while they served together in the Air Force.

The theme for 2008-9, "International Astronomy" was selected in recognition of the 400th anniversary of the invention of the first telescope. Mr. Shayke Shafir, coordinator of the program, told Space Team members they would join organizations all over the world celebrating and exploring this momentous discovery, an example of international collaboration and cooperation. They will be learning about the latest advances in telescope technology and space photography.



Dr. Daniel Lallouche, a physicist who represented Israel in the building of the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva, shared stories about his personal interaction with scientists from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, as well as many other countries. He told students that scientists hope that observations of the 25 million particle collisions per second will help to answer

questions such as "what is mass" and "where did the antimatter created during the Big Bang go?"

Students asked, "How safe is this particle accelerator?", and "Does this kind of work pose a problem for Jewish belief, or any other religion?"

Turning fun and games into - fun and games!

Alexander Laurenzi awed the Space Team students by demonstrating a game he developed on a large screen. Sharing his evolution from a "gamer" to the inventor of the "SimSquared" Company that designs simulation programs, he pointed out the relevance of their studies in science and math — how they can even turn fun into simulations that are sold and used for training, visualization, technology and entertainment. His simulations take place in or under water, in the air and in space!



Working closely with NASA on the design of the Space Shuttle Mission, his "game" allows users to simulate a variety of space experiences, including take-off inside the shuttle's cockpit, docking at the international space station and performing work on the Hubble space telescope. Students were stunned by the simulator and commented, "It felt like really being inside the astronaut's seat during take-off! I can't imagine how they deal with so many switches on the control panel!"



Students were thrilled to learn that they will get a partial version of the space "game" on the Center for Excellence website!

The Space Team program, initiated in 2002 with five schools, now is available in 13 schools including:

Makif Julius - Julius
Kuftan Halabi - Daliat al Carmel
Yavneh High School Yeshiva - Haifa
Nofrim School - Tiberias
The Baptist School - Nazareth
ORT Dafna School - Kiryat Bialik
Yeshiva High School - Kiryat Ata
Yonatan Middle School - Kiryat Motzkin
Mevo'ot Iron - Ramot Menashe District
Makif Gimmel - Beer Sheva
Ramot Yitzhak Aleph - Nesher
Ramot Yitzhak Bet - Nesher