

## Young Detectives Club 2006-2007 Report

The Young Detectives Club (YDC) must surely be one of the most exciting and stimulating extra-curricular learning hubs for pupils in today's school system! How often do school pupils get to work with the police on forensics and learn about real-life cases in criminal investigation and traffic policing? In each meeting of YDC, the young students are benefiting from the opportunity to see biology, chemistry, computer science and physics applied and in action beyond the confines of the school classroom and laboratory.

### **Background**

Through a special arrangement between the Israel Police and SEE, the Young Detectives Club offers leading Mitchell Excellence 2000 (E2K) students a truly hands-on and challenging opportunity to immerse themselves in the science and technology of police work. School year 2006-07 marked the first year of a three year pilot program for YDC. It was offered to motivated E2K Eighth and Ninth Grade students in seven Israeli schools in peripheral and central areas already enrolled in E2K weekly science and math classes, plus pupils taking part in the Jerusalem Program for high potential pupils.

The Clubs each meet twice monthly in their own schools for an extra two hours of learning based on written classroom material about forensics and transportation. The YDC teachers have all received special training through the Chais Teacher Institute of SEE in preparation for their roles as leaders of this new activity. Classroom activities are enhanced by talks by visiting professional experts and Club visits to police department hubs and research laboratories to work alongside police investigators in solving real life crimes.

Dr. Avi Poleg, Director of the Chais Teacher Institute points out: "The whole concept of the Club is collaboration with the police. For us it's good to have professional bodies on board. For the police it's good to make youngsters familiar with police work – to humanize the police to them – a 'win win' situation. Police involved in work against crime are supplying us with raw material for learning."

### **This year's focus and highlights**

This year's YDC was launched in an opening ceremony held on police premises for principals, teachers and the Club's 110 participating students. An expert specializing in 'film noir' detective profiles was also invited to add a cultural aspect.

The dedication and enthusiasm of Anat-Achar-Shoham, E2K Coordinator for the Southern Region, and YDC Coordinator and Developer, is visible. Anat explained that in the last year, the YDC cooperated with several police departments, notably the Police Community Unit, the Police Transportation Unit, the Police Criminal Investigation Unit and the Police Department of Technology and Logistics.

Over the course of the year, YDC members were given a number of interesting topics to investigate including a model in which they were handed aerial photographs of the port of Jaffa, and asked to identify specific sites. This task had pupils investigating via the Internet, and cooperating to produce credible answers. "We also created scenarios with the help of visiting forensic experts. Students were asked to guess, for instance, how prisoners had managed to evade prison security and sneak in medications and drugs with the help of visitors," Anat explained.

A highlight of this year was a school-wide May open day for a Beersheba school, with police sniffer dogs as guests of honor. A concert from the Police Orchestra launched the event, and Club members created a forensic station for the delight of all students.

Another highlight was the development, by two IASA students, of fingerprint techniques that amplify evidence, a discovery that has practical relevance. YDC members learned from an emphasis on documenting findings how to photograph crime scenes, to avoid walking on or near evidence and about related chemical techniques. Club members had fun with plaster footprints and 'no-mark' powder, which, like the pens and stamps used in entertainment venues, is only visible under blue light.

Students were intrigued by lectures and a demonstration of the polygraph. They even developed footprint techniques with police forensics teams in a hypothetical task incorporating theory and scientific techniques.

Israel has a very high rate of car accidents. It is a subject which needs more public attention. Next year a, second parallel professional subject will be offered for the Club members in tandem with traffic policing professionals: Traffic and transportation, the physics of movement, friction between road and car, acceleration, and what may cause accidents.

### **Evaluation in its broadest sense**

Evaluation forms an important part of any pilot program. A humanized view of the police and a consequent concern for public order is one of the principles of the Club. Through questionnaires measuring their views before and after participation in the program, Club organizers worked with police in gauging how student perceptions of the police shifted. Anat was the first to admit that her personal perceptions have been transformed! While this year's evaluation has been more qualitative in nature, the new school year will see the inclusion of more quantitative evaluation methods.

Anat emphasizes that one of the learning points from the YDC program this past year is the need to incorporate more scientific principles into the activities. Based on the very successful and popular Ilan Ramon Space Team Program, also an enrichment program for E2K students, YDC organizers would ideally like the involvement of 15 schools to maximize its potential.

They would also like to replicate the Beersheba open day in other schools. The team is working on including a legal element to add perspective. There is also a plan to build a library of hard-to-obtain resources for Club schools to share, as some of the purchasing of specialist materials has to be done through the police.

Once a year, the Israeli Ministry of Internal Defense circulates an international newsletter. This year, the YDC was delighted to be asked to write about the cooperation between them and the Police Community Unit.

There are positive policy benefits, too. As a consequence of the Club's existence, SEE has been asked to take part in the Green Light (Ecology) Forum involving the police and NGOs.

Anat explains: "This is a pilot. I am learning by doing. Our teachers are now so much more experienced, so the new school year should be better still! It is obvious that the YDC is extremely popular with members who see its theme as a 'hot' topic. Teachers report that the youngsters are very motivated and enthusiastic participants in the program. In addition, we will be building interesting virtual activities into the YDC. We hope that this program will be more like the Space Program in terms of aiming towards special in-school labs that will emphasize the scientific aspects of police work."