

## The Young Detectives Club – Back on the Case

It's no mystery – the students were hot on the trail to excellence at the opening event for the 2007/8 year of the Mitchell Excellence 2000 Young Detectives Club. The event was held on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007, at the Society for Excellence through Education in Jerusalem. In its second pilot year, the Young Detectives Club is provided to select schools that have excelled in their four-hour per week Excellence 2000 program and want more. This club is modeled after the very successful Excellence 2000 Space Team Program. The Young Detectives Club is a two-hour per week program that capitalizes on the fascinating subject of forensics and provides eager youngsters with a view of how the police use science to solve crimes. The club is run in conjunction with the Israel Police Force, and will take place this year in six different schools from Be'er Sheva to Hadera. Over 140 students, representing all six schools, were in attendance for the opening event.

The day began with a video that reviewed the activities of the Young Detectives Club from last year, including study units about interpreting aerial photographs, prison security, photographing crime scenes and the use of polygraph testing. The students then received a warm welcome from the Society for Excellence through Education's Director General, Hezki Arieli. Musical interludes were provided by members of the Police Orchestra.



Deputy Major General Ron Sheref engaged the students as he described his work heading the Arson Department of the Israel Police Force. Sheref took the students step-by-step through several arson investigations, emphasizing the excellence and creativity required to solve such cases, in which the usual clues of DNA and fingerprints have often been destroyed.

Students learned how police dogs can be used to search for accelerants, and how knowledge of the behaviors of different chemicals can be used to reconstruct events. Sheref demonstrated how scientific knowledge and excellence are vital for practical application in criminal investigations – a fact that will be sure to motivate the Young Detectives throughout the year.



Other speakers included Deputy Major General Barak Ben-Eliezer of the Research and Technology Department of the Israel Police Force, and Deputy Major General Orit Dakah of the Community Cooperation Department. Dakah spoke about the many ways in which the police force and civilians can work together to improve our society.

The highlight of the event came when the Young Detectives got a chance to roll up their sleeves and use teamwork to solve three Sherlock Holmes-style mysteries. The activity was really a test of teamwork and leadership, as the students were given extremely hard riddles and a limited amount of time to solve them. The students had to prioritize and decide which parts of the activity might be completed in the time allotted, in order to maximize the points they could earn. Students appreciated the delicate balance between the work process, and the solution itself. The exercise reinforced the value of working logically and methodically to reach conclusions.



At the conclusion of the opening event, the students were presented with Young Detectives Club 2007/8 membership cards, and the official project for the year was announced. The project is an exercise in reverse criminology. The students must design and stage a crime scene, in which the criminal did everything in his/her power to avoid being caught. This scenario will allow the students to learn about the more complex aspects of solving crimes, so that they can continue to be valued partners to the Israel Police.