



LUNCH WITH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Lunch and discussion with school principals about their perspective on the national program to expand excellence in mathematics and science studies.

NOVEMBER 3, 2016, 13:15-14:45, DJANOGLY HALL, MISHKENOT SHA'ANANIM

The Trump Foundation is aware of the importance of schools. The foundation's strategic outline relates to the school as a critical mechanism of support for increasing excellence in learning and teaching. According to the outline, an effective school is one that develops a pedagogical approach shared by the whole school, paints an ambitious picture of the future for its students, and integrates management and organizational routines that promote excellence and pedagogical tools for clinical teaching.

Nonetheless, to date, the foundation has avoided working with school principals. Most of the foundation's activity is focused on teachers and classroom instruction. The academic and educational institutions and organizations with which the foundation cooperates prefer to work directly with teachers. Teachers participate in regional communities that are organized away from their school campus and in mentorship and supervision processes that take place within the four walls of the classroom.

One might have thought that school principals would play a central role in the partnerships the foundation furthers with the stakeholders of the schools in the local governments, school districts, and educational networks. But even in these partnerships, for reasons that remain to be explained, principals are not a major axis; they are only asked to approve and allow teacher participation in professional development activities that mostly occur outside of school.

Thus, when the Ministry of Education announced the national goal of expanding the circle of excellence, school principals found themselves between a rock and a hard place. The goal was decreed from above, the professional groundwork had been laid, and they were caught in the middle. Many principals got on board right away, but some expressed opposition. Some were concerned that the preference for science education would come at the expense of other disciplines, others couldn't identify with the goal, and still others were relieved they had not been included in the process.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are school principals' reactions to the national goal of expanding the circle of excellence in mathematics and science? Do they identify with the goal or view it as a fleeting fad? What are the challenges in school that a principal interested in promoting the goal has to face?
2. What do principals who want to promote the goal actually need? What do they need from the Ministry of Education and the academic institutions, and what can a philanthropic foundation place at their disposal? Is special principal training or a professional network of principals necessary for sharing knowledge and tools?

3. Can and should Avney Rosha—the Israel Institute for School Leadership play a productive role in professional development and the establishment of a shared network for principals promoting excellence? Assuming that Avney Rosha prefers not to deal with the issue, what other institutions do principals consider professionally qualified?
4. As part of salary agreements with teacher unions, the brunt of professional development is the principals' responsibility and takes place on school grounds. How do principals view the professional development of their teachers in the various disciplines in general, and in science in particular, and how do they intend to implement their vision?

As **background** to the discussion, we recommend reading the following:

- A. Documentation case: "[Excellence and the Israeli Character – Can They Go Hand-in-Hand?](#)", Eli Hurvitz

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