



EXAMPLES OF PROGRAM EVALUATIONS BY TRUMP FELLOWS

Ashdod – Municipal Model

The city has set itself an ambitious goal: 25 percent of students graduating 12th grade will complete five units in mathematics. As part of its partnership with the foundation, Ashdod operates two communities including 45 teachers, both experienced and new. The communities discuss aspects of knowledge, skills, and approaches to clinical and nurturing teaching. A veteran teacher is paired with every new teacher to provide close supervision. Modeling days are held twice a week, providing “master classes” attended by all the mathematics teachers in the city. Nine teachers in this program were interviewed and three observations were held.

The component of quality teaching that was mentioned as the most significant in this program is the “atmosphere of trust.” The teachers discussed their appearances in their own classrooms, in the teachers’ community, and even in personal interactions with students:

“In the community there is an emotional connection between the teachers and a sense of trust and openness. There isn’t any criticism. The emphasis is both on mathematical knowledge and on emotional and pedagogic knowledge... I feel that if something isn’t working for me, I can come and talk about it. It’s fun to come along and get advice.”

“I have become more convinced about something I always believed – that more children could do five units than do so in practice.” “I used to be pretty ‘yes or no’ about it – this one is for five units and that one is for four units, he doesn’t stand a chance. This year I’ll increase the number of students I allocate to the five-unit track.”

Another component mentioned as significant is “feedback and improvement,” particularly in the arena of the classroom. The teachers report that, thanks to the program, they work and aspire to improve and diversify their teaching. They state that they have made changes to the lesson plans, use illustrative means, and are more willing to experiment and try new approaches.

Branco Weiss – Pedagogic Incubators

The program began four years ago, including teachers’ communities in 15 schools based on the “rehearsals” method, in cooperation with students and teachers. The emphasis in the program is on soft skills – reducing judgmentalism, freeing the class from centralized control by the teacher, and providing more space for the students. Eight teachers in this program were interviewed and three observations were held.

In this program, too, the components: “atmosphere of trust” and “feedback and improvement” were found to be the most important on the class level and in the interaction with the students. The events in the community (the incubator) provide the teachers with a role model for desirable conduct in the class:

“In the class we engage in conversation. We question things. The students cooperate with each other and teach one other. There’s a kind of orderly chaos. It isn’t quiet. There’s lots of practice time during which they consult with each other. Sometimes I gather them together when there is a common difficulty.”

“The most important thing in the incubator is non-judgmentalism, which doesn’t mean that you don’t apply critical thinking. A student or teacher may do something that you think is wrong. But you can tell them that while still not giving them the feeling that there’s something wrong with them or that they are less worthy.”

Weizmann Institute – Diagnostic Assignments in Physics

This program aims to develop 150 diagnostic assignments relating to typical errors of high-school physics students. The tasks are being developed in cooperation with leading and active teachers in physics teachers' communities around the country. The teachers experiment with assignments at the community sessions and then use them in the classroom, returning to the community for discussion based on documentation and feedback. Nine teachers in this program were interviewed and three observations were held.

The main arena of impact of this program is the classroom. The level of trust in the class grows, routines of diagnosis and feedback are implemented, and learning becomes more active:

“There's more trust in the class. The students know that they can make a mistake and correct themselves. The approach is kind of, 'let's talk about the difficulties from all aspects' rather than, 'those who don't succeed aren't good students....' Trust means that you can talk about things without trying to blame anyone for a lack of success.”

“Discussion has been created between the students – they give feedback to each other, and they don't see the teacher as an arbiter. The students argue about the answers, but they don't only focus on whether it's right or wrong. What's interesting is not the answer, but the thought process.”

“We've begun to work on several activities that aim to address difficulties. The student has to explain their answer, and the answer must be complete. We use the acronym FSC – facts, science, connection. Facts from the question, a scientific-physical explanation, and the connection between the facts and the explanation.”

“In diagnostic questions, the student exposes their thought processes to the teacher. Proper attention by the teacher creates an atmosphere of togetherness and a joint struggle against the difficulties, instead of criticism and judgmentalism.”