



Merhav

A Multi-Faceted School-Based Response for Students at Risk

Many elementary school students from disadvantaged and/or immigrant backgrounds enter junior high school without having mastered basic study skills and knowledge. This places them at a disadvantage relative to their peers from stronger socio-economic backgrounds. They are less likely to complete high school with a matriculation certificate and less likely to become fully functional and productive adult citizens.

For these at-risk children, success in school is often linked to personal struggles - domestic issues, limited family financial resources and emotional support, and/or adaptation to new culture. Lacking home stability and support, for six formative years their elementary school becomes one of the few stable factors in their lives. In schools with a majority of students from disadvantaged homes, the school's task of preparing students is complicated by the student body's multiple challenges – over and above the regular challenges children face.

Promoting Educational Success and Emotional Well-Being

JDC-Ashalim's innovative Merhav program – which in Hebrew means "space" and is an acronym for "A School-based Welfare and Educational Response" – seeks to ensure that elementary school children from disadvantaged/immigrant homes are adequately prepared, academically and emotionally, for junior high school. Merhav also responds to the stresses and frustration of school staff and city education leaders who work with at-risk populations.

Merhav works simultaneously to promote the functioning of at-risk students, school staff and city decision-makers. In schools, Merhav leads a process of change, establishing cooperation between educational, psychological and welfare services, and helping schools attend to their student body's multi-layered academic, emotional and social needs. Merhav invests in teacher training as well as in supplemental staff and resources, in order to extend the school day and offer in-school counseling to students and parents, academic support in core subjects, arts and other enrichment activities, and joint parent-child activities. On the city level, Merhav brings the needs of young at-risk students to the fore and builds support networks for the city's schools.

JDC-Ashalim's Merhav program is currently being implemented in 20 schools in six cities, reaching 7,000 students.

Program Partners

Merhav is a joint venture between JDC-Ashalim; the Rashi Foundation; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Social Affairs; and local municipalities; the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, and the UJA-Federation of New York.

Ashalim – The Association for Planning & Development of Services for Children and Youth at Risk & their Families
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