

Pink Spectacles – Parents' School in Majd-El-Kurum Junior High

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Abstract

One of the most important thing for every person and in particularly a teenage pupil, is to feel belong to the society he lives in, and feel that his status in the given society is strong and secure. Often times we wondered how can we assist our pupils to develop a sense of belonging; what is the best way to strengthen vital behavioral patterns, and what could be done to harness pupils and parents to significant process that will be relevant to each pupil; a process that will enable all the pupils to develop in his own pace developing behaviors and acquire skills that will help him in various relationships with the environment and with himself. The project "Pink Spectacles" started in the Majd-El Kurum junior high on November 2009, following a workshop that took place in the School of Education of Haifa University. The workshop focused upon the importance of parental involvement in the education of their children and their participation in the educational work, especially parents to pupils with acute disciplinary problems and low academic achievements. A group of teachers from those who attended that workshop decided to realize an innovative idea that had been discussed in it and to establish a "school for parents", which will offer the parents relevant guidance and teach them how to look at their children through pink shades. This report will describe a unique project of school for the parents, later called "Pink Spectacles". The organization of change and improvement, lead by enthusiastic young principal, a determined sciences teacher and the teaching staff of the Majd-El-Kurum Junior High "Pink Spectacles" brings together 9th graders and their parents, while the educational staff acts as the bonding element. The program is aimed to increase parental involvement in the academic education. It thrives to improve the school atmosphere and school culture in general, and to improve pupils' self image and the way their parents perceive them. As mentioned above, the majority of the parents who participated in the workshops of "Pink Spectacles" were parents of pupils stigmatized as problematic: due to low academic scores and relatively high level of disciplinary issues, including episodes of verbal and physical violence. The findings reveal that there was an improvement in the academic achievements of these children after the intervention, and their involvement in violent incidents was significantly reduced.

Introduction

The Israeli society is in the thick of an ongoing process in which parents want to realize their right to influence the formal education of their children. The aim of the workshops describes here, is to expand and deepen the connection between parents and the educational system. It has significantly contributed to parental involvement in the school work, as it had turned parents from state of passive information recipients into active participation of parents in the working of the school. We hope that this newly formed partnership will contribute to elevation of the school's academic level, and lead to improvement of learning effectiveness and knowledge introversion.

Pasternak, in the summation of her study of 1989, claims that one of the major components distinguishing between "good" school and those not considered as such Is the attitude of the teachers towards the parents and vice versa. She also says that parents benefit from their involvement in the formal education of their children because it enables them to expand their mutual relations with their children.

According to Noy, [1991], the benefit teachers may get from positive mutual relations with their pupils' parents is the ability of such involvement to provide them both practical & material assistance and emotional support that can reduce their professional burnout.

Recent studies indicate that there is a gap between parents' perception and teachers' perception regarding the emphasis and priority within the areas of collaboration. Parents believe that their involvement will help to improve their offspring academic achievements while many teachers feel threatened by parents because in their opinion when parents intervene in their work, they don't always recognize the boundary between what is permitted and what isn't [Friedman & Fisher, 2002]. It is important to find optimal balance between the principals and the aims of the sharing, to prevent or at least diminish the involvement of conflicts. The process should be carefully controlled; rather than circumvent confrontations there is a need to earnestly and openly deal with issues of discord. Parental involvement is a growing fast spreading social phenomenon; therefore, we should study it, learn how to cop with it and try to direct it for the benefit of the system.

Several studies show positive connection between parental involvement and teaching quality; a finding indicating that parents' involvement in education contributes to improvement of academic achievements and intellectual skills; it improves the pupil's self image and learning motivation, and reduces disciplinary problems [Noy, 1999]. Although academic achievements or educational products are not caused by a single factor, but a diverse range of causal factors, a study conducted by Grosin & Manor, [inside Friedeman1995], revealed statistically significant positive correlation between school climate pupils behavior & academic achievements.

The ministry of Education's CO circular of December 2001 states: "Parents are responsible for the education of their children. They have the right and the duty to be partners to the educational process that occurred in the school, affecting the lives of their children in the school and beyond its boundaries.

"Cooperation between parents and teachers should be based upon mutual trust. This cooperation is an inseparable part of creating school climate, which contributes to elevate motivation, to learn and improve academic achievements, and to promote social, and educational values."

Involved parents support willingly school activities; therefore, the school should seek and encourage their involvement. A proper balance between the needs of the school and the needs of the parents increases the chance to reach harmony

The Israeli educational system employs a few thousands of principals, approximately 120.000 teachers and educational support workers, and about 1.500.000 pupils. It is surrounded by more than 2.000.000 parents. The parents comprise of the largest population segment of the system.

Several studies proved the existence of positive connection between parents' involvement and the scholastic achievements of their children [Miller, 1995; Greenwood, Asher & Hickman, 1988].

Parents' right to be involved in the education of their children is anchored in law; however, in practice the level of parental involvement the schools allow differs from one school to the other, and does not necessarily reflect the law or the findings of the relevant studies. The same applies to the relations between various educational institutions and the parents of their pupils.

Various classifications for models that will represent the measure of parental involvement and participation in the education of their children had been proposed. [Miller & Gordon, 1995; Hickman & Greenwood, 1977; Bauch, 1988]

These mutual relations are characterized by a number of popular models [Hagit & Galia, 2005] placed on the sequence between passive and active involvement. These models refer to division of power between parents and school. The activities comprising parental involvement are usually chosen by the school according to its educational view and the ideas of its staff regarding the desired place of the parent in the educational working of the school.

1. The communicative dialogist model – offers balance and participation of parents in the educational deed on equal terms; therefore we tend to prefer using it if it can be realized with acknowledgement and consideration of social and economical aspects, cultural differences, and issues of gender equality. If all these are taken into account the usage of this model can lead to significant improvement in pupils' academic achievements and form a non-alienated community whose members feel belong [Hagit & Galia, 2005].

According to the above mentioned scholars, there are certain educational institutions in which parents are perceived as partners to the educational dialog. Their impact and contribution to in-school contents and processes is considered as contribution of partners of equal status to that of the educators. These institutions employ an: "open door policy" – meaning: parent can approach the principal and the teachers for any reason or matter, they can be involved and affect express their opinion and act contents or teaching methods and be actively involved in planning and implementation of change.

This model had been derived from a liberal educational perception and critical pedagogic view, based on models of effective communication and problems solving [Gordon, 1995].

In this model both parents and teachers have significant weight in verification and clarification of issues. Dealing with dilemmas is based upon creating mutual understanding that enables cooperation on equal terms.

The communicative model has big potential to change the power balance; since in this model the encounter between teachers and parents is multi- identities since parents come to this encounter with a number of identities: they are active people, professionals, interested party, and wide range of other characteristics, while the educational staff communicates with them on a number of subject and not only on their children functioning and their academic achievements.

The aim of the dialog is to bring up various issues and disagreements and finding ways to deal with the differences and solve problems. The dialog should be conducted in mutual respect and good will, when both sides believe they share the ability to change. It based on the recognition that parents' knowledge is a genuine important source not lesser from the professional knowledge of the teachers. It also recognizes the right to doubt and to question.

Research studies of the last 4 decades, in Israel and on international scale reaffirm the importance of parental involvement in the improvement of their children behavior, welfare, and academic achievement. However, the report on the initiative of implemental research in education show that parental involvement is not so common in the Israeli Educational system [Greenbaum & Freed, 2011]. There are certain obstacles delaying parental involvement, first of all, the educational staff's lack of willingness to be the factor responsible for working with the parents [Epstein, 2011]. The teachers claim that their reluctance to do it imbedded in the fact that they had not been trained to work with parents [Zigmunt, Fillwalk, 2011]

It is important to note that although the ministry of education defines allowing parents to participate as part of the teachers roll, [RAMH, 2011], the program of teachers' training does not reflect this intent. The relevant report indicates that there are relatively few courses that train budding teachers to work with parents, and even those are mostly offered as choice courses. The report points out the fact that practical experience in working with parents is obviously one of the weaker links in current programs of teachers' training.

My colleagues and I wish to propose an innovative initiative for a relevant training program for teachers towards their work with parents. The program will be designed according to the structure of the existing field experience practice and as an integral part of it, and will develop the professional skills of the trainees, and their ability to work with parents, and will give them the tools that may encourage them to initiate connection with the parents and propose cooperation.

The training program will be implemented as part of the teachers' training program; during the practicum the students will meet pupils' parents. The experience will be followed with reflection process and constant feedback, in order to establish and deepen commitment, personal realization ability and the sense of capability and professionalism. Such program may help to realize the desired change in the school-parents connection, and lead to improvement of the school atmosphere and the pupils' achievements.

"In community education, the school principal has a central role; in addition to recruiting ideas, the principal must prove leadership in order to pull the entire staff of the school to the change" [Pasternak, 2002]. In order to implement the principle of parents involvement, we propose to include the subject as one of the core subjects of the teachers training curricula, so the teachers trainees will learn about the complexity of the subject, and will be provided with tools that will help them to use the communication model in the educational institution in which they will be placed as teachers.

The program should include social and pedagogical aspects and form awareness regarding the division of power and its safeguard and change mechanisms, so it will enable consideration of the entire family and its several layers and identities. The proposal includes recommendation to follow the teaching staff and support those who wish to adopt the communicative-dialog model.

The main goal of "Pink Spectacles" is the creation of supporting educational infra-structure encouraging dialog between the three major factors in educational deed: teacher-pupil-parent, as a strategy for coping with the educational task of teenage pupils.

Methodology

Research population

Ten families of parents and pupils comprised of: 7 pupils marked with acute behavioral problems including violence whose average academic achievements are relatively low and their parents, and 3 pupils who have no behavioral problems and good academic scores and their parents. All the participating pupils came from two 9 grade classes in Majd El Kurum junior high. The pupils sample was heterogeneous and the parents came from different socio-economic level, different age groups and different level of education.

School and population characteristics

Majd El Kurum junior high is an independent school located in north of Israel, one of its kinds in the town for the last 26 years. The school receives pupils from three primary schools and feeds the only high school in town. It contains about 1000 pupils in 32 classes. 3 of these classes are classified as MOFET and 3 classes under the umbrella of special education. The rest of the classes are heterogeneous.

The school employs 85 teachers, most of them young. The support staff includes 2 secretaries, a counselor, lab specialist and three cleaners.

Additional facilities include: 2 computers rooms, one lab, a lending library and 5 additional corner spaces for private tutoring.

The majority of the school population comes from low middle class background, blue color workers and people of lower classes. Several families are recipients of local welfare aid, and other families are living on minimal wages salary or depend on social security allowance.

Data gathering and workshops structure

1. The data was gathered from the pupils' marks sheets, examination of the sample pupil's personal file with the home teacher and the counsel before and after the workshops, feedback forms fulfilled by home teachers and parents, and during class meets.
2. The workshops included 6 meets in which all subject matters had been freely discussed. The content and inner time allocation of the meets was constructed according to parents needs. For example: one of the meets was enhanced by a short movie suiting the subject of that particular meet. At the end of the last meet all the participants were given a copy of the movie [on disk] and a specially designed graduate certificate.

The first meet- empowerment - seeking positive aspects in each given child

- Impressive learning and various activities.
- Why a given parent deserves something sweet [chocolate].
- Each parent will tell the participants why he/she deserves something sweet in with reference to his children. Discussion of the examples.
- Two presentations concerning encouragement and empowerment.
- Homework: discovering positive aspect in your child.

Second meet – Strengthening and empowering positive aspects of the children

- The effectiveness of the use of power. [Two groups attempt to reach their goal by force].
- Linking the results to general understanding that it is difficult to reach targets by force.
- In the second part of the meet we used a ball of string as an aid: on reception of the ball, each participant had to tell the group about a positive aspect he/she found in his/her child and than pass the ball to another participant.

- Observing a movie catered for dialog encouragement and the empowerment of strong aspects of children. Toward the end of the meet the participants were given a feedback sheet, and certain time had been allocated to raise questions regarding the movie. The meet had been summed up in a group discussion.

Third meet – the gap between the parents' needs and the needs of their children

The meet included:

- The card game [the cards were prepared by the children during home teacher period. Each card presents a problem a bagging or hindering a given child in writing].
- An audio-visual presentation [do not judge from afar].
- Discussion of various situations recorded on the cards aimed to reach a win-win situation

The forth meet – whatever your children experienced you had also experienced

- The parents were asked to recall a negative episode in their pas and how it was solved: what made things easier, what steps they took? Whom they asked to help? What is so special about that person and why they chose to be helped by him? What phrase or particular deed calmed them?
- Bringing the parents to the awareness that the children are in need for listening, empathy and containment.

The fifth meet – parents and children together

The meet included activity shared by parents and children, whose aim had been:

- Personal examination testing the ability of each child to consider and select for him/herself sources of support aimed to reach his/her objectives.
- A test for the parent to determine whether or not he/she can be a source of energy and support for his/her child.
- Encouraging parent-child bondage.
- An open controlled meet between the child and his/her parent, discussion and coordination of expectations.

Sixth meet – all the participants together.

Activity shared by parents and children whose objective is:

- Strengthening the bondage directed to enable and encourage the children to internalize the fact that their parents love them and willing to make considerable sacrifices for them.
- The meet started with reading a short story symbolizing parental willing sacrifice, [The apple tree] after which each child was asked to pick up a plant of his choosing and give it to his parent with an explanation why he/she chose this particular plant to present as a gift to his parent.

Meets Summary and Discussion of the Results

The first meet- empowerment - seeking positive aspects in each given child

All the meetings took place in Majd El Kurum junior high. There were 15 participants, 5 male and 10 female, all parents to pupils of 9th graders from wide social economic and age group diversity.

The chairs were set up in a circle to create an intimate good atmosphere, as not all group members had been acquainted before.

The teacher Laura welcomed the parents that came to the meeting and expressed her appreciation for their participation. Than she had introduced herself and asked the group members follow her example and introduce themselves to the group and describe their family [No of children].

When introductions had been concluded she presented the main subject of this particular meet which was: to discover positive aspects in our children.

"I want to share with you a proposal of strategy change concerning coping with our children, since I consider you an important link between the pupils and the school, and positive development of a child requires continuity and consistency. The main objective of this program is the improvement of the triangle relationship between teacher, pupil and parent.

All of us, I as an educator and you as parents wish to understand our children in order to be able to treat each and every one of them according to his/her personal needs and find the right answer to his/her expectations. We must acknowledge of the fact that children have needs that we as adults are not always aware of their existence or to the measure of importance the given child attributes to them.

After this opening each participating parent was asked to choose a chocolate bar from a box placed in the middle of the circle. After all helped themselves for their treat of choice they were asked why they chose the chocolate; why we all crave something sweet, and why each one of them deserved something sweet. The conversation that developed afterwards was spontaneous and it evolved in popcorn style: people started talking whenever they felt like. Some thought that they deserved a sweet reward since they had chosen to accept the invitation and participate in the workshop and give up other planed they had for the evening because they thought their children might benefit from their participation.

One parent told the participants about an episode that occurred a day earlier: he took his little 4 years old daughter for a walk, and suddenly, out of the blue, his daughter said to him: "Daddy, I love you very much and I am grateful to you because you take us on trips." The father was ever so pleased to hear it, and felt that he need to share his feelings with the group, and expressed his hope that the older daughter will also tell him she loves him, since he had come to this meet to do something for her. Thus, since he is here for his daughter, he believes he deserves something sweet.

The participants soon responded with the following comments: "you, a mature adult was pleased to hear compliments from your little daughter and you would like to hear more. Imagine what a 14 years old feel when you praise him/her or compliment him/her. You support him and empower him." Other noted that we are all accustomed to criticize negative aspects in our children behavior and tend to make an issue of it; while most of us hardly pay attention to positive aspects and good deeds and treat them as normal understandable behavioral patterns.

We expect our children to clean up, to put things in place, do their homework, have good manners and be polite, and often times we forget to give them required incentives. Children crave attention, if a child realized that only his negative behavior yields attention, he might consciously adopt undesired behavior to attract some response and win some attention. This is why it is so important to acknowledge, recognize and praise good appropriate behavior. We need to look for the positive aspect and provide children with little incentives from time to time, even if they do not meet expectations, we can still utter a short compliments, and even a gesture of satisfaction. We have to look for the positive within the negative. For example: a parent that finds out his child is very stubborn, which is rightfully considered a negative behavioral pattern should remember that stubbornness also indicates self confidence, which is a positive property.

On the second part of the meet we observed presentation called the old lady and the two jars: an old lady had two jars, one whole and one cracked. Every day she went to the well and filled them up to bring water home. The whole jar saw itself preferable, since all the water he carried reached home, while the cracked jar was ashamed with himself since half of the water he carried spilled out on the way. One day he approached the old lady and told her how shameful he is with the fact that he always loses half of the water and was truly surprised to hear her response: the old lady said that he was the preferable jar since the water he spilled on the side of the path caused germination and growing of the beautiful flowers she is using to decorate her home.

The parents loved the message of the presentation and stated to share with the group members stories about their children.

In the last segment of this meet we watched a presentation about frogs emphasizing the importance of compliments in children life.

The parents were asked to summarize the meet. Their summation stressed words such as: challenging, important, raised motivation, triggers willingness, and terms such as: introspect and self criticism.

At the end of the meet the participants received the contract and the syllabus, and we told them that content might change to meet the needs of the group. They all were given a home task: to look for positive aspects in their children behavior. There was good supportive atmosphere through the entire meet, people expressed empathy and were willing to cooperate, and expressed care and interest.

Table 1 –violence incidents involving pupils from 9th grade 5' whose parents participated in the parents' school project Pink Spectacles

The name of the pupil using violent	Place of incident	Type of violence	Violence is directed against	No of violent incidents he was involved in on second trimester	No of violent incidents he was involved in on third trimester
1				0	0
2	In class	Verbal	Other pupils	1	1
3	In class	Verbal	Other pupils	2	3
4					0
5					0
6					0
7	Courtyard	verbal	pupils	1	1
8				1	2
9	In class	Verbal & physical	pupils	2	4
10	In class	Verbal	A pupil	0	1
11				0	0
12				0	0
13				0	0
14	In class	Verbal	teacher	0	1
15				0	0
Overall No of violent incidents [average + standard deviation]				N=7 0.5±0.35	N=13 0.86 ± 1.15

Table 2 –violence incidents involving pupils from 9th grade 6' whose parents participated in the parents' school project Pink Spectacles

The name of the pupil using violent	Place of incident	Type of violence	Violence is directed against	No of violent incidents he was involved in before the intervention	No of violent incidents he was involved in after the intervention
1	In class	verbal	pupils	2	0
2	In class	verbal	pupils	5	2
3	In class & at the courtyard	Verbal & physical	pupils	12	6
4	In class	Verbal	Teachers & pupils	10	4
5	In class & at the courtyard	Verbal & physical	pupils	15	7
6	In class & at the courtyard	Verbal & physical	pupils	10	3
7	In class & at the courtyard	Verbal & physical	pupils	9	5
8	In class & at the courtyard	Verbal & physical	pupils	15	8
9	In class	verbal	pupils	3	2
10	In class & at the courtyard	Verbal & physical	pupils	10	8
11	In class	verbal	pupils	2	1
12	In class	verbal	pupils	5	1
13	In class	verbal	Teachers & pupils	11	5
14	In class	verbal	pupils	6	5
15	In class	verbal	pupils	4	1
Overall No of violent incidents [average + standard deviation]				N=119 7.9 ± 16.56	N=58 3.86 ± 5.66

The project was specifically designed for pupils with relatively low academic achievements whose personal files indicated above average involvement in violence and other disciplinary problems. After the initial group was selected we invited their parents to participate in the project. Table 1 & 2 clearly indicate that after the intervention there was a significant reduction of violence among this particular group of pupils.

Second session [meet 2] strengthening and empowering strong aspect of the pupils selected

The meet started with a game: the group was divided into two subgroups. One group was instructed to seat on the chairs and to guard them, and the other group was told to take hold of the chairs. In retrospect we found out that those who attempted to take the chairs by force failed to do so, while those who asked politely and explained the reason they needed the chairs, managed to convince the members of the other group to release them to their possession.

This opening exercise created good atmosphere and intimacy.

The idea behind this exercise was to direct the participants to connect the lesson they had learned in it and the choices they have when they find themselves in similar situation with their children; we simply proposed a practical strategy to reach an objective.

During the second part of the meet, each parent informed the other participant about positive aspects he/she found in his/her child. We used a string ball as an activity aid: the parent speaking was holding the ball, and when he/she finished he/she passed it on to another person. Thus, at the end of the cycle the strings connect the entire group in intricate net of strings like a family. This activity enabled emotional opportunity for release along with offering then new point of view regarding several issues concerning their children.

Various studies reveal that short one word incentives like: nice, good, excellent work for short term only, and with time loose the ability to influence the recipient. Thus, if we want the incentive to be considerable, we have to provide incentives in 4 stages: general, specific, expanded and personal.

If a given parent claims that this model is too complex and therefore difficult to implement, we have to verify how he treat his child when the latter breaches rules or misbehaves. We have to internalize the need to provide children with positive incentives to strengthen their feeling that they are loved, and cherished regardless of failures and disadvantages. If the child will feel accepted desired and loved, the chance to reach the objective is higher.

The third meet – focusing on the gap between children and parents needs.

Before this meet the children were asked to write down what troubles them in their parents' behavior and attitude towards them. They fulfilled the assignment on sheets of different colors. The sheets were filled out anonymously.

At the first part of the meet each parent had been instructed to pick up one of the colored sheets and choose the color he/she likes or the one that expresses his/her fillings. When every one had a colored sheet they had been instructed to flip over the sheet and they were given 3 minutes to read its written content expressing needs of the children.

After reading their sheets the participants were asked what they felt when reading the child need on the sheet, can they recall how they felt in that age, and how they were feeling that day as adults.

The discussion that ensued referred to the gap in needs, and to the fact that it the situation is not parallel, since the needs of children today differ from the needs of the children of the previous generation. The discussion brought up ideas, dilemmas and wide diversity of issues. People were trying to deduct conclusions and offer possible solutions.

It is imperative to note that in light of the current accelerated pace of change in our cultural reality, parents and teachers face several challenges. The role of teacher and parent is far more complex that it was in the past. Thus, we have to change our perception and adapt our educational methods to the fast changing environment. We all agree about the importance of boundary setting, nevertheless, before we set those boundaries, it is our responsibility to make the effort and listen to the children in order to understand their needs and be able to reach a solution that will be accepted on both sides [win-win situation].

Forth meet – what your children go through you had gone through as well.

At the beginning of the meet, each parent was asked to choose two cards from the package that was on the table, after being instructed to choose cards from two different categories. One card reflected the participant emotion when coming to the meet: expectation, challenge thrill, enthusiasm, and even worry and discomfort.

For example: one participant said she enjoy the meet and waits all the week for it, while another admitted that she is disturbed because she is worries about the welfare of the little children she left at home.

The discussion that developed was rather interesting: people pondered about the fact that in some occasions have negative feeling in certain circumstances, while in other occasions we do not depends on the circumstances, our immediate responses and the responses of others. The discussions dealt with emotions and with the need to acquire tool to help us to better communicate with or children.

All agreed about the need to tell the child that you are aware of his mood, and you care, to demonstrate good will and consideration. It was recommended to use sentences such as: "I feel that you are blue today" or "'I feel your pain", etc. the participant had been asked to recall a problem they had or a situation they were in and remember made things easier, who helped them, what phrase of sentence cooled things and relaxed tensions.

The participants were slow to respond, and the question was asked again in various different formats: when you found yourself in a situation, what did you do? Whom you approached, why him/her? What is so special about that person, what made you choose him/her? Eventually we came together to the 3 major factors that help us in dire situations: Listening, empathy and containment. We concluded that it would help us to learn and have ready some phrases or sentences expressing care, listening and empathy, and be able to pull them out from our memory bank and impart them to our children.

The meet focused in emotional experience; therefore, we tried to conduct dialog involving social and emotional skills. The parent who had participated in the workshop were instructed to recreate emotions they felt in similar situation in the past, and to apply the insights they reached than when they find themselves in a similar situation with their children.

To examine and analyze emotional processes the participants experienced in the past, and apply the lessons of that learning when they encounter similar situations with their children. Every process experienced by an adult, parent or teacher, is being experienced by the child he/she is raising. Therefore, the participants had been asked to make an effort to understand their children from that view point.

The fifth meet- parents and children together

This meeting confronted 15 parents with their children, in order to strengthen the bondage and discourse between child and parent. The atmosphere was warm and pleasant. Each child was seated next to his/her parent, and each pair took part in a test designed to examine the personal ability of the child to choose and verify support sources in order to achieve his/her objectives. The test contained 4 questions:

1. Which properties I posses strengthen me?
2. Which properties I possess are in need to be strengthened?
3. What are the external elements that help me?
4. What are the external elements that obstruct me?

The children spoke of the issues that had been raised and on those they referred to in writing. For example: one by asked his mother why whenever he brings home a new friend she does not stop inquiring who is he? Where he comes from etc. he claimed that she makes him uncomfortable and embarrasses him in front of his friends. The mother responded: "Because I live you and I want to know everything and every one connected to you, because I am worried about you" The boy answered: "but I want you to do all these inquiries between us in private, not in the presence of my friends."

We all agreed that we should respect the needs of the children. We have to take parents' feeling into account without harming those of the children.

One boy commented: "Since daddy bean to attend these meetings he became less nervous." One girl said: "I love playing basketball, but Mom is not too happy about it. Whenever I want to go for basketball training Mom begin to give me all sorts of household tasks". The mother claimed that she wants her to concentrate on her studies, and the girl answered: "I can concentrate only after I am satisfied and contented from playing basketball".

Sixth meet – parents and children

At the beginning of the meet one of the boys was asked to read the story about the apple tree, which describes the relationship between the boy and the tree: the boy plays under the tree, enjoying its shadow, and fruit. He goes away and comes back, and the tree always provides for him and his needs.

The tree symbolizes the parents that are always there to provide for their children. When the children read the story, it was very moving, since it symbolically expressed how much the children are grateful for their parents for their ceaseless sacrifices for them.

On the second part of the session each child chose pre-selected plant from a tray and gave it as a gift to his parent explaining why he/she chose this particular plant as his/her symbolic personal gift. For example: one boy chose a cactus as a gift to his mother saying: "Mom is as patient as a cactus, she stores plenty of warmth and love; even her stinging mean to protect me". Another girl chose s sage saying: "Mom smells good, like a sage and she want that my name will also smell good. Also, sage is used as medicine for tummy ache, and Mom's advice is good medicine for all sorts of pains".

These statements and others like them were very moving. Some parent rose up and hugged their children, some even shed tears.

At the end of the activities all the participants received appreciative certificates for their participation, and each of them received the star disk.

This particular meet was unique and quite different from the previous meets, since although it included parents and children, the children demonstrated self confidence and expressed themselves freely managing to break the barrier between them and their parents. We reached this point because the pupils felt secure; they felt that they are being listened to, and that there is a supportive framework that strengthens them. The meet was successful and highly rewarding. It gave the parents motivation to change their approach when interacting with their children.

Summation

Being parents to adolescent teenagers is not easy. Almost all parents ask themselves how to manage their relationship with their adolescent children without failure. We believe it is possible. We have to remember that adolescents are prone to emotional overload and confusion. Physical changes and changing ways of thinking cause them sometimes pressures, anxiety and emotional instability.

They become very vulnerable at the precise phase the society burdens them with demands: they are required to learn to succeed, to be sociable and to meet expectations. They feel overburdened, and tend to think that people do not care for them and inconsiderate of their feelings.

We, the parents know that this is not the case, because we are considerate! The confusion of our children scares us; we approach them carefully, sometimes too much so. We tell ourselves that our child is very sensitive, that we must be very careful; and what about us, the parents? What we go through? Sometimes our own children show disrespect, and some of them are insolent and impertinent. Are we supposed to restrain ourselves and take it?

We often feel that we are required to be super parents, to provide answer to every difficulty and solve every problem, to stay calm and in control without being pulled into the adolescent emotional whirlpool. We are expected to know when to ignore things and when we need to set boundaries. We are supposed to be flexible but in the same time determined.

It is not easy to be an adolescent and it is certainly not easy to be a parent of an adolescent. Sometimes it is complex, confusing and frustrating, and many of us do not know how to cope.

Pink Spectacles workshops are focus on these subjects. Parents discover that they are not alone in the battle, and the difficulties are shared by most of their peers. We raise questions and learn from looking into our own experience and the experience of others.

In the past, parents' education focused mostly on skills and developmental knowledge. These subjects can be highly beneficial to some parents, but it has a very limited influence on the deeper qualities of parent-child bondage. On the other hand a personal growth of the parent, can highly affect his parental quality. Thus the objective is to encourage parents to use inquiry processes and develop deeper insights

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Attachments

VIOLENT INCIDENT REPORT FORM _____

Detail of the pupil involved in the incident

SECRETIVE

Pupils name	Place of the incident [please circle]		
ID	1. in class	In the lab	Private tutoring corner
	2. in the courtyard	In the library	Other
Time/hour of incident			

Violence

The person performing the violence [circle] 1. pupil 2. teacher 3. parent	Type of violence <u>Verbal violence</u> 1. including physical violence 2. without physical violence <u>Physical violence:</u> 1. physical without instrument [a push, kick, slap, bite, etc] 2. using an instrument [sharp instrument, stick or anything else]	Violence directed towards: 1. pupil 2. teacher 3. instructor 4. visitor 5. school employee 6. other -----
Details of the violent doer: Name: ID: Gender 1. M 2.F Class.....	Negative exploitation: 1. emotional 2. economical 3. other -----	Detail of the person the violence was directed to: Name _____ ----- Gender: 1. M 2.F

		Class _____
Causing damage to property		
Perpetrator 4. pupil 5. parent 6. visitor	Details of perpetrator: Name _____ Gender: 1. M 2.F Class _____	Description of damage

Data on the reporting person

Name of the person reporting	role	Signature
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Method of handling

_____ _____ _____ _____ -----

Detail of the handler:

Name of handler	role	Signature
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