



GREENING THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The goals of environmental education, which were formulated more than 20 years ago in the Belgrade Charter, ring as true today as they did in 1976: *"The goal of environmental education is to develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations, and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones."*

Ms. Zivit Linder, director of the Education Division of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, fervently believes

that "it is our duty to let both children and adults see and understand that in each and every step they take, now and in the future, they must seek the right balance between society, economy and the environment, between their individual needs and the needs of the environment, in order to create a just and healthy society."

The Ministry of Environmental Protection is convinced that education is a prerequisite for achieving sustainability. For this reason, it has spearheaded a host of educational initiatives in recent years, including green education programs, environmental education curriculums, school and commu-

nity projects, competitions and special events, targeted at both the formal and informal educational systems.

Promoting Environmental Education in the Formal School System

An important breakthrough was achieved in September 2007 when the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Education joined in launching a new environmental education program which will be implemented in schools throughout Israel. The program culminates the work of a task force, appointed by the director general of the Ministry of Education, which included senior representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Ministry of Education, institutes of higher education, green organizations and teachers from all over the country. Their task: to come up with an answer to the question of what can be done to promote environmental education in Israel. To answer the question, the team came up with an operative plan which combines multidisciplinary environmental study, environmental action and environmental training of teachers.

The program aims to integrate environmental education within a range of school subjects, while promoting environmental attitudes, achievements and behavior. The rationale underlying the program is that environmental education is not just another subject within the "basket of subjects" offered by a school; rather, it is a basic element which should be integrated in the school curriculum, along with community and social action.

The prerequisites for environmental education within schools include:

- Development and implementation of a school vision, based on multidisciplinary approaches, which integrates environmental study and environmental action.
- Development and implementation of school activities that foster environmental knowledge, thought and values along with contribution to the community, and break through the bounds of school and classroom to involve teachers, local authorities and other organizations.



Green School activities, photo: Roi Simcha



- Promotion of the subject with the aid of a school representative who is committed to fulfilling the vision of environmental literacy.

The program was approved in September 2007, just in time to be integrated into the current school year. The hope is that this innovative school model will indeed promote the development of multidisciplinary environmental education, which emphasizes involvement and commitment to the environment.

Greening the Educational System

One of the Environmental Protection Ministry's leading projects in the field of education for sustainable development is "greening the educational system" from kindergartens to universities. The idea is to encourage schools, with the cooperation of the administration, students, parents and community, not just to teach environmental subjects but to act in a sustainable manner, to conserve resources, and to advance eco-efficiency.

The idea was first born during Israel's preparations for the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. Today, hundreds of schools – from kindergartens to universities – have joined the process.

In order to help schools along the road toward sustainability, the Ministry of Environmental

Protection and its partners, the Ministry of Education and the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, drafted guidelines and indicators for Green Schools. The three-step process calls for commitment on the part of the school, mapping of the current state of environmental education and formulation of environmental indicators for achievement. The action plan itself, which is backed up by sustainability indicators, relates to three main areas:

1. Integration of environmental subjects in the curriculum to increase knowledge of environmental issues.
2. Rational use of resources, such as water, electricity or paper and promotion of bottle, paper and battery recycling.
3. Contribution to the community through a project targeted toward environmental awareness and improvement.

In light of the success of the Green School project in schools throughout the country, the "greening" process has been expanded to green kindergartens, green community centers and green university campuses.

By the end of 2007 - 90 schools, 10 university campuses, 20 community centers and 33 kindergartens had been accredited and hundreds more are undergoing the "greening" process. The road toward a greener future has definitely been set in the educational school system.

Major Components of the Environmental Education Program:

- Allocation of at least 30 hours of study at every age level, including out of classroom activities.
- Mapping of existing environmental subjects in the curriculum in different areas, including: science and technology, geography, homeland studies, social studies and citizenship, etc.
- Instruction based on sustainable development guidelines, which is integrated with out of classroom activities and action in the environment.
- Highlighting of the environment as a central subject in the framework of science and technology and geography studies in the 2007/8 school year.
- Initial training of some 100 leading teachers and assimilation of the subject on the regional level.
- Preparation and publication of enrichment and curriculum materials.
- Organization of special events and competitions.



Green Educational Institutes 2007

