The Three Pillars of Education, According to the Branco Weiss Institute

Our work is based on two principles:

1. *The Branco Weiss Institute educates human beings.* Education is not summed up in measurable achievements. Rather, its essence is providing tools for personal and social development. Consequently it must relate to the entire human being.

2. *The Institute has a social commitment to educating teenagers from the periphery* and to providing solutions for disadvantaged children. These difficulties faced by these pupils are not necessarily in school, but also in their other circles of life: the family, the neighborhood, and the community.

The Challenges of Education in the Periphery

1.

Research has shown that many of the problems and even the violent behavior of pupils from the periphery are in fact a symptom, an expression of frustration at their difficulties in the scholastic, personal, or social sphere. In some cases, frustration with scholastic gaps causes personal and social problems; in other cases, it is the problems in the personal dimension and in their capacity for self-direction that produce the frustration that leads pupils to violence or to dropping out of school. *Breaking the cycle of failure,* which generally lasts for several years, and helping these pupils develop a capacity for personal and social adaptation require reaching them in a new manner, one that breaks down the walls of their habitual failure and alienation. To this end we use diverse methods that draw on a number of disciplines and permit pupils who have experienced failure in one area to excel in new directions.

2.

A second problem in the education of teenagers from the periphery is their sense of identity and horizon of expectations.

In many cases their frustration and inability to fit in stem from pupils' difficulty in consolidating a clear self-identity that can guide their behavioral choices vis-à-vis the rest of the world. In many cases, pupils from the periphery whose scholastic achievements are outstanding by any standard do not understand that their record could open the door to higher education and employment possibilities, and thus for significant social and economic advancement. Because of the educational deficit at home or in the environment in which they grow up, they cannot imagine success in the future, even though, to judge by their current achievements, they have everything it takes to succeed. Thus pupils from the periphery with outstanding grades and potential may not envision a career more sophisticated that than of a practical engineer and never imagine that they could receive a university degree in engineering or even go on to graduate studies. In such cases, efforts in non-academic dimensions are needed to make it possible for pupils to record scholastic and personal achievements.

Consequently, all of our educational activities are based on a holistic view of each pupil and include three dimensions: the scholastic, the individual/emotional, and the social/community.

- The *scholastic* dimension relates to the content studied in school and to the acquisition of learning and thinking skills.
- The *individual and emotional* dimension deals with problematic personal situations, cultivating aspects of personality, and individual capacities.

- The *social and community* dimension involves cultivating the child's identity within the circles of the family, ethnic group, local community, and Israeli society as a whole.

1. The Scholastic Dimension

The scholastic dimension of the various programs is based on mapping pupils' situation when they enter the school (grades in various subjects, strengths and weaknesses), identifying their unique learning proclivities, and tailoring a personal curriculum for each of them.

Throughout their school career there is dynamic mapping and carefully tailored individual curricula that change as a function of the pupil's progress. Small groups and personal training are essential elements of all studies in the program.

2. The Individual Dimension

Mentoring, based on the cognitive training method, provides adolescents with opportunities to learn about themselves and to cope with the conflicts and problems associated with the development of thought and behavior patterns in particular (self-awareness, focused self-control, flexibility, self management, and social belonging), and the maturation process in general. This process develops along with the group process, but the individual and his or her ability to cope stands at its center, with the mentor frequently serving the adolescents as role model.

3. The Social Dimension

The group social program is a channel for the teens to develop their identity and sense of personal capabilities, through interaction with other members of their peer group. It provides adolescents with a social mirror, models for emulation from the peer group, a source for social comparison, and an emotional refuge. The positive interactions in the group encourage involvement and personal commitment and support self-knowledge and the development of new patterns of behavior and thinking. We endeavor to create a unified group that works for *the good of all its members and the surrounding community.*