

The Top High School Networks in Israel: Ministry of Education Rankings Revealed

The Ministry of Education compiled for the first time data on the achievements of pupils attending private education networks that operate hundreds of high schools and that are budgeted with billions of NIS per year By: LIOR DATAL

The government channels billions of NIS to private education networks that operate high schools but until now has never known whether these large budgets are justified. Data compiled by the Ministry of Education for the first time on the achievements of the networks reveal that for the most part the achievements do not justify the budgets.

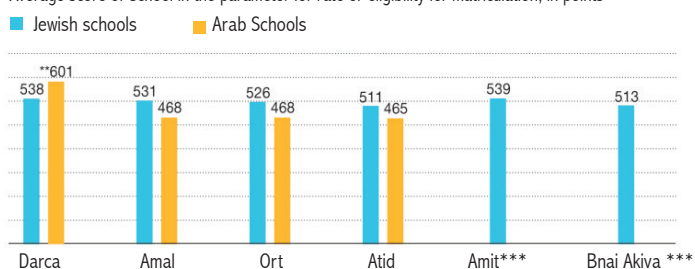
The education system believes that the new test will change the balance of powers in high school system, and may result in a transfer of high schools in the networks - either amongst themselves or among local authorities. The Ministry of Education wishes to establish the new data in order to replace the schools that are not functioning satisfactorily or whose achievements are low.

A letter sent by Director General of the Ministry of Education Shmuel Abuhav, to the heads of the local authorities states that a comprehensive review conducted by the Ministry of Education, whose results are published here for the first time, revealed “no significant advantage to private operation of the (education network) over operation by the local authority. We identify throughout the continuum ownership that performs well alongside ownership with achievements that need improvement, and these issues must be reviewed on an individual basis.”

TheMarker analyzed the new Ministry of Education data, focusing on six of the largest educational networks in Israel - Ort, Amal, Amit, Bnai Akiva, Atid and Darca. These networks jointly operate 304 schools and are budgeted about 2.9 billion NIS per year, many millions of which are used for management fees for the network.

Severe Gaps between Arabs and Jews

Average score of school in the parameter for rate of eligibility for matriculation, in points*



*Average in each parameter 500 points **Based on one school only, Yarca ***The Amit and Bnai Akiva Networks operate Jewish schools only

On the Road to New Tenders for High School Management

The new Ministry of Education model is designed to allow local authorities to compare performances of the various networks, within the confines of a tender for selecting operators for schools. To date, there was no consensus on a comparison, and financial proposals of the networks constituted a key consideration in the tenders.

The Ministry of Education instructed all local authorities to hold within two years new tenders for the operation of high schools in their jurisdiction that are managed by the education networks. The authorities were also instructed to emphasize data on quality of the networks that are now being published. The data is based on eligibility for matriculation certificate, dropout rates, excellence during matriculation exams and other data, as well as the percentage of pupils in five-unit matriculation math and English and school atmosphere. In Jewish schools, the Ministry also examined IDF recruitment rates. The goal being to cause the authorities to invest the budget they receive from the Ministry in the educational networks that were found to be top notch, and to replace schools that are dysfunctional, or with poor performance.

In order to rank the networks, the Ministry of Education reviewed the accomplishments of every school operated by the educational network for at least three years, and weighed the achievements into a total score in each parameter. At the same time, the data is biased in some cases since they include a comparison between networks with diverse schools across Israel and schools from various economic classes and sectors. The Ministry therefore developed a comparative model designed to be fair. In addition to the data published here, the local authorities have access to the quality parameters that take into account the economic circumstances of the pupils' families, and comparison between similar schools.

Private Education in Israel Put to the Test

Based on Ministry of Education Model that compares education networks in Israel, without taking into account socioeconomic classes of pupils in the networks, with points (500 = average)

■ far above average ■ above average □ near average ■ below average ■ far below average

	Eligibility for Matriculation	Excellence on Matriculation Exams	5-Unit Math	5-Unit English	Ethics (Exams)	Dropout prevention	Average*	Number of Schools in the network**	Annual Budget and Sources
Darca	542	539	529	547	527	473	526	23	Approximately NIS 175 million (government ministries)
Amit	530	517	524	520	497	520	518	55	NIS 445 million (government ministries)
Ort	512	498	518	506	510	500	507	99	Approximately NIS 1.2 billion (government ministries)
Bnai Akiva	514	501	507	476	497	524	503	39	NIS 195 Million (government ministries)
Atid	468	528	525	503	471	494	498	36	Approximately NIS 370 Million total revenues
Amal	503	484	508	500	474	516	497	52	Approximately NIS 630 million (Government ministries)

* The indices presented

**According to the Ministry of Education

Source: Quality of Education Networks Model from the Ministry of Education, based on 2015 data

TheMarker

Amal Network at the bottom of the Table

The quality model developed by the Ministry awards scores in every parameter. The average score being 500, and a score of 400 considered particularly low. The calculation of the average also includes high schools operated by local authorities. As is seen in the attached table, in most parameters, the education networks -with the exception of those excelling - do not pass the average and their performance is occasionally subpar.

Of the six education networks we examined, the veteran Amal network was ranked in last place, with an average score received from the Ministry of Education in the parameters that were examined - rate of eligibility for the matriculation among pupils, rate of pupils with excellence on the matriculation exams, percentage of pupils in 5-unit math, percentage of pupils in 5-unit English, fight against dropouts and purity of exams (cheating during matriculation). The Atid education network was ranked just above Amal, by one point above Amal's score.

Ort was ranked third, followed by the religious Amit network, which ranked second. First place in the averages for parameters reviewed by the Ministry of Education was the Darca Network, the smallest of all networks examined - which achieved most of the highest scores in most of the Ministry of Education parameters. The network, founded by the Rashi Foundation and supported by the American Youth Renewal Fund, YRF, operates approximately 25 schools across the country, with a budget of about NIS 175 million per year from the Ministry of Education. This is the only network that does not collect management fees from the Ministry of Education budget, but operates on philanthropic support.



Gym at Darca School in Lod

Eyal Tuag

The other networks, whose performances are much lower, charge a certain percentage of the budget received by the local authority for every pupil as management fees.

The Darca network ranked first among the six education networks in the parameter pertaining to eligibility for matriculation certificate, in the parameter of excellence in matriculation exams and in five-unit math and English.

The network's success is impressive in light of the fact that it only began operating in 2011 particularly in disadvantaged towns and neighborhoods. Its current eligibility rate for matriculation on average is about 85%, far higher than the national average. Darca is followed by Amit, whose percentage of eligibility for matriculation is higher than average - the network ranked second in the relevant parameter.

At the same time, the Darca network ranked last among the networks examined in the parameter for dropout rate. The network's score in this parameter may be attributed to re-registration of pupils who transferred from veteran institutions of the network to new institutions and not pupil dropout.

In accordance with the policy being spearheaded by Minister of Education Naftali Bennet, the Ministry of Education also examined implementation of the program to increase the number of pupils studying 5-unit subjects of math and English. According to the ranking, the highest percentage of pupils in the subject belonged to the Darca network. In the ranking of the number of pupils in 5-unit math, the Bnai Akiva network ranked last of the networks under review. The same holds true for the number of pupils studying 5-unit English. The Amit network ranked second in this parameter.

The schools' efforts to prevent pupils from dropping out was reviewed by the Ministry of Education in order to encourage them to invest in weaker pupils and to not cause them to leave the school in order to improve the percentage of pupils eligible for matriculation in the institutions. The network that excelled in this parameter was Bnai Akiva, followed by the Amit network, with Amal coming in third.

The religious ulpan network Zvia ranked extremely high in the Ministry of Education parameters, but was not included in the review by TheMarker. Although it is a large network that operates about 50 high schools, it is difficult to compare the data to those of other networks, since only religious girls attend, and in some schools, pupils are screened before being admitted to the studies and pay high tuition.

The Amal network ranked last in the parameter pertaining to the percentage of pupils excelling on matriculation exams. The percentage of pupils eligible for the matriculation certificate is ranked fifth, followed by the Atid network. Amal received a relatively low score in the parameter pertaining to the percentage of pupils studying for five-unit math and English. Only the Bnai Akiva network ranked lower than Amal.

The Atid network was awarded the penultimate ranking with the general average score. Despite its poor average, Atid is one of the leading networks in terms of percentage of pupils excelling on matriculation exams, ranking second in this parameter whereas Amal ranked last in the same parameter. Atid ranked second in this parameter as well as in the percentage of pupils in 5-unit math. In contrast, Amal ranked third as one of the top networks in preventing pupil dropouts.

Ort, Israel's largest education network that operates about 100 schools, did not rank first in any Ministry parameter. The average score awarded to it for percentage of eligible pupils for matriculation was lower than the score awarded to the other three networks - top-ranked Darca, second-ranked Amit and Bnai Akiva. Ort was followed by Atid and in last place by Amal. Ort ranked fifth among the six networks reviewed by TheMarker in the parameter of pupils excelling on matriculation exams (the number of units of study was high, and the grades were high - for example, people with matriculation diplomas with a minimum of 30 units of study, five units in English and minimum four units in math, and an average score of 90). They were followed by Amal. The score pertaining to the number of pupils studying five-unit math and English in the Ort network was lower than for the other three networks. At the same time, the score awarded to Ort in maintaining exam purity was particularly high, and the network ranked second in this parameter.



Minister of Education, Naftali Bennett Olivier Pitussi

A rethinking in the Arab Authorities is Required

The re-examination by the Ministry of Education will require a rethinking by the local Arab authorities regarding the operation of high schools in their jurisdiction. Many Arab schools are operated by the education networks due to the authorities' inability to cope with operating them, and due to a desire to improve achievements by selecting an outside operator. At the same time, the data compiled by the Ministry of Education reveals that not all private education networks are successful in positively impacting schools in the Arab sector. In his letter to the authorities, Ahuvab wrote: "I see owners that work more with certain populations and specific parameters".

The average data is significantly affected by geographical spread of the schools of each network. The accomplishments of Jewish schools of Amal are significantly higher than the 24 schools in

the network of the Arab, Druze and Circassian towns (gap of about 140 points). In a review of Jewish schools only, Amal ranked third in eligibility for matriculation - since the achievements of Jewish schools are significantly higher than the Arab schools. In the ranking of Jewish schools only, the Amit network (which does not operate Arab schools) leads, followed by the Darca network, behind by only one point, which operates only one high school for non-Jewish pupils - a Druze high school that excels in Yarka. They are followed by Amal and then Ort. Ranked fifth is Bnai Akiva (513 points) - which is bypassed by several networks, when only the Jewish schools of each network are ranked. Bnai Akiva is followed closely by the Atid network (511 points in Jewish schools only; Bnai Akiva does not operate Arab schools as well).

In total, the differences in scores given in the parameter of eligibility for matriculation among Arab and Jewish schools, in accordance with the Ministry of Education review, is 100 points higher. These figures correspond with the existing gap in Israel's education system, in which the eligibility for matriculation exams in Arab society among 17-year-olds totaled 48.4% in 2015. For the same age group in the Jewish population, the percentage of pupils eligible for matriculation in that year amounted to 75.6%. The accomplishments of Arab schools in the Ort, Amal and Atid networks are similar - and significantly lower than the accomplishments of pupils attending schools operated by these networks in Jewish towns.

One of the networks included in the Ministry of Education review is Sakhnin Education Network, which operates 20 schools in Arab towns. In some areas, the accomplishments of the network were higher than the accomplishments of the large networks. The score awarded for percentage of pupils eligible for matriculation in the Sakhnin authority is 501 - 40 points higher than the score received by Arab schools in the large networks. Here, too, the accomplishments of Sakhnin network is compared to general achievements (including Jewish pupils), and in some cases, the Sakhnin network outperformed some of the Jewish networks. If the Sakhnin network was included in the general average ranking (it was excluded because the Ministry of Education model addressed only some of its schools), its average score in each parameter (507) was higher than the score for Amal, Atid and Bnai Akiva.

Affluent Towns Receive Large Budgets

One of the explanations of the gaps that are revealed between the networks can be attributed to the Ministry of Education's budgeting method. The Ministry of Education provides larger budgets to high schools in more affluent towns. The reason being that the budgeting method incentivizes the matriculation exams, allows for services provided to pupils, such as libraries and laboratories, averages teacher seniority and inclusion, and encourages studies in more prestigious study tracks, e.g. science and computers.

Subsequently, schools with greater resources - particularly in affluent towns - earn relatively large budgets whereas high schools in weaker towns, particularly Arab towns, are negatively affected. The Ministry of Education is currently sending larger budgets to pupils in religious high schools than to Arab pupils.

The Ministry of Finance recently tried to spearhead a differential budgeting initiative for high schools, since there is no budgeting mechanism that offers affirmative action in budgeting for weaker schools. The initiative was halted by the Ministry of Education.

At the same time, the budgeting mechanism is not the only reason for the gaps revealed in the education system. The results of the Ministry of Education review of the local authorities and education networks, which are budgeted by the government, to examine the level and quality of studies offered by the schools, and to ask themselves what is their responsibility for the state of pupils attending their schools.