



Illustration. Photo: Roi Alima, Flash 90

## Revolution: This is how Darca's peripheral schools conquered the top spot in excellence rankings

Data from 2017 indicate that a new high school network succeeded in revolutionizing the matriculation success percentages and matriculation certificate quality in schools in the geo-social periphery of the State of Israel.

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The percentage of matriculation certificate attainment in Israel and the gaps between the periphery and the center of the country are subjects that are of great concern to Israeli society, especially when data confirm the concern that students' places of residence have an impact on their chances of success in life. However, the Darca network of high schools, which has taken upon itself the task of narrowing the gaps in the periphery and leading educational excellence and innovation in the Israeli educational system, shows that it is possible to do otherwise.

### From 54% to 96.4% within 6 years- How did they do it in Gedera?

In the 2009-2010 academic year, only 54% of students in the town attained a matriculation

certificate. After only six years, the Darca network stabilized the three schools in Gedera (about 2,700 students) and increased the matriculation success rate to 96.4%. For the sake of comparison, according to data from the Ministry of Education, the percentage of matriculation success in the city of Tel Aviv is 77.7%.

The achievement is therefore twofold - a very high jump in relation to the town itself, and also surpassing the strong localities in Israel, which for many years have been the most successful areas in Israel in the field of education.

Matriculation and achievement data indicate a significant increase in students' abilities, all through innovative learning methods, the development of a culture of excellence that encourages a love of learning, originality and critical thinking, while constantly striving for

progress and development with an emphasis on individual attention for every student.

Even in intensive studies in English, there are exceptional achievements, which constitute admission requirements for university; 32% of graduates successfully completed matriculation in 4-point English (compared to the national average of 17%), and 56% completed matriculation certificates in 5-point English (compared to the national average of 36%). In mathematics Gedera graduates also significantly exceeded the national average, with 27% of graduates completing 4-point mathematics (compared to the national average of 17%). In another exceptional achievement in mathematics matriculation, 23% of Gedera students completed 5-point mathematics (compared to the national average of only 14%).

## The Darca network revolution in the periphery

- **Bat Yam: 100% matriculation success at Hammer Bat Yam High School, and an average of 95% matriculation success in the other Darca network schools (Bayit V'gan and New High School)**
- **Gedera: The Darca network assumed management of the high schools in the city only six years ago; currently matriculation success in Gedera is 96.4% (for comparison, the matriculation success rate in Tel Aviv is 77.7%).**
- **Kiryat Malachi: 87.4% at the Darca Gymnasia in Kiryat Malachi**

- **Kiryat Shmona: 82% matriculation success at Darca Danciger (record matriculation certificate attainment)**
- **Darca Ashkelon: 85% matriculation success**

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Innovative pedagogy, learning spaces, educational escape rooms, chess and bridge, diplomacy in English, leadership development for outstanding students, experiential learning - these are just some of the various teaching methods implemented by the Darca network in its 30 schools with approximately 15,300 students throughout the country, with an emphasis on geographic and social peripheries.

Darca is a network of high schools established with the support and encouragement of the Ministry of Education to strengthen the schools in Israel's socio-economic periphery and turn them into leading educational institutions in secondary education. The school network includes schools from different communities in Israeli society and works to strengthen the social fabric of the State of Israel. The network works with a public council that includes leading intellectuals, educators and activists in Israeli society and is financially supported by the Ministry of Education and philanthropic foundations.