**Project - Introduction to the University**

**A project to make academia accessible to young women with an emphasis on gender opportunity equality**

As part of its public responsibility, Tel Aviv University is taking steps to make higher education accessible to diverse populations and to promote equal opportunities in the field of education.

In order to cope with the social challenge of ensuring gender opportunity equality and preventing gender stigmas during the processes of selecting a profession and choosing a field of study, Tel Aviv University proposes to expand an existing project, which focuses on making the academy directly accessible to girls studying in elementary school, especially in the fields of science, as part of structured visits on campus.

Experience has taught us that tracking begins at the elementary school level (3rd t0 6th grades), where, unintentionally, male pupils are given priority over female pupils in the science/mathematical fields. There are many causes for this: teaching methods that do not suit girls, lack of role models, a ‘chilly climate’ in the classroom toward girls, such as negative comments about the girls from the boys in the class, gender division, veiled discrimination by the teaching faculty, and occasionally, unconscious preference toward the boys, giving boys a greater opportunity to speak, etc.

Consequently, at a very early age, girls are put off by subjects such as arithmetic and science, and they shy away from these fields of study. For example, a girl in 2nd grade said that robotics is not a subject for girls. When asked why, she answered that this is what the boys in the class told her. Another example: In a 3rd grade class with 27 pupils, 8 boys and only one girl were taken out of class to attend the enrichment program. There are many more examples.

The situation is also manifested among female university students. There are subjects in which there are almost no female students, including mathematics, physics and some of the engineering fields (for example electrical and mechanical engineering), and others, as can be seen in the appendices.

**Currently, there are a variety of solutions for girls in middle school and high school, but no real attention has been paid to young girls in elementary schools.**

There is no doubt that these solutions are important; however, in order to change the existing situation and prevent the solidification of girls’ negative attitude toward scientific subjects, we must introduce them to the university and make the scientific experience accessible to them as early as the elementary school years.

We propose a project that will introduce and make the university accessible to young girls in the 3rd – 6th grades, especially the scientific fields, in an experiential manner that will include directly meeting the university’s researchers, both male and female, a visit to experimental (wet) laboratories and generating interest in the various scientific fields.

The program will be based on directed visits that will include:

* **A preliminary session at the school** – Prior to every visit, a preliminary session will be held at the elementary school run by a university research student, in which the university will be introduced, with a brief explanation of the meaning of a research university (what is a research university? what is researched? the structure of the university). The girls will hear an explanation of what they will see on the actual tour. The session will take about one hour.
* **Tour of the university** – The tour will include brief lectures, visits at 2-3 wet labs, and a session with female researchers who are leaders in their fields. The visit will last 3-4 hours.

The tour will be run by a teacher from the elementary school and university students.

As previously mentioned, the goal of the program is to enable the female pupils to receive an actual, concrete picture of the university, and to transform the university – previously an abstract concept - into a familiar and accessible place. Tel Aviv University believes that such a visit will expose them to the work of female researchers and provide them with an inspirational and thought-provoking educational experience. This will help to shape a vision of the future based on **interest and personal inclinations and not influenced by gender considerations**. It will also help to establish the understanding that science is open to everyone regardless of gender.

In addition to exposing the girls to the scientific fields, we intend to introduce them to successful female scientific researchers. These researchers will serve as role models and motivate them to invest in the study of science and mathematics.

Finally, these visits will also help shape the gender perception of the accompanying educational staff.

To date, we have organized tours, on a volunteer basis, run by faculty members and with private funding, with no organized support. With the increasing recognition of the importance of this type of tour, Tel Aviv University is interested in expanding the project significantly to include visits to different laboratories in all faculties and include as many elementary schools as possible.

**Previous Experience in the Field:**

Last year, an attempt was made to host these sessions at the Engineering Faculty. To date, 15 such tours have been conducted, attended by 450 pupils. These sessions were a great success – and there is great demand for them!

**The Target Population:**

* Female pupils studying at elementary schools in the 3rd – 6th grades.
* The educational staff at the participating elementary schools will receive training regarding how to relate to the girls in the classroom, preventing ‘chilly climate’ toward the female pupils in the class, and also directing the female pupils toward scientific subjects.

**Scope of the Participants:**

The aim is to host 35 groups per year at the university. Each group will consist of 20-30 female pupils. In total, there will be 1,000 female pupils.

**Project Leaders:**

* Male and female university students – with appropriate group leading skills for working with children and/or teenagers - will be carefully selected.
* Female researchers from Tel Aviv University who will host the pupils during the visit to the university.

**Collaboration With the Elementary Schools:**

* Transportation for the pupils to the activity on campus.
* Selecting escorts for the visit from among the elementary school faculty (ratio of one escort per 10 pupils).

**Annual Budget:**

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| **Annual Budget (based on budget for tours from the Arab sector)** | | |
| Transportation + Support at School | NIS 3,000 per tour (including transportation, insurance, etc.) | **105,000** |
| Salary for Coordinator | Cost of half-time salary for 10 months according to administrative hours, NIS 40 per hour | **46,750** |
| University Student Stipends | Stipends for university students who accompany the visits, 3 students for each visit, in addition to the elementary school staff, NIS 150 per visit | **15,750** |
| Remuneration for doctoral students who host pupils in the labs (travel budget) | Doctoral students for visits to the laboratories, 2 labs per visit, NIS 1,000 for the doctoral student | **70,000** |
| Miscellaneous (perishable materials for the lab, small gifts for the participants) |  | **18,500** |
| Total for 35 visits per year |  | **NIS 255,000** |

**Coordinator:** Job description: planning the tours, coordinating with the elementary schools, allocating the student escorts, setting the visit schedule with the laboratories and coordinating rooms.

**Female/Male Students**: Each visit will be accompanied by three university students (in addition to the elementary school staff)

**Host Female/Male Doctoral Students**: The doctoral students will be responsible for the visit to the laboratory, interactive hospitality + explanations, an a 1-hour preliminary session at the elementary school, where they will explain the essence of a research university, its structure, and what the tour will be like.