



**THE OECD/CERI INTERNATIONAL STUDY  
Innovative Learning Environments (ILE)**

**Spreading and sustaining innovative learning**

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**Ramot Hefer Experimental High School, Israel  
A Diffusion Center of the Creative Dialogue  
Experiments and Entrepreneurship Division, Ministry of Education**

**Combined Monitoring Note**

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The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the OECD or of its member countries.

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## **Introduction**

This report is part of the OECD/CERI initiative on Innovative Learning Environments (ILE). There are twenty-three participating countries in the study including Austria, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Israel, South Korea, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia, Spain, Australia, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the United States. The participating countries' representatives, all of whom are experienced researchers in the field of education, view the study as an opportunity to deepen understanding and knowledge of ILE that advance learning and thinking skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study has three stages: in the first stage, between 2008 and 2010, a comprehensive study was conducted on environments shaped to support deep and effective learning (Dumont, Istance & Benavides, 2010). In the second stage, between 2009 and 2012, 150 examples of ILE were identified in the participating countries (three of Israel), and 40 cases, of which two were from Israel (Tubin, 2011, 2012), were analyzed in depth and summed up in two publications: OECD, 2013a; OECD, 2013b

This report is part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage, conducted during 2012-2014, designed to identify systemic strategies and initiatives for dissemination and institutionalization of ILE. The objective is to widen the perspective and to examine strategies for systemic innovative educational change that are applied in diverse locations. In the Israeli context, the System Note presents the Ministry of Education's Experiments and Entrepreneurship Division (EED), whose main initiative and policy aims is to generate and then scale-up and sustain educational innovation (Tubin & Weinstein, 2012). In this report we focus on Ramot Hefer High School, that developed unique learning environment, the Creative Dialogue, and its diffusion center, established to disseminate the innovation to other schools and educational settings.

Focusing on one school and its diffusion center allow us to follow the cyclic process of ILE development and dissemination, initiated with support and spread approach designed by the EED to encourages school-based innovations and scale-up disseminations. We examine its five year innovation development at the school and its grass-root dissemination by the diffusion center.

## **1. Overview of the Selected Innovative Learning Strategy**

**Background, aims & rationales** - The development, implementation and integration of ILE into school is a complex process requiring integration of internal and external resources. Based on this assumption, the Ministry of Education launched in 1996 the Experiments and Entrepreneurship Division (EED) to encourage and to support innovations that promote learning that emerged in the educational field. The current report focuses on Ramot Hefer High School which, with the EED's support, developed a successful ILE - the Creative Dialogue - and established diffusion center to assist interested schools to implement and adjust it.

Ramot Hefer is one of the first schools to have joined the EED program. It is a six-year regional high school, with over 900 students in 7-12 grades (12-18 years old) in 2014, from mid-high socio-economic background. The school was established in 1945 and since 1993 has been led by Ms. Bruria Sela as school principal. A decrease in student population along with dissatisfaction with traditional teaching methods, and motivation to adjust the school to the 21st century, led to the inception and the development of the "Creative Dialogue" ILE.

In 1998, Ramot Hefer started the five year journey of ILE development with the EED's support. At the beginning, the inspirational principal and a handful of dedicated and passionate teachers spent a lot of time brainstorming meetings to eventually come up with the concept of the creative dialogue. The Creative Dialogue is based on the constructivist principles and project-based-learning methods aim at meet students' interest and provoke creative thinking as the students together acquire and apply new knowledge to produce projects that matter. The goal is to provide students with 21st century skills, such as inquiry, critical thinking, teamwork, knowledge presentation, standing in front of various audiences, and the ability to reflect, evaluate and provide (and receive) feedback. The creative dialogue prepares students to cope with complex content and subject matter, analyze it and present their knowledge at the "participation stage" to parents, teachers and colleagues (Sela, 2007).

For example, for the subject of Art, part of the matriculation examination is to learn to observe art (painting, sculpture, etc.) from different aspects (internal and external reality, the artists and society, tradition and innovation). Instead of frontal teaching about well-known artists, the teachers compose groups of 2-3 students that during three months executed the three phased creative dialogue: first, they choose an Israeli artist and learn their work of art

through various resources of information (including a personal meeting with the artist). Then, they created personal and group projects that reflected their knowledge and insights, and finally they presented these products on the “participation stage”.

Since its inception 15 years ago, the ILE expanded from a single team and subject matter, to encompass 14 subjects and about 80 teachers (out of 100). The initiating teacher team has become tutors to their colleagues assisting to assimilate the creative dialogue in the school. The ILE evolved into a systemic school ecology, and is now one of the school’s most successful features. Several factors are combined to support the emergence and to sustain the creative dialogue:

*The school principal* – Very early on in her tenure, the principal began to look for new ways of teaching and learning. With her charismatic style she enlisted a core of teachers who felt that traditional methods were not enough, and were willing to meet weekly on their own time to think it over. The principal not only allowed for new ideas to emerge, but also backed them up by providing resources; such as obtaining the necessary approval from the MOE inspectors, empowering the staff to learn from their actions and mistakes, and meeting the EED requirements to keep its ongoing support and resources.

*The staff* – The creative dialogue required teachers to broaden their teaching skills repertoire. Teachers added tutoring and guidance abilities to accompany their students in the inquiry and constructivist learning. The core of 5-8 senior teachers spread these skills among the entire staff, so that today they have reached about 80% of the teachers – now all trained and committed to the innovation.

*The diffusion center* – About 10 teachers joined the diffusion center to disseminate the new ideas out to other interested schools. A diffusion center is a concept created by the EED to enable experimental schools to disseminate their innovative models to other schools in Israel. The existence of the diffusion center in-house allows the principal to empower the most dedicated and talented teachers and to enrich their role to become the internal and external innovation ambassadors. Furthermore, this team of teachers also brings back ideas from their encounters with other schools and educators, enriching the creative dialogue.

**The target populations** - The creative dialogue is designated to promote the learning of all students. According to the creative dialogue method, schools that want their students to practice meaningful learning have to replace some of the frontal and traditional teaching methods with the creative dialogue. The first step is to be granted the permission of the

subject matter inspector of the Ministry of Education<sup>1</sup>. Once approved, the departmental teams prepare the topics for creative dialogue, recommend sources of knowledge, plan the timetable and select the assignments required for constructivist learning. Each creative dialogue session lasts three months for several hours a week, (for example, five hours instead of two in the regular teaching). The students work in groups of three to define research questions within the general subject, collect data, process and analyze it and write an academic essay. Finally, they present their outcomes in the “participation stage” in front of their parents, colleagues and teachers.

At the “participation stage” the students use diverse products to reflect the acquired knowledge, by play, dance, presentation, musical part, radio show, sculpture and painting. Presenting the products at the “participation stage” requires mastery of the knowledge, an ability to express oneself and knowing how to stand in front of an audience. In the case of matriculation examinations<sup>2</sup>, students are required to defend their essay and products to their teachers and to the external examiner of the Ministry of Education. The whole process is monitored by a teacher who serves as a tutor, directing the students and providing them with critical review, and feedback for constant improvement.

**Institutions involved** – As in any other school in Israel, Ramot Hefer has three key involved institutions: the Ministry of Education (MOE), the municipality and the parents. There are two main partners in the ministry of education – the subject matter inspector and the EED. The subject matter inspector has to approve the creative dialogue, monitor the curriculum and evaluate the students’ products and learning. The inspectors’ approvals are crucial for recognition of the creative dialogue as part of the matriculation examinations. The school principal therefore invests a lot of efforts in achieving them. The second partner in the ministry of education is the EED that supported the five years of creative dialogue development, and continue to support the establishment of the diffusion center, providing ongoing assistance in marketing and advertising the ILE, as well as resolving various political matters at the MOE.

The municipality provides the school with some extra resources, and the parents cooperate in transporting their children to the ILE meetings and participation in the participative stage. An

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<sup>1</sup> In Israel each subject matter supervised by chief inspector that is in charge of the national curriculum and the content need to be learned.

<sup>2</sup> The matriculation examinations are available to all students at the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade, and constitute a major entry ticket to many jobs and to the higher education institutions. All students in Ramot Hefer carry out at least three matriculation examinations (out of about 10) with the creative dialogue.

additional group of partners are experts who volunteer to help the students in inquiry into the variety of subjects of the ILE.

**Accountability and broader policies** – Experimental schools in Israel are expected to provide students with learning environments that support and develop academic achievements as well as social values within a pedagogically innovative and nurturing school culture. Ramot Hefer's ILE has met such expectations in several ways. First, it followed the EED policy to develop and disseminate educational innovation. Second, as a regional school without a nearby and homogeneous community, it enjoyed a degree of freedom needed for educational innovation initiatives. And finally, it managed to integrate the joy of learning with the duty of high-stakes examinations, thus responding to the Israeli criteria of a successful school – high achievements, a positive school environment and a good reputation (Tubin, 2011).

## **2. The Creative dialogue Theory of Change**

The creative dialogue environment developed as a consequence of dissatisfaction with the traditional teaching methods. During the years and with the EED facilitation, the school developed its theory of and mechanisms for change to explain how the desired results would be achieved. The diffusion center also developed its theory of change to explain what a school adopting the ILE should do. All together we found three theories of change according to the three factors involved: the EED, the school, and the diffusion center. These theories are presented in the following part, along with the implementation mechanisms, the rationale for significant and robust change in scale.

**Support and spread model** - According to the EED's theory of change, change begins in schools, operating within an agreed upon framework for development of innovation design, and is then implemented and spread to additional schools. This model of change is based on three assumptions. First, there are many initiatives all over the educational system that need backing and a shield, which the ministry of education should provide in order to ensure wide-spread policy. Second, for an educational initiative to become an ILE, it needs five years of support to provide schools with time, structure and training in order to experiment and elaborate the educational initiative. Third, after five years, in schools with successful ILEs, there is a need to establish a diffusion center whose responsibility is to share the know-how with other interested schools.

This model is realized through three mechanisms: 1) Call for experimental schools - Once a year the EED initiates a call for schools interested in developing innovations. The EED also provides courses on educational innovation for interested schools. The EED applies a screening mechanism through which, on average, about 50% of the schools are accepted. 2) Five years of support – The EED provides the selected schools with resources (mainly extra teaching hours), guidance and training, for developing the initiative and implementing it school-wide. It also provides the brand of “experimental school” to shield the schools from some of the external constraints, such as test requirements. 3) When the ILE is fully developed, the EED further supports the establishment of diffusion centers in successful schools.

The model and mechanisms bring about a significant change in several ways. First, since the innovation starts at school, it reflects authentic needs and the desire/motivation for change. Second, the EED responds to school needs to gradually develop the ILE from a small and limited initiative into a significant school-wide systemic process applied by most of the teachers. Finally, when the ILE has proven to bring significant change, it encourages other schools to imitate and learn.

The EED was launched in 1996, and has already encouraged hundreds of innovations, nurtured over 300 experimental schools, and today supports 37 diffusion centers. In addition, the brand ‘experimental school’ has become highly prestigious and has thus encouraged many principals to submit their proposal for the EED calls. This way, the EED maintains the wind of innovation in the educational system and inspires schools to constantly innovate.

**The bonfire model** - According to **Ramot Hefer**’s theory of change, ILE development is a high energy process that, like a bonfire, needs to be ignited, gathered around and maintained. This model is based on the following assumptions. First, much energy is required for lighting the bonfire of innovation, and such energy is available among motivated teachers ‘with spark in their eyes’, which need to be enlisted first. Second, like a bonfire, ILE maintenance requires constant monitoring so it will warm other teachers, seniors and novices alike. Finally, the collection of new wood, to both increase resources and remove obstacles, is occasionally needed for keeping the innovation ablaze. Several mechanisms were put in place to achieve this model: a leadership team, professional development, a class schedule, and instructors’ collaboration.

*The leadership team* – The ILE leadership team is composed of key functionaries in the school, like the principal, deputy, department heads and pedagogical coordinator. All of them gathered 15 years ago as young teachers around the principal to spark the innovation. Over the years, their actions as the ILE developers promoted their careers to such central positions and further academic studies.

*Professional development* - The school developed a set of courses and workshops for the departments' teams and novice teachers for spreading the new acquired knowledge, planning the creative dialogues and reflecting on the innovative process. The professional development activities as data-based decisions and peer observations advanced the teachers to evolve into professional learning communities. For example, some of the teachers developed method of working with Google Docs for constantly monitoring students work, and spread it among them.

*The class schedule* - The mechanism used to organize all teachers, students and content is the class schedule, which manages the activity of creative dialogue in different grades and subject matter. The class schedule is produced by the pedagogical coordinator, who is a member of the leadership team and highly proficient with the ILE and its implications. She plans the class schedule according to changing requirements, such as changing the time period from 45 to 60 minutes and back, as the 45 minutes was found to be the optimal amount of time.

*Inspectors' collaboration* – In each subject matter, executing the creative dialogue requires the MOE inspector's approval for the content, level of knowledge, and methods of evaluation. The principal collaborates with the inspectors in order to confirm and to reassure their approvals, as well as to broaden their agreement to new subject matter.

The ILE changed the school in several significant ways. First, since their first year at school, students practice at least one or two creative dialogue sessions a year. Thus, when they arrive at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, they are already proficient with the method, and can successfully cope with three and possibly more matriculation examinations using the creative dialogue. Second, teaching in the ILE broadened teachers' repertoire, in ways that better adjust their teaching methods to student needs. Third, peer observations and the learning communities provide teachers with ongoing professional development for implementing the innovative methods.

As to the ILE sustainability, the school principal and staff explained that teaching in the creative dialogue method enhances learning interest, as well as evokes effective and meaningful insights and responses among students. One teacher, when speaking of her

commitment to the ILE, noted that if she had to return to traditional teaching methods she would leave the school. Other teachers pointed that should several teachers revert to the traditional teaching approaches, the rest of the teachers would stay with the ILE because it is more meaningful and effective.

These views, along with clear norms, structured routines and systematic socialization of novice teachers, imply that the ILE is highly incorporated into the school's ecology and has a good prospect for long term sustainability. These assumptions are also based on evidence of improved scholastic achievements (appendix 1 for example), high level of students' skills of self-learning, self-expression and teamwork, professional teachers, a positive school climate and high reputation (Saporta, 2006). An additional contributing factor to ILE sustainability is the diffusion center, which proliferates the school's value.

**Learning and adjusting model** - According to the diffusion center's theory of change, introducing a new school to the creative dialogue is a complex process, with several phases, that requires constant communication between the center and the applying school. The first phase is exposing the ILE to the interested school, followed by training and practice that end with adjusting the ILE to the receiving school context. The implementation model is based on three assumptions: first, there is a need to attract a school to this ILE, because schools have many alternatives to choose from. Second, acquaintance with the creative dialogue motivates teachers, especially when meeting the students and their enthusiasm. Third, each school has a unique context, thus care in guidance is needed to adjust the ILE to new schools. The diffusion center has established several mechanisms for implementing this approach.

*Exposure days* – The diffusion center is managed by two part time teachers who also serve as department heads and members of the leading team, with one serving as the center's formal head. She is assisted by about ten senior teachers that developed the ILE, and 40 student volunteers. The center runs about ten exposure days a year for schools, colleges, and various visitors. Each exposure day begins with a presentation of the ILE rationale, followed by students' demonstration and free chat. As pointed out by the center head: "The students serve as the 'dialogue ambassadors'... two days before a visit I WhatsApp them and they come".

*Motivated teachers first* – It is rare that all teachers interested in ILE have the same level of passion for the project. Yet, one small dedicated group of passionate and motivated teachers is quite enough. They will take the risk to experiment and practice, and if successful, they will diffuse the acquired methods and best practices to their colleagues.

*Professional learning communities* – The diffusion center staff commence with the interested school and guide the innovative teachers. Together they learn and practice how to coach students' teamwork, how to guide students' inquiry and writing, to evaluate and provide feedback, and to prepare students for the participation stage. Every year, the diffusion center selects about three schools to work with for a 1-2 year period.

*Learning while practicing* – Once in a new school, the diffusion center's teachers use on-the-job training allowing the new teachers to practice the creative dialogue. In this way, small successes of the first trials provide fuel for further implementation.

“It is very important for the diffusion center to disseminate the ILE knowledge we have developed,” explained the pedagogical coordinator, “otherwise it will be lost... tomorrow the principal will leave, I'll leave, the center head will leave and it will be a pity... if we build something good, why not share it with everybody?” The well-structured diffusion method and the commitment to do so, along the EED's requirements for sustainability and scalability, led the center's staff to adjust tailor-made training for every new school, with the adjustment process left for the learning school to follow and complete.

A study conducted on the diffusion center in 2006 (Saporta), found unique diffusion practices that weren't developed or efficient enough. Since then, the diffusion center has further developed its theory of change and set of practices, know-how and lessons-learned, and the school published its “experiment book” (part of the EED's methodology) that describes the creative dialogue rational and environment (Sela, 2007). By now, over 100 educational organizations have come to exposure days, and more than 10 schools have adopted the creative dialogue.

### **3. The Unfolding Strategy in its Policy Context**

*The ILE robustness and responsiveness* – The EED policy of encouraging schools' educational innovation, Ramot Hefer creative dialogue ILE and the diffusion center have been working together for fifteen years while they constantly improved their effectiveness. At the last years, two salient reforms led by the Ministry of Education support the creative dialogue environment and its diffusion center function.

The first reform - “new horizon” launched in 2012 by the MOE and the two teacher unions (the elementary school teachers and secondary school teachers), targets to improve teachers'

work terms and salary increase as well as the workweek of 40 hours (instead of the former 30 hours a week). The reform is in its third year of implementation.

The second reform - the “meaningful learning”, launched in 2014 by the Minister of Education, aims to promote 21<sup>st</sup> thinking skills, such as creativity, self-learning, social involvement, and rich learning experience. As an example, here is a short clip that was filmed at Ramot Hefer showing the creative dialogue ILE and which was uploaded to the MOE website and YouTube to demonstrate meaningful learning:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GREdJcl0O6E#t=32>



The two reforms support the creative dialogue in two ways: First, the call for meaningful learning asks schools to exchange 30% of the curriculum formerly tested by rote matriculation examinations with new alternative methods. This call encouraged many schools to visit Ramot Hefer in search of approaches that promote meaningful learning. As a result, the number of schools supported by the diffusion center has escalated in the past two years from two-three schools a year, to about ten schools a year that show interest by participating at the “exposure days”. In addition, the “new horizon” reform that added about ten weekly hours to teachers’ job makes it much easier to use teaching hours for personal tutoring and group teamwork. Thus, teachers utilize the additional time in the school to support the implementation of the creative dialogue. It has also become easier to arrange the class schedule for the creative dialogue in subjects and grades.

Ramot Hefer's creative dialogue is not only well integrated into the new reforms, but it is ahead of them. With the two reforms, the school and its diffusion center are well situated to shortcut the learning curve of interested schools.

**The role of policy and policy-makers** – As noted above, the school depends on the MOE inspectors’ approval for realizing the creative dialogue ILE, and achieving such an approval requires time and effort. It appears that the MOE inspectors tend to be conservative, when it comes to approving ILEs, in part due to their concern regarding the academic level of the innovation. While the reforms increase the likelihood of the inspectors’ cooperation, until the unclear conditions for allocating 30% to meaningful learning will be standardized, and as long as the responsibility for inspecting each subject at each school is left completely to the inspectors, it is hard to see a major successful scalability.

The MOE also has an important role in promoting the diffusion center, by providing additional resources and by permitting teachers to train other schools as part of their work schedule. Currently, the center's activities rely on two part time teachers, who also serve as members of the school leadership team, who often use their personal extra time. It seems, therefore, that with the current resources and work terms, three schools a year is the utmost capacity of the diffusion center.

**Challenges and opportunities** - the two reforms provide a very good opportunity for upscaling the creative dialogue ILE. For successful scalability several conditions need to be set, most of which depend on policy makers: MOE, municipalities, teacher unions and teacher colleges. The diffusion center's staff needs to be provided with a work schedule that enables them to both teach and train schools. Additional teaching hours can also alleviate the center's ability to recruit more teacher-trainers. Developing a network of subsidiary diffusion centers for example, can also help not only in disseminating the creative dialogue to additional schools, but also to enhance the ILE's robustness. Another possible direction is for Ramot Hefer to cooperate with teacher colleges to provide prospective teachers with practicum and observation as part of their training at Ramot Hefer and similar schools.

#### **4. Evidence of Impact**

There is evidence for impact of the creative dialogue at the school, and for influence of the diffusion center on other schools.

**Change of learning environments** – “The creative dialogue”, noted one of the leading teachers, “is not about additional resources, it is about different usage of existing resources”. The different use of resources has led to changes in diverse aspects:

*Students' role* – The creative dialogue transforms learning to the responsibility of the students, thus turning them from passive and obeying learners to active and engaged participants responsible for their process of knowledge acquisition.

*Teacher role* – The teachers broadened their teaching methods repertoire, and became proficient in traditional as well as the new methods alike. This makes teaching more enjoyable and increases professional capabilities.

*Induction process* – The school changed its ways of accepting and socializing novice teachers: each new teacher receives a senior and ILE experienced teacher as a personal coach to guide their work experience at the school and particularly with the creative dialogue.

*Professional development* – The changed and expanded role of the teacher to include guidance and tutoring abilities is the creative dialogue's most important resource. To achieve that the school invests in many in-house hours of professional training, mainly by teamwork, so that at each department all the teachers are engaged in planning, operating and in evaluating the creative dialogue.

*The diffusion center* – The center has a unique contribution to teachers' professional development by offering them an additional career path. The creative dialogue's best teachers join the diffusion center and help to tutor interested schools. The questions and inquiries of the learning schools require the diffusion center staff to further develop the creative dialogue pedagogy, its guidance and its diffusion methods.

**Reach:** Over the last 15 years, the creative dialogue has developed in several directions:

*The innovation scope* – While the number of subjects taught using the ILE expanded from 1 to 14, and the number of teachers participating has grown from 5 to 80 and that of expert teachers from 3 to 10, the staff found that it is optimal for students to be engaged in only 1 or 2 subjects a year, instead of several dialogues.

*The evaluation methods* – The teachers introduced new ICT tools, such as Google Docs, that enable them to constantly follow-up on students' work, to keep the students tuned and assist them to improve their project and to meet the schedule.

*The diffusion center* - Since setting up the center, it has hosted more than 100 visitor groups and has been involved in introducing the innovation to about 20 schools, including three elementary schools and three high schools. In addition, there are three municipalities that try to diffuse the creative dialogue to all of their schools. The innovation has not only been dispersed and changed the learning environment, but it has also improved the learning outcomes:

**Change in learning outcomes:** along with the change in the teachers' role and with students becoming active learners, the creative dialogue has changed their learning experience. For example, in the "participation stage" of the subject of Art, conducted in 2014, five pairs of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students presented their products and insights from meetings with an Israeli artist, to their parents and visitors. After summarizing their academic work, they described the artist's products, compared it with other Israeli and international artists, and reflected on their creative dialogue learning, with the following quotes:

- This way [meeting the Israeli artist in person and studying their work] I have met artists that otherwise I would never have heard of, while well-known artists such as Pablo Picasso and Claude Monet I would have learned about anyway.
- I like it [the presentation] that I have my own voice and not only repeat others.
- I was glad to meet the artist in person and get answers that you can't find on the Internet.
- The dialogue means also to cope with my stage fright, something that never happens in exam.
- I wouldn't lie, to the matriculation examination I study two hours before, and this much it takes me to forget it. The dialogue stays with me for years, I still have with me the 7<sup>th</sup> grade products.



*Academic essays*



*The product –collage of eyes*

Although the innovation does not directly target student achievement, the latter was still improved (Appendix 1). In addition, a 2006 research of the ILE (Suporta) found an increase in students' abilities for self-learning, teamwork, presentation and self-expression; many of the teachers improved their professional knowledge; parents and students were very satisfied, and the school gained a very good reputation as an innovative school.

Students' teamwork also contributed to a decrease in the level of violence in the school. The students were placed in groups of 2-4, determined by the teacher, and found themselves acquainted with each other, even with those "that I would never talk to if we shouldn't have to do a dialogue together, and then I discovered the whole world", as one of the students explained.

In 2013 the school principal and the school earned the Rothschild Foundation National Education Award for "breakthrough educational leadership, innovative and unique, that

combined students, teachers and parents for educational and valuable performance<sup>3</sup>. This prize also presents parent satisfaction with the innovation, teachers' proficiency, and the school's flexibility with multiple teaching methods, and for resilience with external expectations.

**Evaluation and summary** – The creative dialogue ILE underwent several evaluations, all used for learning and improvement. First, in its 5<sup>th</sup> year as an experimental school it underwent a rigorous evaluation, which resulted in its experimental book (Sela, 2007). Second, a study on the diffusion center found that much know-how has been gathered, and that there is a partial diffusion process (Saporta, 2006). Later on, these know-how practices, as for example, how to organize the class schedule for the creative dialogues, how to track students' teamwork, how to evoke effective feedback, and how to prepare students to the participative stage, were written by the diffusion center staff and serve as a point of departure in their guidance to interesting schools. In addition, a study of learning from success found that the processes of inquiry, implementation and diffusion lead to constant improvement of the creative dialogue environment (Alenbugen-frankovitz, Rosu & Rozenfeld, 2011).

Ramot Hefer high school was chosen, as already mentioned, by the MOE as a model for innovative and meaningful learning. When trying to integrate or use this ILE in its full potential, some challenges should be considered:

*School factors* - A school attempting to assimilate the ILE should make sure the following components are in place: a school principal that has a strong leadership team sharing the same vision, a leading team who manages to attract other teachers to come join; and institutionalization of organizational routines to support the innovation, such as a class schedule and in-house professional development training.

*Diffusion center* - As mentioned, the diffusion center is about to reach its capacity, because it depends on professional ILE experienced teachers who can effectively implement it in interested schools. "It is not a theoretical issue" explained the center's head, "the coaches need to have firsthand knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of the creative dialogue for responding to concerns of new teachers". The support and resources of the EED were found to be valuable, and more of them can be even better.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.mynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4354320,00.html>

*The inspectors' approval* – Approval of 30% of the curriculum needs to be regulated to maintain uniformity in the system and to save time. Leaving the arrangements with ten different inspectors per school decreases the potential for the ILE dissemination.

*Cooperation and continuity with teacher colleges* - The ILE changed the role of the teacher. To leverage it in scale, the new role must begin already in teacher training programs and their training period. Such process requires the cooperation of teacher colleges and the MOE.

**Conclusions** – The creative dialogue is an innovative learning environment that works and results with profound outcomes and a lot of satisfaction. The diffusion center was found to be a good mechanism for promoting innovation in the school, and externally with interested schools, and the innovative pedagogy fits well with the new reforms in Israel's educational system.

Several lessons about implementation of ILEs can be learned from the creative dialogue innovation:

- The teacher role must change, which creates a lot of hesitation and resistance. Starting with a group of passionate teachers in the schools and with novice teachers in the teacher training program could be a first step to resolve this challenge.
- Developing a successful ILE takes time. From the 15 years of the Ramot Hefer case, it is clear that a stable leading team, trial and error methods, several years and a lot of patience are needed.
- This innovation is in the school's best interest when combined with traditional methods and does not replace them. To achieve such a mixture, the school has to change its professional development methods, adjust its timetable and class schedule, and establish a diffusion center with the MOE approval and backup.

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Appendix 1: Ramot Hefer achievement compare with national average, 2011

subjects	Ramot Hefer	national average
Chemistry	91	88
Physics	83	80
Life sciences	96	81
Music	91	87
Communication	90	79
Theater	99	97
Geography	87	73 בגרות מכוונת
Dancing	100	96
Psychology	89	79
Art	87	78
Mechanical control	94	91
Marketing	89	82
Technology	82	77
Hebrew	78	77
English	87	80
Arabic	94	85
Civil education	76	72
Mathematics	88	79