

## July 2009 Newsletter

At the end of the school year, we look back on the Talia Trust's contribution to those children who need our help. Although the numbers are still small, we can certainly claim that the Talia Trust has touched the lives of many children this year.

We are particularly excited by S'dot HaNegev Regional Council's new project, "Circles of Strength", which is just now completing its first phase in seven first-grade classes in different kibbutzim and moshavim in the agricultural area between Netivot and the border with the Gaza Strip.

179 children have been exposed to this settling- into- school programme, especially tailored for these children who have lived much of their short lives under the threat of rocket attack. Four specialist teachers, working with two occupational therapists, look for problems in skill acquisition and identified 40 children needing their help. The individualized or small group teaching, from which these particular children benefit, is financed by the Talia Trust.

This new project is unique in that it not only deals with the current first grade intake but trains the regular class teacher to identify developmental problems, such as those obvious when learning writing, in future classes she will teach. In addition, it is hoped to continue the project with the upcoming first grade class in these schools and, this time, to continue it for the full school year. The preliminary results for this year's short project already show improvements in interpersonal relationships and gaps in individual cases. It is hoped that a full academic year of such a project will really close the learning gap, between the children needing the extra help and their peers, by the time they reach second grade, instead of that gap widening as the months continue. In most local authorities the youngest children do not get help and funds are channeled to the older grades. The result is the usual spiral of frustration amongst LD children. Here, through preventative measures, the teachers are attempting to reverse the pyramid so that the majority of these children will need far less extra help in the future and will have a better self-image as a result.

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1<sup>st</sup> July 2009

