



Summary of Evaluation 2010-2011 School Year

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Summary of Findings | 2 |
| Introduction..... | 5 |
| The Population | 7 |
| Evaluations of the Books by the Teachers and Parents | 8 |
| Reading the Books | 10 |
| Teachers | 10 |
| Parents..... | 11 |
| Activity after Reading the Books in the Preschool | 12 |
| Jewish Values and Expressions in the Preschool..... | 15 |
| Use of Sifriyat Pijama’s Suggestions for Teachers and Parents..... | 17 |
| Teachers | 17 |
| Parents..... | 18 |
| Shared Reading Habits at Home..... | 20 |
| Initiative for Reading | 21 |
| Beyond the Numbers: General Comments | 22 |
| Summary and Conclusions | 24 |
| Appendix 1: The Method..... | 26 |
| Tools | 26 |
| Process..... | 27 |
| Appendix 2: Sample Questionnaire for Teachers..... | 29 |
| Appendix 3: Sample Questionnaire for Parents | 32 |
| Appendix 4: Evaluations of the Books by Teachers and Parents..... | 35 |
| Appendix 5: Reading the Books at the Preschool and Home..... | 36 |
| Appendix 6: Activity Related to Values | 37 |
| Appendix 7: Use of Sifriyat Pijama’s Suggestions by Teachers..... | 38 |

Summary of Findings

Sifriyat Pijama, the Israeli version of the Sifriyat Pijama program, was continually evaluated during the course of the 2010-2011 school year. This process included electronic questionnaires for teachers and printed questionnaires for parents:

- 323 teachers received questionnaires on each book sent to preschools, approximately once a month. The average response rate was 61%.
- The parents in those teachers' classes received one questionnaire. There were 1,413 respondents, comprising about 15% of the population. The relatively low rate of response was mainly due to the dependence on the goodwill of the teachers to distribute the questionnaires to the parents, collect and return them.

This report summarizes the main findings of these questionnaires.

Evaluation of the Books by the Teachers and Parents

- When asked their opinion of the books, an average of 90% of the teachers responded that they liked them: 57% ranked them as Excellent and another 33% ranked them as Good.
- 95% of the parents expressed satisfaction with the books, with 67% ranking them as Excellent and another 28% describing them as Good.
- The teachers and parents had very similar opinions in terms of the books they liked best and least.

Reading the Books

- An average of 84% of the preschools reported reading the books in class at least twice. The most common response was between 2 to 4 times (64% of the respondents). This finding is true for all the books and all of the teachers, regardless of whether it was their first or second year in the program. Another 20% reported reading 5 times or more, while 14% read the books just once. The average percentage of teachers who did not read the books at all is negligible (1.7%).
- Most of the parents (58%) read the books 3 times or more, while about 36% read them 1 to 2 times, and about 6% did not read the books at all.

Activity after Reading the Book

- On average, 79% of the teachers reported conducting book-related activity with the children, in addition to reading the books. This indicates that they took the program seriously and found the content and values in the books suitable for activity and discussion in the preschool.
- The activities the teachers described in the open questions included: conversations, role playing, dramatization, field trips, demonstrations and creative work such as composing stories, drawing, building things and more.
- The teachers reported that the values addressed in the books found real expression in preschool activities. The teachers in Sifriyat Pijama for their second year reported more activities connected to values (82% versus 75% on average), perhaps because they had internalized the program's objectives in a deeper way.

Use of Sifriyat Pijama's Suggestions for Teachers and Parents

- Three-quarters of the teachers reported using suggestions they received from Sifriyat Pijama. Similarly, parents made extensive use of the suggestions for activities (65% on average).
- About 70% of the parents reported reading the suggestions addressed to them. The parents used the suggestions both directly and indirectly. That is, the suggestions were either a source of inspiration for activities, or the parents used them as specified for more than one book (in total, about 61%).
- About a third of the respondents reported learning Jewish values from Sifriyat Pijama's supplementary material. In general, no differences were found between teachers from the state education system and the religious state education system.

Shared Reading Habits at Home

- About 63% of the parents reported reading together with their children more in general since they began receiving books from Sifriyat Pijama. That is, Sifriyat Pijama has made a positive impact on the reading habits and shared activity of parents and children.
- More parents from the "veteran" preschools (where the program was operating for the second year) reported an increase in shared reading habits (71% versus 58%). This likely indicates the program's ongoing influence: the longer the duration of the program, the more its principles are assimilated.

Initiative for Reading

- Parents reported that children played a great role in initiating reading. About 85% of the respondents said that their children initiated reading together. The next in the

ranking were the parents themselves: 69% of them viewed themselves as initiators. The teachers were the last in the ranking: About 48% of the parents felt the teachers' initiative in a significant way.

- A more substantial percentage of the parents from the “veteran” preschools attributed significant initiative to teachers in comparison to parents from “new” preschools (58% versus 42%). Here too, there is a possible connection between the duration of the program and the assimilation of its principles by parents and teachers.

Introduction

The Sifriyat Pijama program began operating in Israel during the 2009-2010 school year. The program “seeks to instill a love of reading in children and encourage a discussion of Jewish values in the family and in the preschool. The program was created by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and operates in partnership with the Ministry of Education. Each book arrives at the preschool and the teacher presents it to the children. After an activity in the classroom, each child receives his or her copy, a gift for the family library. The book includes suggestions for shared parent-child activities, designed to deepen the understanding of the values expressed in the book. The books are in Hebrew and their content is appropriate for the Israeli reality; the books are distributed in a centralized way in the preschools.”¹

Initially, Sifriyat Pijama operated in Israel as a pilot program in 103 preschools during the 2009-2010 school year. In light of the program’s success, the Ministry of Education decided to actively participate and co-fund the program, allowing the number of preschools to expand to about 1,500. Each child and each preschool received nine books during the 2010-2011 school year. The preschools participating for the second year received a different set of books than the “new” preschools because they had already received some of the books during the first year of the program. In order to avoid using the same books again, the “veteran” preschools received four new books as a pilot launch.

The program is aimed at children in kindergarten and pre-kindergarten preschools.

During both of its years of operation, Sifriyat Pijama was accompanied by a process of evaluation. The goals of the evaluation derived from the programs objectives and included:

- To examine how the books were received by the preschools, parents and children.
- To examine whether teachers read the books and conducted related activities in class.
- To check whether parents were reading the books to their children and discussing them.
- To check whether teachers and parents found Sifriyat Pijama guides helpful and whether they used them for discussion points and activities.
- To check whether the Jewish values and concepts emphasized in each book were communicated to the children and have become part of their daily lives.

During the course of the year, separate reports were written for each book distributed in the preschools. Summaries of the parents’ feedback and group interviews with them, were part of the evaluation process. The current report summarizes the key findings.

¹ See the Sifriyat Pijama website: <http://www.pjisrael.org/page.aspx?id=34>

The Population

Teachers

- All of the teachers who participated in the program during the 2010-2011 school year (103 preschools).
- Of the approximately 1,500 preschools that joined the program during the 2010-2011 school year, about 220 were randomly sampled. This sample included preschools under the supervision of the state education and the religious state education divisions. Their relative numbers in the sample were similar to their respective proportion in the general population of program participants. That is, a third of the preschools were from the religious state education track and two thirds were from the state education track.

Level of Response

Of the 323 preschools that received questionnaires on all of the books:

- The general response rate was 60% on average.
- On average, the response rate was higher in preschools that participated in the program for the second year.
- The response rate declined as the school year went on.

Parents:

A questionnaire was sent via the teachers to all of the parents in the sampled preschools and in the “veteran” preschools.

Level of Response

Of the 330 preschools that received the questionnaires for parents, 1,413 responses were collected from 114 preschools located in all parts of the country. The number of responses comprises about 15% of the population participating in the program. The relatively low level of response is mainly attributable to the dependence on the teachers to distribute, collect and return the questionnaires.

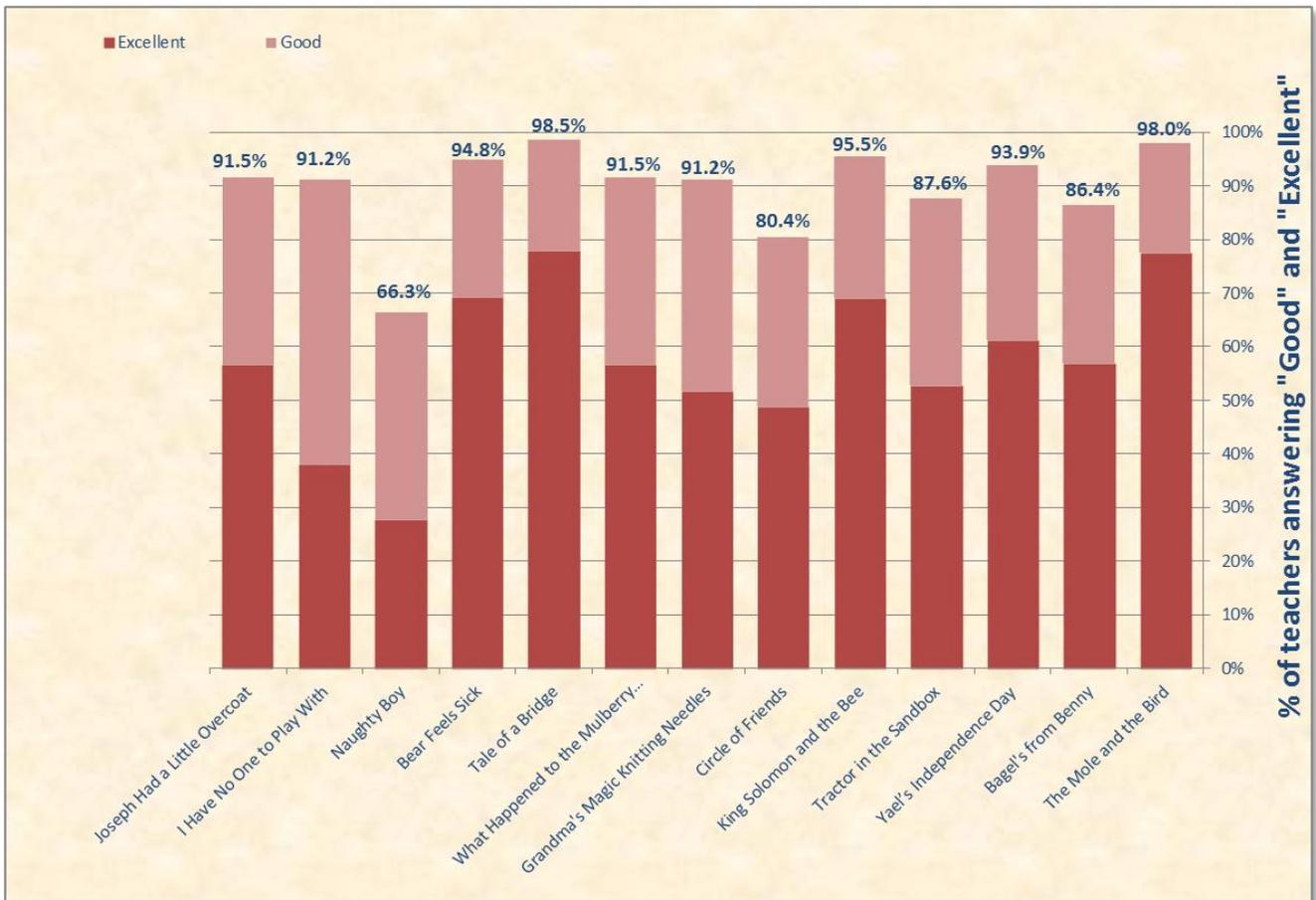
64% of the parents who responded were from the “new” preschools and 36% of the parents were from the “veteran” preschools. This ratio is quite similar to that of the program’s sample population.

Detailed tables of the level of response, as well as a description of the evaluation tools and process can be found in Appendixes 1-3.

Evaluation of the Books by the Teachers and Parents

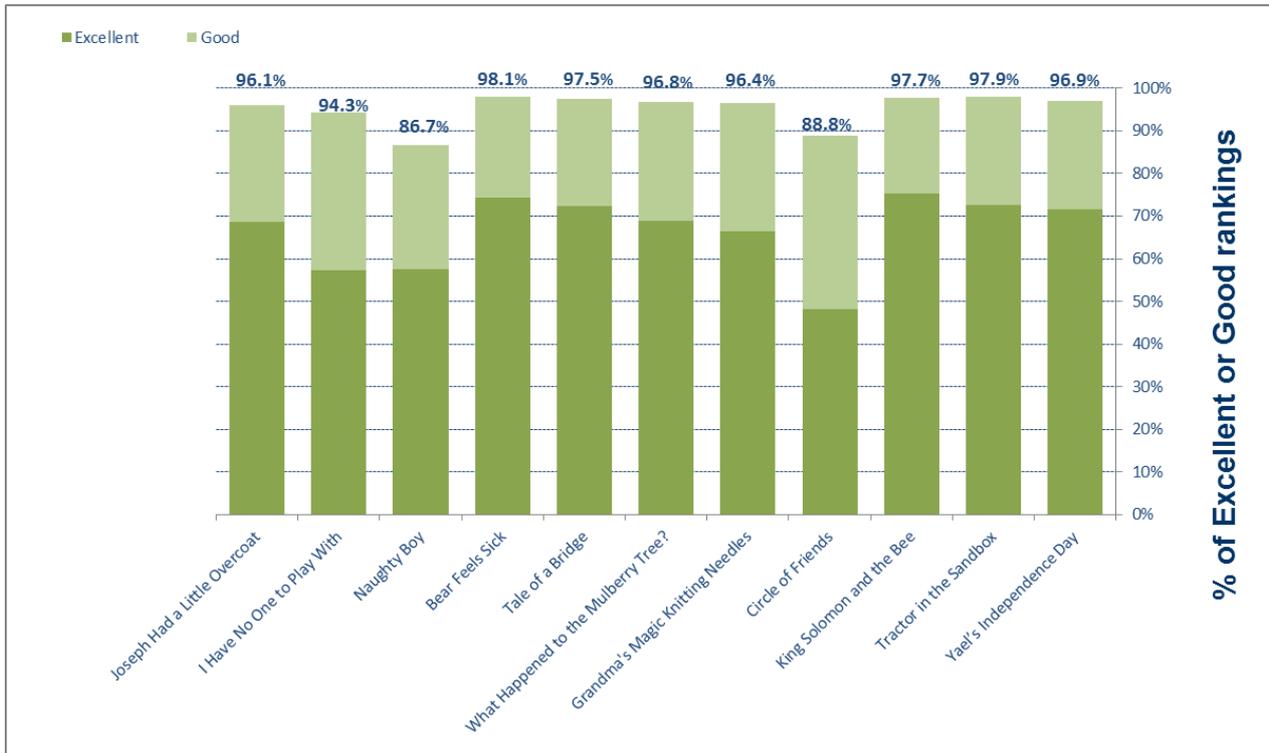
Both the teachers and the parents were asked to express their opinions about the books, and to rank them. This section summarizes their responses.

Evaluation of the Books by the Teachers



- When asked to rate the books, an average of 90% of the teachers said they liked them: 57% rated them as Excellent and another 33% rated them as Good.
- A clear disparity emerged between teachers in the state education track and the religious state education track in regard to four books: The teachers in the state education system gave higher marks to the books *Naughty Boy* and *Circle of Friends*, while the teachers in the religious state education track preferred the books *Bagels from Benny* and *King Solomon and the Bee*, perhaps because the latter are closer to the religious world: *King Solomon and the Bee* deals with the beloved figure from the Bible, while *Bagels from Benny* deals with being thankful and part of the story takes place in a synagogue.

Evaluation of the Books by the Parents ²



- An average of 95% of the parents expressed satisfaction with the books, with 67% rating them as Excellent and another 28% rating them as Good.

A comparison of the two populations reveals:

- In general, the parents tended to evaluate the books more positively than the teachers did.
- The parents and the teachers ranked their favorite and least favorite books in a similar, but not identical, way. For example, *Tractor in the Sandbox* was much better received among the parents than among the teachers. The latter explained in the open questions that the book is full of agricultural and technical terminology, and is foreign to the world of the children. Perhaps in this case, the fact that all of the teachers are women, and the book focuses on a tractor and its various engine noises categorize it as a “book for boys” may also have resulted in a gendered response to the book.
- The books *Bear Feels Sick*, *Tale of a Bridge* and *King Solomon and the Bee* were the favorite books of both groups.

² The books *The Mole and the Bird* and *Bagels from Benny* were distributed toward the end of the school year, after the questionnaires had already been sent to the parents. Therefore, there is no reference to them in the reports from the parents.

- The books that received the lowest ratings by both parents and teachers were *Circle of Friends* and *Naughty Boy*:

Circle of Friends is a special book, a story with illustrations and without words. The intention was to give the children an opportunity to express their internal world and unique point of view. Thus, there is no text to read. Instead, the idea is to converse with the child and spur him or her toward openness and creativity. Apparently, the parents and teachers had more difficulty with this book, whether this was due to a lack of understanding or because of the time and effort required. There seems to be a need for more explanations and guidance in regard to this book.

The book *Naughty Boy* was criticized by both teachers and parents. There were complaints about the use of the concept “naughty child,” which some of the critics regard as not educational, as well as complaints about the threatening and frightening illustrations, the children’s difficulty in comprehending the concept of the “evil inclination,” and the failure to understand that the book is not talking about two different children.

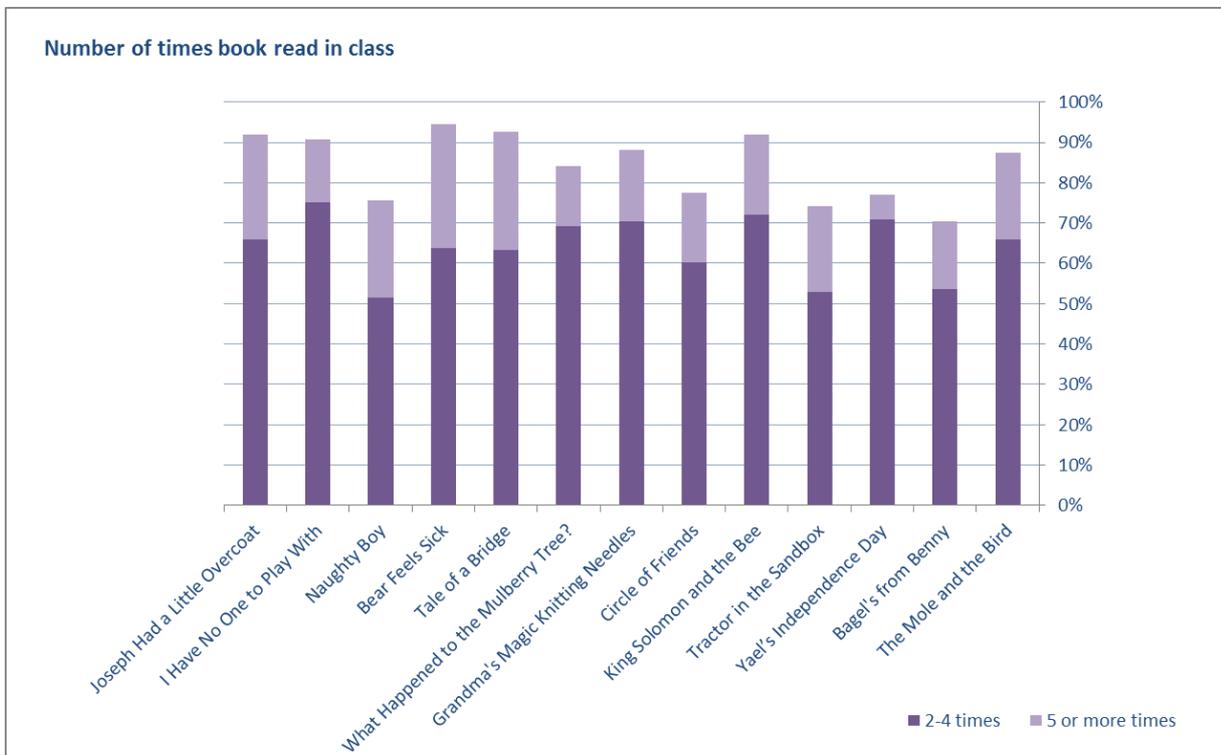
Reading the Books

The number of times the book is read in preschool and at home provides an indication of the program’s centrality in preschool and the level of interest and enthusiasm of children and their parents in the books and shared activities. Consequently, the teachers and parents were asked how many times they read the book with the children. Tables showing the distribution of responses can be found in Appendix 5.

Teachers

The diagram below shows the percentage of teachers who read the books at least twice:

Percentage of Teachers who Read the Books at Least Twice



- 84% of the teachers on average read the books in the preschool at least twice. Most of them (64% of the respondents) read the books 2 to 4 times. This finding applies to all of the books and all of the teachers, regardless of whether they were participating in the program for the first or second year.
- The average percentage of those who never read the books at all was negligible (an average of 1.7%).

- For both “new” and “veteran” teachers, there was a direct correlation between their evaluation of the book and the number of times they read it: the more they liked the book, the more they read it.
- In both cases, the books that were distributed first during the 2010-2011 school year (*Joseph Had a Little Overcoat* and *I Have No One to Play With*) were read the most number of times, even though they were ranked relatively low on the scale of evaluation. The fact that they were the first books to be distributed probably led the teachers to read them more times because it was something new.
- The number of times the books were read in the “veteran” preschools was lower on average than the number of times they were read in the “new” preschools. Perhaps this was because the average age of the children in the “veteran” preschools was higher, or perhaps because the habit of reading at home was more established, thus making it less essential to read the books in the preschool.

Parents

Parents were also asked how many times they read the book at home. Their responses indicate that:

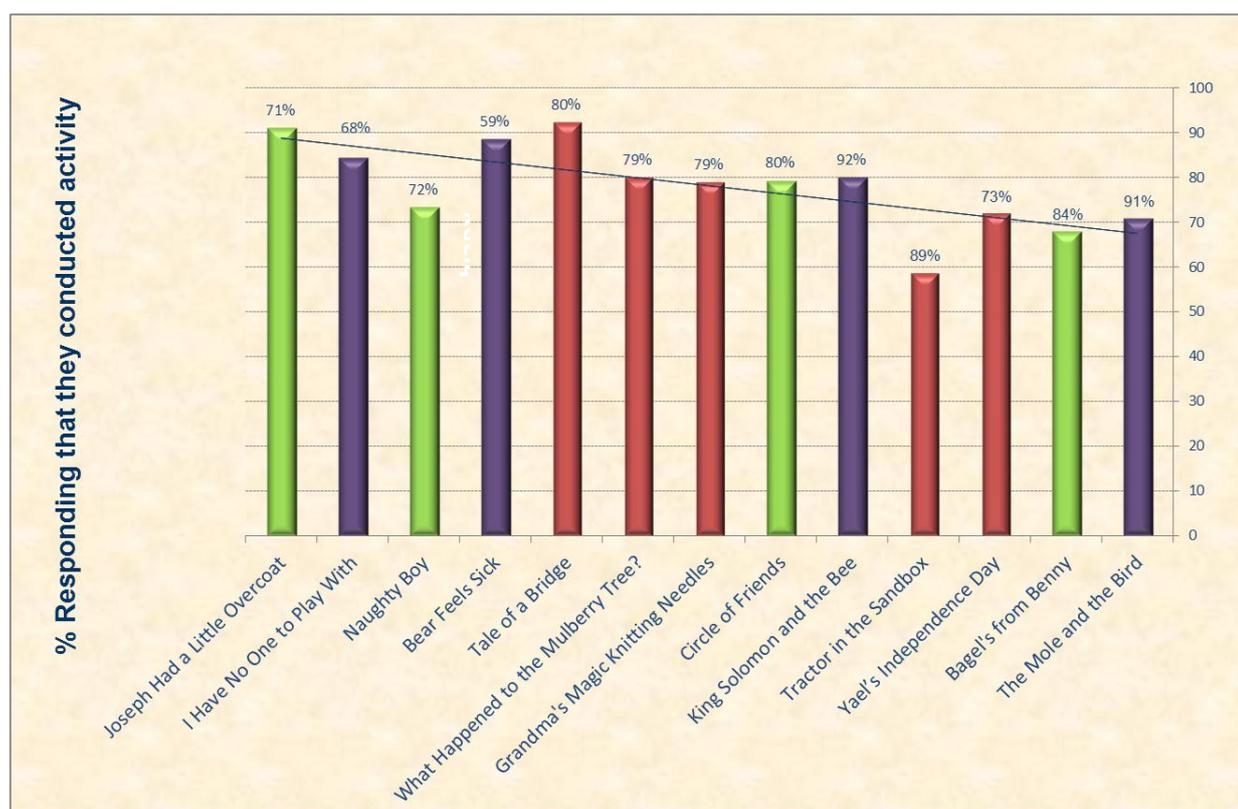
- Most of the parents (58%) read the books at least three times, while about 36% read them 1 to 2 times and about 6% did not read the books at all.
- The book that was read the least number of times at home was *Circle of Friends*, which was also ranked as the least favorite book by both “veteran” and “new” teachers. As noted in the previous chapter, this is a story with illustrations and without words. Instead of reading text, one must converse with the child and spur him toward openness and creativity. Apparently, the parents (and the teachers too) found this book to be more difficult – whether due to a lack of understanding or because of the investment of time and effort required.

Activity after Reading the Books in the Preschool

In order to instill the love of books in children and to stir them to think and talk about their content, reading books to them is not enough. Appropriate activities must also be planned and carried out. Sifriyat Pijama provides suggestions for activities and encourages the teachers to generate interaction with the parents related to the books. Thus, they were asked about these activities and whether they found Sifriyat Pijama's suggestions to be helpful.

The diagram below summarizes their responses according to the chronological order in which the preschools received the books.

Conducting Activity Related to the Book, in Addition to Reading It



- = books that were only distributed to the "new" preschools
- = books that were only distributed to the "veteran" preschools
- = books that were distributed to everyone

- A majority (79% on average) of the teachers reported conducting book-related activities with the children, in addition to reading the books. This indicates that they took the program seriously and found the content and values of the books appropriate for discussion and activity in the preschool.

- There was a clear decline in activity toward the end of the school year, whether due to the abundance of year-end activities or due to “fatigue.” It would be good to check the dates the books are received vis-à-vis the preschool’s schedule of activities, and to consider whether to continue to distribute 9 books a year.
- Even though the book *Naughty Boy* was distributed at the beginning of the year, relatively fewer activities related to the book were conducted. This apparently reflects the teachers’ reservations about the book, which were prominently expressed in the open questions.
- The book *Tractor in the Sandbox* generated the least amount of activities. As noted, this book drew criticism because of its many agricultural-technical terms, and perhaps it was also perceived by the teachers, all of whom are women, as a “book for boys.”

The activities the teachers described in the open questions included: conversations, creative work, dramatization and role playing, outside activity such as field trips and visits, and cultivating a garden at the preschool.³

- The **conversations** focused on the following main subjects: **relations between people** – friendship and respect for others, accepting differences, helping and anonymous charity, giving and generosity, appreciation and expressing thanks, listening, visiting the sick, extending greetings, making peace and the importance of reconciliation, the importance of family ties (particularly with grandfathers and grandmothers), expressing and identifying emotions; **relations with oneself** – independence, empowerment: each child has wisdom and abilities, ways of contending with anger, insult, fears and the “evil inclination,” ways of coping with separation and transitions (from the home to the preschool, and from the preschool to the home and to the school), finding benefit in things that are ostensibly lacking in value; **respect for the environment** – the need to recycle, the importance of protecting trees, respect for animals and protecting and caring for them, the importance of working the land; **health** – proper nutrition, medicinal plants and cleaning; **vocabulary, rhyming, oral stories and sayings**.
- **Creative work** focused on recycled materials and materials related to the stories, such as working with wood or wool, baking bread and so on.
- **Dramatizing** the story via puppet theater or role playing, dramatically acting out situations that express the values of the book, simulations of similar situations from the children’s lives. Activities involving movement and music, socio-drama and other activities were also conducted.

³ Detailed descriptions of activities conducted following each book can be found in the specific reports.

- **Gardening:** Cleaning, planting and cultivating trees, vegetables and flowers, scattering food for birds.
- **Outside activity:** Tours and visits in places that supplement the learning from the books, helping the elderly, the handicapped and soldiers, charity and good deeds.

Activities were also conducted with parents and grandparents, particularly in the areas of creative work and dramatization. In addition, parents and children carried out instructions to bring creative work, objects, pictures and stories from home that reenact relevant events from the lives of the child and the family.

Jewish Values and Expressions in the Preschool

The values imparted by the books were examined from the teachers' perspective of the books' contribution in teaching Jewish values and from the perspective of the everyday use of these values in the preschool.

As noted, the teachers were asked whether the **Jewish values** the books portray are expressed in the preschool. A summary of their responses can be found in Appendix 6.

The data indicates that:

- Over three-quarters of the teachers think that the values the books address find real expression in the activities of the preschool.
- Teachers who were working for the second year in the program reported more activities related to values (83% versus 75% on average). Perhaps they had more deeply internalized the program's objectives.
- 65% of the teachers made reference to the values appearing in the suggestions for parents.
- In particular, the "new" preschools noted the values of "loving peace and pursuing peace" from *Tale of a Bridge*; "do not destroy" from *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*; and "visiting the sick" from *Bear Feels Sick*.
- In the "veteran" preschools, over 80% of the teachers reported addressing the values of six books: "the importance of friendship" from the book *I Have No One to Play With*; "appreciation and responsibility" from *What Happened to the Mulberry Tree?*; "visiting the sick" from *Bear Feels Sick*; "controlling one's urges" from *Naughty Boy*; "listening to others with empathy" from *Grandma's Magic Knitting Needles*; and "optimism and determination" from *Yael's Independence Day*.
- The values/expressions "respect for elders" from *Tractor in the Sandbox*, "appreciation and expressing thanks" from *Bagels from Benny*, and "there's a time for everything under the sun" from *The Mole and the Bird* were felt less strongly in the preschool in comparison to other values/expressions. Here too, this might be attributable to the timing: Since these books were distributed toward the end of the year, the teachers did not have time to translate the values they expressed into the everyday life of the preschool.

In the open questions, the teachers explained the ways in which the books' values were expressed in the preschool. Most of the teachers cited the expression of the values in communication between the children in the preschool: positive interactions, assistance,

empathy, cooperation, conflict resolution in “the language of dialogue” without violence and with the expression of emotions. The children used the spoken language in greetings, apologies, sayings and concepts they applied in relevant situations in the preschool, politely and respectfully. The values that were frequently cited in the teachers’ comments included: values of friendship, consideration, acceptance, courtesy, patience, attentiveness, giving, appreciation, joy and enthusiasm from giving, respect for others. Another salient value was respect for the environment: recycling used materials, protecting the property of the preschool and the public. In addition, personal values were prominently mentioned: being content with what you have, independence, awareness of health, and involvement and action for change.

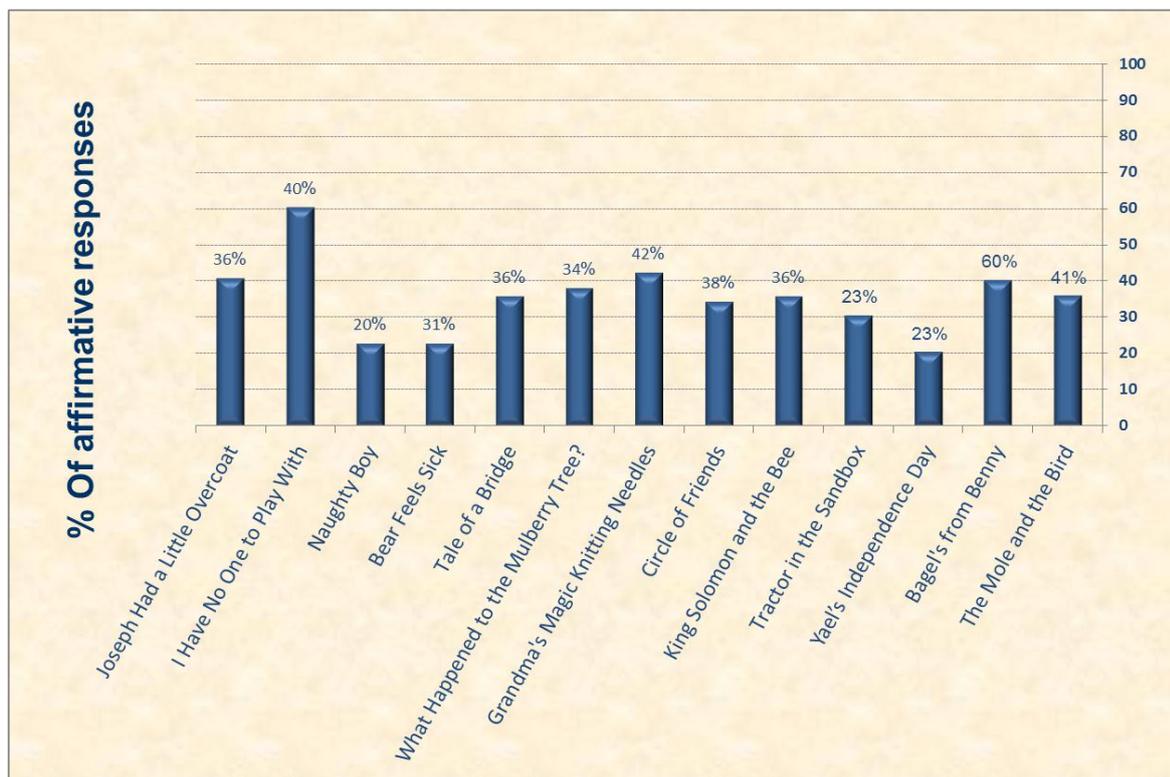
Use of Sifriyat Pijama’s Suggestions for Teachers and Parents

Sifriyat Pijama provides suggestions for discussion and activity for both parents and teachers. At the beginning of every book, there is a guide explaining the central values and suggesting family activities. The teachers can also use these suggestions, as well as the suggestions that appear on the program’s website and distributed by email each month. Both the teachers and the parents were asked about their use of Sifriyat Pijama’s suggestions. The teachers were questioned about the use of the suggestions for each particular book, while the parents were asked one question pertaining to all of the books.

Teachers

The diagram below summarizes the affirmative responses to the question of whether Sifriyat Pijama’s supplementary materials contributed significantly to their own understanding of Jewish values.

Percentage of Teachers Who Said Program Material Helped Their Understanding of Jewish Values



- An average of approximately one third of the teachers reported that they learned something new about Jewish values from the supplementary materials provided by Sifriyat Pijama.
- *I Have No One to Play With*, which deals with the expressions “find yourself a friend” and “peace is great, for all other blessings are included in it,” was distributed to the “veteran” teachers, who perceived this book as providing the most significant contribution to their own understanding of these Jewish values.

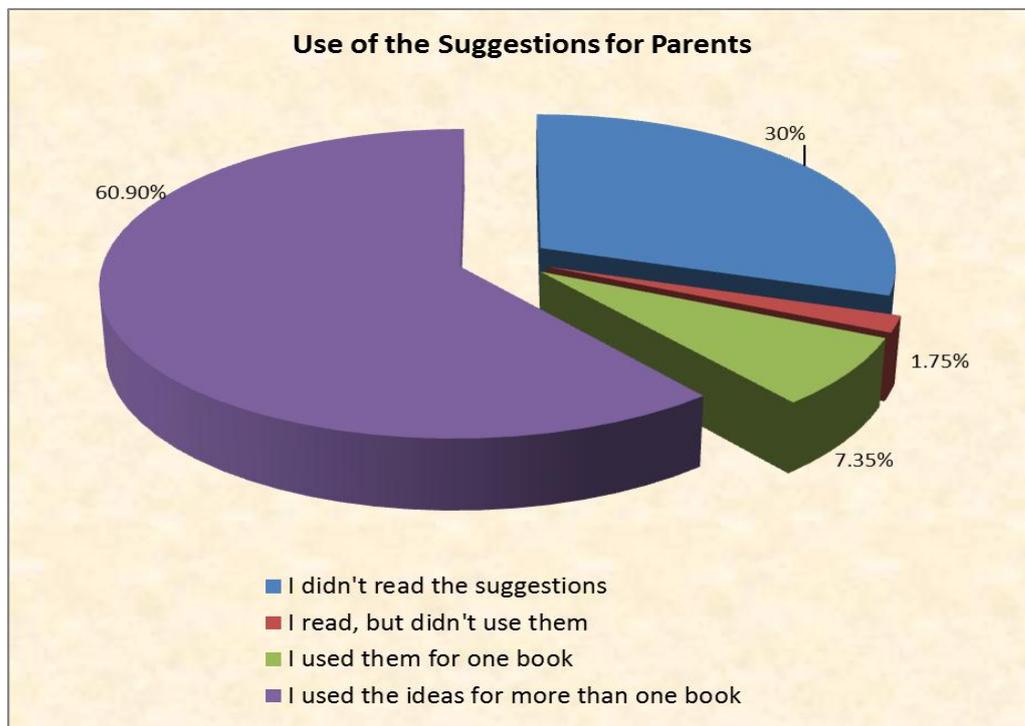
- The number of teachers who felt they learned something new about Jewish values from the books *Naughty Boy* (controlling one's urges), *Bear Feels Sick* (visiting the sick and being careful) and *Yael's Independence Day* (optimism and determination) was lower, ranging from 20% to 23%.
- A comparison of the teachers in the state education track versus teachers in the religious state education track shows a clear difference only in regard to one book – *Bear Feels Sick*. The teachers working in the religious track felt that this book provided significant enrichment in Jewish values.

The data indicates that most of the teachers (74%) made substantial use of Sifriyat Pijama's suggestions in planning and carrying out activities in the preschool. The responses vis-à-vis each book can be found in Appendix 7.

Parents

The parents were asked whether they had read the suggestions directed at them and the extent to which they used them.

Use of the Suggestions for Parents



- Some 70% of the parents reported that they had read the suggestions and nearly all of those who read the suggestions made use of them.

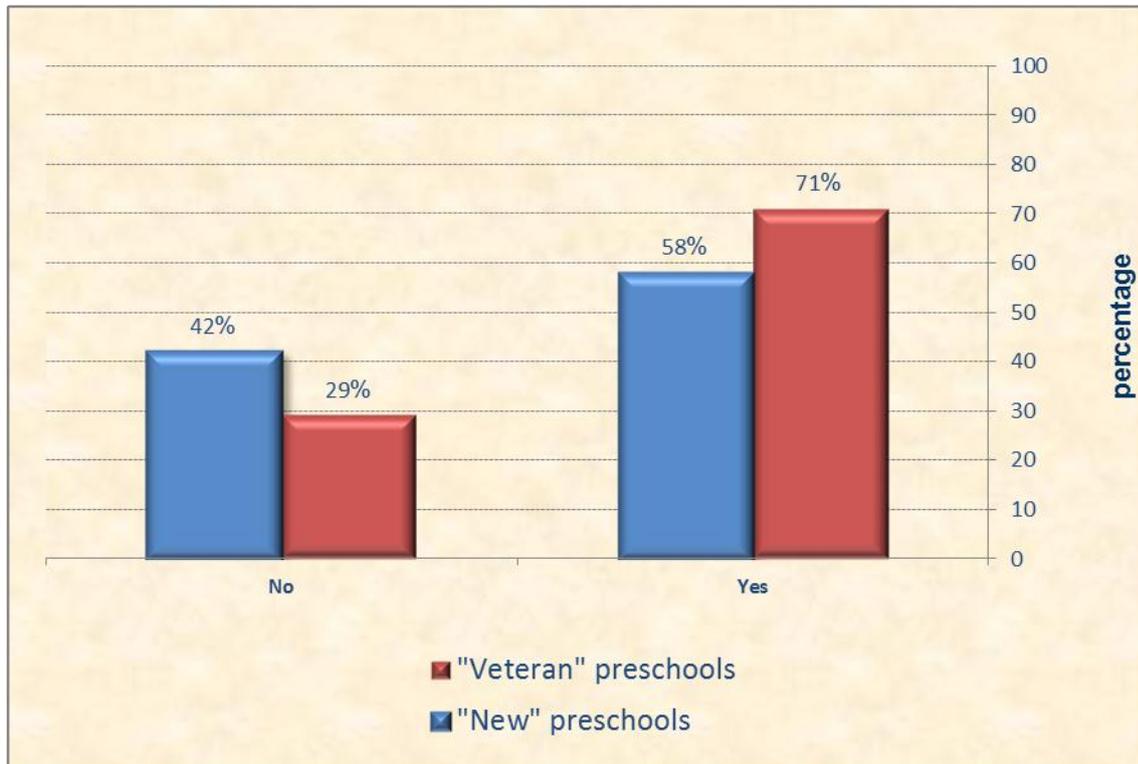
- The parents used the suggestions both directly and indirectly. That is, the suggestions either served as a source of inspiration for ideas for activities or they used them as suggested for more than one book (total of about 61%).
- A small minority of parents who read the suggestions chose not to use them (1.75%).

In summary: Both the teachers and the parents read Sifriyat Pijama's suggestions and made use of them, whether for planning and executing or for stimulating ideas for additional activities.

Shared Reading Habits at Home

Central goals of Sifriyat Pijama are to encourage reading in general and to encourage parents and children to read together. Therefore, the parents were asked whether they were reading more books together since the child began receiving books from Sifriyat Pijama. The diagram below summarized their responses.

Changes in Shared Reading Habits Resulting from the Program



About 63% of the parents (on average, including both "new" and "veteran" preschools) reported reading more with their children as a result of the program. That is, Sifriyat Pijama had a positive impact on the reading habits and shared activity of parents and children.

A comparison of parents with children in the "veteran" preschools versus parents with children in the "new" preschools shows that while 58% of parents at the end of their first year in the program reported more shared reading with their children in the wake of the program, 71% of the parents from the "veteran" preschools, at the end of their second year in the program, reported this. This disparity is statistically significant ($p < .000$) and indicates the ongoing impact of the program: the longer the program continues, the more its principles are assimilated.

Initiative for Reading

The parents were asked who initiated the shared reading. The following table summarizes their answers.

Who Initiated the Shared Reading?

| Initiative came from | Very often | Often | Occasionally | Rarely | Not at all | Total |
|----------------------|------------|-------|--------------|--------|------------|-------|
| From the parent | 24.3% | 44.2% | 25.6% | 4.2% | 1.6% | 100% |
| From the child | 52.5% | 32.7% | 11.1% | 3.3% | 0.4% | 100% |
| From the teacher | 21.4% | 26.2% | 16.5% | 13.1% | 22.8% | 100% |

The data indicates that:

- From the parents' perspective, most of the initiative for reading came from the children. About 85% responded that their children initiated shared reading "very often" or "often."
- In second place were the parents themselves: 69% perceived themselves as the initiators.
- The teachers were in last place: 48% of the parents felt their initiative in a significant way.

A comparison between the "new" parents and the "veteran" parents indicates that while 42% of the former said the teachers initiated shared reading "very often" or "often," 58% of the latter attributed the same level of initiative to the teachers. The difference in averages is statistically significant ($p < .000$).

Here too, there is possibly a connection between the duration of the program and the assimilation of its principles by the parents and teachers.

Beyond the Numbers: General Comments

In the general comments, the books were well-liked and received enthusiastically. Many teachers noted that the books were interesting, exciting and emotionally moving, aroused creativity, enriched linguistically and otherwise, and were relevant to significant issues in the children's everyday life: "You touched the hearts of many children. You enriched them and taught them to love books." They cited the importance of the messages in the stories, the well-liked illustrations and the fact that the books were appropriate for the developmental stages of the children. Strong points they mentioned include: The program encouraged reading. The children asked to read again and again in both preschool and at home. "The project is wonderful and received a place of honor in the schedule. My goal was to establish a set of books and you did most of the work for me. You gave me the best solution for this goal." In addition, the connection between the preschool and the child's home was strengthened via the program. The teachers received positive feedback from the parents on the program. They enjoyed the shared activities with the children, welcomed the relevant educational messages and told about how they were applied in the family. For example: The children conducted mediation processes between the siblings in the family. The teachers reported learning from the program: They received ideas, learned Jewish expressions and values, and acquired pedagogical ideas for activities with the children: "You enriched my thinking about activities as a teacher and reinforced each book and the value it contained. For the children, you enriched the home library, the 'togetherness' with their parents and older siblings. You enriched their minds and hearts with additional knowledge. In this case, 'thank you' is a small word, so here's a big thank you!"

In the parents' opinion too, as expressed in the questionnaires for parents, the program contributed to developing a culture of reading and a love for books, to the children's emotional and behavioral development, to learning, to instilling values, to quality time in the family, and to improving communication between the children and their parents. They told about their enjoyment from the shared reading and activity, and about the excitement and the anticipation the books generated.

The main suggestions the teachers offered for the future focused on the number of books distributed each year and choosing books that are more appropriate for the children's ages. Some of the teachers found it difficult to devote the time they thought the books deserved due to their work load. They experienced significant difficulty toward the end of the year, when it was impossible to devote time to the books as "befit" them. They felt that they were not meeting the program's expectations and this feeling weighed on them. Therefore, they suggested distributing fewer books, with longer intervals between them. In regard to the age-appropriateness of the books, there were teachers who thought that the message or language in some of the books was difficult to understand and unsuitable for young ages. Therefore, different books should be distributed for children of different ages. This last suggestion was already implemented in the 2011-2012 school year. The suggestion to distribute fewer books will be implemented during the 2012-2013 school year.

The main suggestions the parents offered pertained to the books they think should be added to the program (textbooks and others) and the target populations for distributing the books – for example, to expand the program to first and second grade.

Summary and Conclusions

The Sifriyat Pijama program received excellent feedback from both teachers and parents. It seems important to integrate many components that combine to create a significant whole: giving an identical book to each child, activity in the preschool that relates to the book's values, suggestions for reading and activities in the child's home, guidance and training via the program's website, activity adapted for the preschool-home, and encouraging interaction between parents and children, between teachers and parents, and among the children themselves.

Some 90% of the teachers reported that they liked the books, and about 80% said they conducted activities with the children related to the books in addition to reading them. This indicates that they took the program seriously and found the content and values in the books to be worthy of discussion and activity in the preschool.

About one third of the respondents said that they learned Jewish values from engaging with the books. There were no differences on this subject between teachers in the state education system and the religious state education system. According to the teachers, the values addressed in the books found real expression in the activities in the preschool. The activities the teachers described in the open questions included conversations, creative work, dramatization and role playing, outside activities such as tours and visits, and tending the garden at the preschool.

Three fourths of the teachers made substantial use of Sifriyat Pijama's suggestions in planning and carrying out activities in the preschool, and in two thirds of the cases, the activity addressed the values discussed in the suggestions for parents. The parents also made use of the suggestions aimed at them: About 70% reported that they read and used them directly or indirectly to give them ideas for conversation or activity with their children.

Some 95% of the parents expressed satisfaction with the books, with two thirds reporting that they liked them very much.

In general, *Bear Feels Sick* and *King Solomon and the Bee* were the books that received the most enthusiastic responses among those participating in the program. On the other hand, *Naughty Boy, I Have No One to Play With* and *Circle of Friends* were the least favorite books of both the parents and the teachers. There was great similarity among the teachers and parents regarding the ranking of favorite and least favorite books.

In regard to the number of times the books were read: The data indicates that the books were usually read 2 to 4 times in the preschool and 3 to 7 times by the parents at home.

The parents believe that the program enhances their relationships with their children, enriches their discourse with them and adds greatly to family activity. The program enriches the knowledge of the parents and their children, contributes to their linguistic and cognitive

development, encourages study, curiosity and imagination, and diversifies the home library. Moreover, the parents reported real changes in the culture of reading at home: There is more shared reading, the children initiate reading, and when they read the books to them, it is clear that they are familiar with them from the preschool.

From the parents' perspective, most of the initiative for reading came from the children. About 85% of the respondents said that their children initiated reading together. Parents were next in terms of initiating shared reading, with teachers ranked third.

A higher percentage of the "veteran" parents attributed significant initiative to the teachers in comparison to the parents who were participating in the program for the first year (58% versus 42%). Here too, there is possibly a connection between the duration of the program and the assimilation of its principles by the parents and teachers.

The findings show that in the preschools that were participating in the program for the second year, a higher percentage of teachers responded to the requests for feedback, and they reported more activity in regard to the book's values. More parents from the "veteran" preschools reported an improvement in reading habits and in shared activity between them and their children. These teachers also reported more initiatives by teachers to encourage reading at home. Assuming that the program operated similarly in both years, it is possible to conclude that the longer the program continues, the more its values are assimilated.

A look at the number of respondents shows that the amount of feedback decreased as the school year progressed. There was also a decline in the amount of activities in the preschool, as reported by the teachers. This was particularly salient in regard to the last two books distributed. Commensurate with the decline in activities related to the later books, there was also less discussion of the values the books address. This is likely attributable to the busy schedule of other activities at the preschools.

We believe it is important to maintain all of the components described at the beginning of this chapter. Since there are fewer book-related activities at the preschools as the school year progresses, and since the teachers seem to have less time to devote to the program during busy times, it would be advisable to reconsider the number of books distributed during the course of the school year and/or improve the coordination between the date of distributing the book and the plans of the preschool – both in terms of the book content and the schedule of activities at the preschool.

Appendix 1: The Method

The Population

Teachers

Percentage of Teachers' Responses

| Book | "New" Teachers | veteran" " | Total Rate of Response |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|------------|------------------------|
| Joseph Had a Little Overcoat | 81% | - | 81% |
| I Have No One to Play With* | - | 80% | 80% |
| Naughty Boy | 73% | 75% | 73% |
| Bear Feels Sick | 73% | 74% | 73% |
| Tale of a Bridge | 62% | - | 62% |
| What Happened to the Mulberry Tree?* | - | 79% | 79% |
| Grandma's Magic Knitting Needles | 57% | 50% | 55% |
| Circle of Friends | 55% | 73% | 62% |
| King Solomon and the Bee | 47% | 57% | 49% |
| Tractor in the Sandbox | 42% | - | 42% |
| Yael's Independence Day* | - | 50% | 50% |
| Bagel's from Benny | 40% | - | 40% |
| The Mole and the Bird | - | 50% | 50% |
| Average | 59% | 65% | 61% |

* Books marked with an asterisk were pilot books that were distributed to about 100 teachers who were participating in the program for the second year.

Parents

Parental Responses According to Experience with the Program

| Experience in the Program | No. of Respondents | % |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| First year | 905 | 64.0 |
| Second year | 508 | 36.5 |
| Total | 1413 | 100.0 |

Tools

In order to gauge the program's success in meeting its goals, questionnaires were sent to the teachers and parents (Appendixes 2 and 3). In addition, four group interviews were conducted with parents from preschools in Kiryat Shmona, Karmiel and Acre, and six in-depth interviews were conducted with six teachers from "veteran" preschools in order to learn from their success.

Teachers

The questionnaires included questions in which the teachers were asked to express their opinions on the books and on the suggestions for parents, and to report on the related reading activity conducted in the preschool. They were asked about the ways they engaged with the Jewish values relevant to the books, about the children's understanding of these values, and about encouraging reading and family activity focused on reading.

Since the program was operating in some of the preschools for the first year and in other preschools for the second year, the list of books distributed to all of the groups was not identical. The part of the questionnaire about specific books was adapted to each of the groups of teachers. All of the other questions were identical.

Many of the questions were multiple choice and some were open questions. In the latter, the respondents were able to describe the activities in the preschool and to offer general comments about their experiences with each book.

Parents

The questionnaires for parents addressed the books their children received, and sought to elicit information and opinions about the books, the types of interactions with the children, changes in reading habits, and the use of suggestions for parents that appear at the beginning of each book.

Here too, a distinction was made between parents who were participating in the program for the first year and those participating in it for the second year. Each group of parents received a questionnaire that directly pertained to the books they received. All of the other items in the questionnaires were identical.

Most of the questions were multiple choice, but there were a number of open questions that enabled the parents to describe their experience with the program and express their views about it.

Process

Teachers' Feedback

The teachers participating in the sample were sent electronic questionnaires via the Internet, with each questionnaire focusing on a specific book. Each teacher received a total of nine questionnaires. Those who wished to fill in the questionnaires and encountered difficulties received instruction and technical support from the Sifriyat Pijama staff and from the evaluation team. There were also a few teachers who received printed questionnaires.

A report with a summary of the findings was written for each book. A separate report summarized the in-depth interviews with the six "veteran" teachers in order to learn from their experience.

Parents' Feedback

Each of the groups of parents received a printed questionnaire via the teachers. The teachers were also responsible for collecting the completed questionnaires and returning them to the Sifriyat Pijama staff.

A separate report was written on each of the "veteran" and "new" parent groups, as well as an integrative report that included all of the parents in its findings. A separate report summarizing the group interviews conducted with parents in the preschools was also written.

Appendix 2: Sample Questionnaire for Teachers



Questionnaire for Teachers on *Bear Feels Sick*



Dear teacher,

The goal of this questionnaire is to receive feedback on the book *Bear Feels Sick* and activities related to it. We thank you in advance for your responses, which will help us to continue to develop the program. **We ask that the teacher who read the book with the children and conducted the activities with them be the one to fill in the questionnaire.**

Your feedback is very important to us! **Thank you for your cooperation!**

-
1. Name of the preschool principal (first and last): _____
 2. Name of the preschool: _____
 3. Name of the locality where the preschool is located: _____
 4. The preschool is affiliated with: 1. state religious 2. state-TALI 3. state
 5. The class is 1. kindergarten 2. preschool 3. both 4. three-year program
5. Other (specify): _____
 6. The preschool is participating in Sifriyat Pijama: 1. For the first year 2. For the second year
 7. Teaching experience _____ years.
 8. How do you define yourself from a Jewish perspective?
1. Religious 2. Traditional 3. Secular 4. Other (How? _____)
 9. Number of families in the preschool who do not speak / read Hebrew
1. None 2. Two to four families 3. Five to seven families 4. Eight or more families

The Book

Please circle the number indicating your assessment of the following elements of the book *Bear Feels Sick* and its suitability for the preschool.

| | | Excellent | Good | Okay | Not Very Good | Poor |
|-----|--|-----------|------|------|---------------|------|
| 7. | The book's plot | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. | The language | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. | The illustrations | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. | Age-appropriateness | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. | The children's enthusiasm about the book | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. | The book as a whole | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Reading the Book and Ensuing Activities

13. How many times did you read the book to the children in the preschool (to all or some of them)?

1. Never 2. Once 3. Two to four times 4. Five or more times

Please circle the appropriate answer

| | Activity | No | Yes |
|-----|--|----|-----|
| 17. | I conducted activity with the children related to the book, in addition to reading it to them (without the parents) | 1 | 2 |
| 18. | I conducted activity with the children and their parents related to the book, in addition to reading it to the children | 1 | 2 |
| 19. | Sifriyat Pijama's suggestions helped in planning the activity. | 1 | 2 |
| 20. | I learned something new about Jewish values through the suggestions for parents | 1 | 2 |
| 21. | The activity addressed the values presented in the suggestions for parents. | 1 | 2 |
| 22. | The activity addressed other values that are in the book (if so, which values?) _____ | 1 | 2 |

23. Please describe the most successful activity you conducted:

24. Did the value(s) addressed in the book find expression in the preschool's activity?

1. No 2. Yes

If so, how? _____

In your assessment, how much did the children’s understanding of the following expressions or sayings improve **as a result of engaging with the book?**

(the expressions appear in the suggestions for parents and/or in the electronic information packet sent to the teachers)

| | Expression/Saying | Very Much | Much | Some | Little | Not at all |
|-----|----------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 23. | Visiting the sick | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 24. | Being careful and cautious | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Encouraging Reading at Home

Please circle the most appropriate answer

| | The Activity | No | Yes |
|-----|--|-----------|------------|
| 25. | I encouraged reading to the children at home (if so, explain): _____ | 1 | 2 |
| 26. | I recommended a particular activity from the suggestions for parents in the book | 1 | 2 |
| 27. | I asked the parents to carry out an activity from the suggestions for parents, which we continued in the preschool | 1 | 2 |

25. If you have families that have difficulty with Hebrew in the preschool, what actions did you take to encourage reading in their homes?

Additional comments

28. We would be happy to hear if you have additional personal comments or significant feedback you received from parents or children about the book:

We thank you very much for your cooperation. You can also always contact us via email: pjisrael@hgf.org or by fax: 153-54-789-1951

For any subject **not** related to feedback, please call: 054-3068181

For any subject **related to feedback**, please contact Maya at: 052-3462657

Thank you very much

Appendix 3: Sample Questionnaire for Parents



Questionnaire for Sifriyat Pijama Parents – for Preschools in their Second Year in the Program

Dear parents,

We at Sifriyat Pijama are happy to give your children books and to suggest activities for you after reading the books. The goal of this questionnaire is to receive feedback from you on the program so that we will be able to learn and improve it. We thank you in advance for your responses.

The feedback is anonymous. Please fill in the questionnaire and give it to the teacher or to a representative of the program. Your opinion is very important to us, thank you for your cooperation!

The Sifriyat Pijama Team

1. Name of the preschool: _____
2. Name of the locality where the preschool is located: _____
3. The preschool is: 1. state education 2. state religious 3. state-TALI
4. The class is 1. kindergarten 2. preschool 3. both 4. three-year program 5. Other (specify): _____

How many times, approximately, did you read the books with the child at home?

(please circle the answer)

| | Book | 8 times or more | 3-7 times | 1-2 times | Never |
|----|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| 5 | I Have No One to Play With | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6 | Naughty Boy | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7 | Bear Feels Sick | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8 | What Happened to the Mulberry Tree? | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9 | Grandma's Magic Knitting Needles | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10 | Circle of Friends | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11 | King Solomon and the Bee | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12 | Yael's Independence Day | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

How did you like the books? (please circle the appropriate answer)

| | Book | Excellent | Good | Not Good |
|----|-------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 13 | I Have No One to Play With | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14 | Naughty Boy | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15 | Bear Feels Sick | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16 | What Happened to the Mulberry Tree? | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17 | Grandma's Magic Knitting Needles | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18 | Circle of Friends | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19 | King Solomon and the Bee | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20 | Yael's Independence Day | 3 | 2 | 1 |

21. If your child's opinion was different than yours, what was his or her opinion and in regard to which book or books? _____

22-29. In which language do you speak to the child at home? (you can circle more than one)

1. Hebrew 2. Russian 3. Amharic 4. Spanish 5. English 6. French 7. Arabic
8. Other: _____

30. Was the Hebrew in the books difficult for you to read?

1. No 2. Yes, in all of the books 3. In some of the books. Which? _____

31. Did you participate in activities in the preschool connected to the program or to one of the books?

1. No 2. Yes

32. Are you reading more books together with your child after receiving the books from Sifriyat Pijama?

1. No 2. Yes

33. Since your child has been receiving books from Sifriyat Pijama, are you borrowing from the library:

1. Fewer books 2. More books 3. The same amount 4. There is no library

If you read a book or books together with your children, who initiated this?

| | The initiative | Very often | Often | Occasionally | Rarely | Not at all |
|----|---|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 34 | The initiative for reading came mainly from me | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 35 | The initiative for reading came mainly from the child | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 36 | The initiative for reading came mainly from the teacher | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

37. In the first pages of every book, there are suggestions for a conversation or activity with the child. Have you read the suggestions?

1. No (if you indicate no, please go next to question 39)
2. Yes

38. If you read the suggestions, please circle the appropriate answer.

1. I used the suggestions for a conversation or activity for one book.
2. I used the suggestions for a conversation or activity for more than one book.
3. I did not use a specific suggestion, but the suggestions gave me ideas for a conversation or activity.
4. I did not use the suggestions for parents at all.

39. We would be glad to hear if you have additional comments, feedback on the books or any other reaction about the program:

If you are willing for us to call you, please add a name and telephone number and we will contact you.

Name: _____ **Telephone number (including area code):** _____

Thank you for your cooperation. You can also always contact us via email: pjrael@hgf.org.il

Appendix 4: Evaluations of the Books by Teachers and Parents

The Teachers' Evaluation of the Books

| Book | Excellent or Good | Okay | Not Very Good | Poor | Total |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| Joseph Had a Little Overcoat | 91.5% | 8.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 100% |
| I Have No One to Play With | 91.2% | 8.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 100% |
| Naughty Boy | 66.3% | 22.6% | 7.3% | 3.8% | 100% |
| Bear Feels Sick | 94.8% | 5.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 100% |
| Tale of a Bridge | 98.5% | 1.5% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 100% |
| What Happened to the Mulberry Tree? | 91.5% | 8.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 100% |
| Grandma's Magic Knitting Needles | 91.2% | 6.6% | 1.6% | 0.5% | 100% |
| Circle of Friends | 80.4% | 15.9% | 3.2% | 0.5% | 100% |
| King Solomon and the Bee | 95.5% | 3.8% | 0.6% | 0.0% | 100% |
| Tractor in the Sandbox | 87.6% | 9.0% | 3.4% | 0.0% | 100% |
| Yael's Independence Day | 93.9% | 6.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 100% |
| Bagel's from Benny | 86.4% | 6.2% | 6.2% | 1.2% | 100% |
| The Mole and the Bird | 98.0% | 2.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 100% |
| Average | 89.8% | 8.0% | 1.7% | 6.0% | 100% |

The Parents' Evaluation of the Books

| Book | Excellent or Good | Not Good | Total |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|--------|
| Joseph Had a Little Overcoat | 96.1% | 3.9% | 100.0% |
| I Have No One to Play With | 94.3% | 5.7% | 100.0% |
| Naughty Boy | 86.7% | 13.3% | 100.0% |
| Bear Feels Sick | 98.1% | 2.9% | 100.0% |
| Tale of a Bridge | 97.5% | 2.5% | 100.0% |
| What Happened to the Mulberry Tree? | 96.8% | 3.2% | 100.0% |
| Grandma's Magic Knitting Needles | 96.4% | 3.6% | 100.0% |
| Circle of Friends | 88.8% | 11.2% | 100.0% |
| King Solomon and the Bee | 97.7% | 2.3% | 100.0% |
| Tractor in the Sandbox | 97.9% | 2.1% | 100.0% |
| Yael's Independence Day | 96.9% | 3.0% | 100.0% |
| Average | 95.25 | 4.9% | |

Appendix 5: Reading the Books at the Preschool and Home

Number of Times the Books were Read in the Preschool

| Book | 5 or more times | 2-4 times | Once | Never | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Joseph Had a Little Overcoat | 26.1% | 65.9% | 8.0% | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| I Have No One to Play With | 15.8% | 75.0% | 9.2% | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Naughty Boy | 24.1% | 51.5% | 21.1% | 3.3% | 100.0% |
| Bear Feels Sick | 30.8% | 63.7% | 5.5% | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Tale of a Bridge | 29.1% | 63.4% | 7.5% | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| What Happened to the Mulberry Tree? | 14.7% | 69.3% | 14.7% | 1.3% | 100.0% |
| Grandma's Magic Knitting Needles | 17.5% | 70.5% | 12.0% | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Circle of Friends | 17.3% | 60.2% | 17.3% | 5.2% | 100.0% |
| King Solomon and the Bee | 19.9% | 72.0% | 7.5% | 0.6% | 100.0% |
| Tractor in the Sandbox | 21.2% | 52.9% | 20.0% | 5.9% | 100.0% |
| Yael's Independence Day | 6.3% | 70.8% | 22.9% | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Bagel's from Benny | 16.7% | 53.6% | 26.2% | 3.5% | 100.0% |
| The Mole and the Bird | 21.3% | 66.0% | 12.7% | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Average | 20.0% | 64.1% | 14.3% | 1.7% | 100.0% |

Number of Times the Books were Read at Home

| Books | More than 3 times | 1-2 times | Never | Total |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Joseph Had a Little Overcoat | 69.9% | 29.4% | 0.7% | 100.0% |
| I Have No One to Play With | 56.1% | 40.6% | 3.3% | 100.0% |
| Naughty Boy | 59.1% | 35.4% | 5.6% | 100.0% |
| Bear Feels Sick | 71.6% | 25.6% | 2.8% | 100.0% |
| Tale of a Bridge | 60.9% | 33.7% | 5.4% | 100.0% |
| What Happened to the Mulberry Tree? | 58.8% | 34.9% | 6.3% | 100.0% |
| Grandma's Magic Knitting Needles | 59.4% | 36.7% | 4.0% | 100.0% |
| Circle of Friends | 40.0% | 46.5% | 13.5% | 100.0% |
| King Solomon and the Bee | 64.4% | 31.0% | 4.6% | 100.0% |
| Tractor in the Sandbox | 57.1% | 36.1% | 6.5% | 100.0% |
| Yael's Independence Day | 44.5% | 44.0% | 11.5% | 100.0% |
| Average | 58.3% | 35.8% | 5.8% | 100.0% |

Appendix 6: Activities Related to Values

Teachers: The Values were Expressed in Preschool Activity

(% of positive responses)

| Book | Values | First Year | Second Year |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------|-------------|
| Joseph Had a Little Overcoat | Don't destroy; who is rich? (he who is satisfied with his lot); teach your children (pass on the tradition) | 83% | - |
| I Have No One to Play With | Find a friend; peace is great (and includes all the other blessings) | - | 94% |
| Naughty Boy | Who is heroic? He who controls his urges. | 76% | 87% |
| Bear Feels Sick | Visiting the sick; being careful | 82% | 88% |
| Tale of a Bridge | Love peace and pursue it | 91% | - |
| What Happened to the Mulberry Tree? | Appreciation and responsibility for the environment | - | 89% |
| Grandma's Magic Knitting Needles | Empathetic listening and giving | 77% | 85% |
| Circle of Friends | Anonymous charity | 71% | 76% |
| King Solomon and the Bee | The intrinsic value of each person; who is wise? He who learns from every person | 72% | 79% |
| Tractor in the Sandbox | Respect for elders; the value of working the land | 58% | - |
| Yael's Independence Day | Optimism and determination; individual and national independence | - | 80% |
| Bagel's from Benny | Appreciation and expressing thanks | 66% | - |
| The Mole and the Bird | There is a time and a place for everything; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing | - | 64% |
| Average | | 75% | 83% |

Appendix 7: Use of Sifriyat Pijama's Suggestions by Teachers

Teachers: Sifriyat Pijama's Suggestions Helped the Preschool's Activities (% of positive responses)

| Book | First Year | Second Year |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Joseph Had a Little Overcoat | 86.6% | - |
| I Have No One to Play With | - | 76.4% |
| Naughty Boy | 76.6% | 73.2% |
| Bear Feels Sick | 78.9% | 74.6% |
| Tale of a Bridge | 84.7% | - |
| What Happened to the Mulberry Tree? | - | 73.2% |
| Grandma's Magic Knitting Needles | 78.7% | 83.0% |
| Circle of Friends | 71.9% | 64.1% |
| King Solomon and the Bee | 68.4% | 79.2% |
| Tractor in the Sandbox | 60.5% | - |
| Yael's Independence Day | - | 54.2% |
| Bagel's from Benny | 64.6% | - |
| The Mole and the Bird | - | 65.2% |
| Average | 73.8% | 71.5% |

Teachers: Preschool Activities Addressed the Values Suggested to the Parents (% of positive responses)

| Book | First Year | Second Year |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Joseph Had a Little Overcoat | 76.4% | - |
| I Have No One to Play With | - | 77.5% |
| Naughty Boy | 55.2% | 56.1% |
| Bear Feels Sick | 71.9% | 62.9% |
| Tale of a Bridge | 77.5% | - |
| What Happened to the Mulberry Tree? | - | 65.7% |
| Grandma's Magic Knitting Needles | 63.8% | 68.9% |
| Circle of Friends | 65.4% | 74.6% |
| King Solomon and the Bee | 62.6% | 69.4% |
| Tractor in the Sandbox | 55.7% | - |
| Yael's Independence Day | - | |
| Bagel's from Benny | 61.5% | 53.2% |
| The Mole and the Bird | - | 47.9% |
| Average | 65.6% | 64.0% |