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Youth Renewal Fund Launches Israel's First Ever National Teacher Professional Development Program

Program Designed to Advance Teaching Profession in Israel and Improve Public Education System

July 28, 2008 – Yehud, Israel, and New York, New York – Youth Renewal Fund (YRF), a leading provider of supplemental education for disadvantaged Israeli children, is launching a groundbreaking program designed to improve teaching quality and create a long lasting impact on the Israel education system.

YRF's Professional Development Program for Teachers will provide comprehensive training and support over a multi-year period. Teachers will attend regular workshops, conduct peer and self evaluations, and work individually with professional mentors in their field. The program will kick-off with an intensive two-day workshop at the Beit Berl Teachers College in Kfar Saba, August 17-18, 2008.

Despite Israel's growth in the high-technology sector and the large number of patents held by Israelis, the country's education system has suffered serious decline in the past few decades. Israeli students ranked 40th in reading, math and science performance out of students from 57 industrialized countries on a recent assessment exam administered by the OECD.

YRF began initial development of its new program last summer with a pilot workshop for 60 teachers. The seeds for the full-scale initiative grew out of increasing frustration with the resources available to teachers, exacerbated by last fall's 65-day teacher strike, which severely impacted schools across the country. The new Professional Development Program is expected to serve over 200 teachers in 2008; this number will steadily increase in subsequent years based on funding and resources. YRF projects that by the fall of 2011, the program will train 2,000 teachers who will, in turn, teach more than 40,000 children per year.

YRF's Israel Executive Director, Galit Toledano-Harris, expresses her enthusiasm for the project: "Since YRF began in 1989, over 70,000 Israeli children have benefited from our supplemental education programs. Experience has taught us that the teacher is the single most important factor in improving

student achievement outcomes. While we have always worked with teachers, the launch of this program underscores our commitment to the pivotal role they play in the success of every Israeli child.”

Prior to developing this program, YRF did its own homework. “Several recent studies confirmed our belief that improving teaching quality is the most effective measure we can take to bolster education in Israel. Professional development programs exist for many professions—doctors, lawyers, accountants—it only makes sense that they should exist for teachers as well,” says Karen Berman, YRF US Executive Director. “The children of Israel are the country’s future. Unfortunately, the Israeli government is not equipped to provide the quality of education its citizens need and deserve. YRF’s new program will help ensure that Israeli children are receiving the knowledge base required to succeed in a global economy.”

Other current YRF program offerings include after-school classes that provide six hours a week of additional studies in English, Hebrew language and math, single subject learning centers, matriculation exam preparation and college scholarships.

Youth Renewal Fund was established in 1989 to provide supplemental education to disadvantaged Israeli children. YRF’s projects teach core academic subjects, enhance critical reasoning skills, expose students to technological innovation, and provide a strong network of support. By achieving success academically, YRF students discover the power of education as a tool for improving their positions in life and those of their families.

For more information about Youth Renewal Fund in English, please visit www.youthrenewalfund.org or contact Karen Berman, YRF US Executive Director, at 212 207 3195.

For information about Youth Renewal Fund in Hebrew, please visit www.yrf.org.il or contact Galit Toledano-Harris, YRF Israel Executive Director, at 972 3 632 2912.

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