



American dream

Bramson ORT College's largest ever graduation class.

Page 4



Summer of science

World ORT brings top students together at Weizmann for advanced learning.

Page 7



Virtual reality

Argentine kids study from home when swine flu closes schools.

Page 8

Inspiration of ORT France

Money may be hard to come by in this "credit crunch" era but there is no shortage of inspiration to be had in the world of ORT – as the extraordinary evolution of ORT France demonstrates.

In the span of just one generation ORT France has taken its place in the avant garde of the country's education sector, its focus on cutting edge technology and academic rigour producing ever greater matriculation success.

In the decades after the war, it was doing a tremendous job providing vocational education for the waves of Jewish immigrants from North Africa, meeting their immediate need to enter the labour market by teaching them how to be skilled plumbers, mechanics and electricians.

Now it meets the needs of an established community for white collar career paths with refurbished, upgraded schools in Paris, Lyon, Strasbourg and Toulouse (the acclaimed school in Marseille is last on the list for major investment) which not only boast matriculation results above the national average but an increasing number of university-level courses for high school graduates.

Where once ORT France's vocational courses were seen, unfairly, as a depository for youngsters unable or unwilling to tackle traditional academic studies, now "parents know that an ORT school is a school of first resort," according to ORT France National Director Marc Timsit.

Just how far ORT France has come in the past 20 years was highlighted when members of World ORT's Board of Trustees toured the school at Toulouse which last year inaugurated a new 3,000-square-metre building containing four ICT laboratories, state-of-the-art physics and chemistry laboratories and comfortable classrooms to replace the prefabs which had been employed 30 years beyond their use by date.

The new facilities have enabled the school to start introducing a range of tertiary level BTS diploma courses. The first of these two-year programmes, in banking, is already operational; the Opticians' Technical Diploma is due to be introduced in September, and a BTS diploma in international marketing is due to start in 2012.

"Their matriculation pass rates are remarkable," said World ORT Secretary Martin Behr at the end of the tour. "No fewer than 90 per cent pass and the rate is 100 per cent for accountancy. The school is another demonstration of the power of the ORT message: providing education which is relevant to the times for young Jews wherever they may be. And in this case, it's not just Jewish students but also non-Jewish students."

The part of ORT France's success that has caught most public attention has been ORT Strasbourg's near 100 per cent success rate in its gruelling two-year preparation programme for a place at the Grandes Ecoles – elite higher education establishments outside the main framework of the public universities system.

Among the successful students is rabbi's son Jonathan Aflalo, who has been able to make his dream of studying mathematics at the Ecole Polytechnique a reality because ORT Strasbourg, which in 2006 became the first private college in France to offer a three-year bachelor degree in collaboration with a university, is the only institution

which offers the preparatory course without classes on Shabbat.

The multi-million-dollar refurbishment programme, the high and improving exam results and consequently increasing enrolment have only been possible thanks to fundamental structural changes within ORT France itself.

Guy Seniak, the World ORT Representative in France, who worked with past president Marcel Benichou as ORT France's National Director, said: "During his presidency ORT France became one of the best organised Jewish organisations in France. He insisted on balancing budgets in every field of operations; he didn't

accept funding our work through debt. It was accepted that ORT France had to be managed as a company but that this company had to be managed as a voluntary association."

After touring ORT Toulouse this summer, it was clear to World ORT Director General and CEO Robert Singer that ORT France was set to build on these historic achievements under the new presidency of Lucien Kalfon.

"The work that is being done by Dr Kalfon, Marc Timsit, and the 500 professionals working for the organisation is truly excellent and all of us in the worldwide ORT family salute them," Mr Singer said.

130 years of World ORT



World ORT's anniversary logo was designed by an ORT Mexico student and current President Jean de Gunzburg signs ORT's historic document.

2010 marks 130 years since the founding of ORT in St Petersburg in 1880. Past and present presidents of World ORT have officially launched the organisation's 130th anniversary year with a solemn reaffirmation of its founders' aims and values. Current President Dr Jean de Gunzburg – a descendent of ORT co-founder Baron Horace de Gunzburg – was joined by other past Presidents, in the signing of a document which echoed the letter sent out to potential donors across Russia in 1880. The original document announced

the setting up of a fund to provide training and education that would enable Jews to lift themselves out of poverty.

The document states that they came together in London "to declare our abiding commitment to the aims and values of our predecessors and to urge and encourage like-minded persons to continue to support ORT's vital work throughout the world". The document, which has been sent to the heads of state of all 63 countries in which ORT has a presence, states: "Individuals and communities across the globe continue to

rely on ORT for the skills and knowledge that will enable them to lead independent and purposeful lives. We can do no less than to respond earnestly to their needs." Dr de Gunzburg said: "The world in the 21st century is very different from the one [my ancestor] knew and yet the organisation he helped to create not only exists, it continues to fulfill a real need. Very few organisations have been able to accomplish the kind of sustained success which ORT has. I think he would be extremely happy if he were able to see what he contributed to."

Present perfect, future uncertain for ace student

The only thing that stands between Ruslan Aiginin and a glittering university education is poverty.

ORT Mishpahteinu student Ruslan was the toast of Kazan when he scored a perfect 100 in his computer science high school graduation exam – one of only 61 of the 67,504 students who passed the Russia-wide test to do so.

His performance won him a scholarship to Kazan State University where he wants to gain the skills necessary to become a programmer and ICT specialist.

But university life brings with it greater expenses that he and his widowed mother, who live on \$275 a month, simply can not afford.

“Although he won’t have to pay tuition, he still has to buy books and training aids and to pay in order to participate in conferences and science societies,” said ORT Mishpahteinu Principal Olga Troupp. “He will also need an Internet connection at home. At school, Ruslan was a scholarship student and also enjoyed free transportation, a free canteen, free Internet, and we paid for his participation in Olympiads and other extra-curricular activities. And at school he wore a uniform so clothing costs were reduced.”

Ms Troupp appealed for sponsors to come forward to help Ruslan.

“All he needs is \$2,000 a year to be able to live a normal student life,” she said. “Meanwhile, he is looking for a job but I fear that the stress of studying and working may harm his health as he has been undergoing treatment for an eye condition.”

Ruslan’s achievement as Tatarstan’s only perfect scorer in the exam prompted the republic’s Deputy Minister of Science and Education, Ludmila Nugumanova, to congratulate the school’s teachers on television for their commitment and skill in nurturing such a fine student.

“We are particularly proud of Ruslan because he lives alone with his mother,

who is a pensioner. They have just enough money to live on. They can not afford private tutors so Ruslan is truly a product of our school,” Ms Troupp said.



Holding on: Ruslan Aiginin is hoping to hear good news.

But Ruslan’s result is just the tip of the iceberg of ORT’s achievement in teaching technology to teenagers.

Most ORT Russia students scored more than 80 per cent in the computer science exam, placing them in the top seven per cent of graduates; among them was Vladislav Kaganov, a student at Moscow ORT Technology School, who was one of only 197 students across the country to score 99 per cent.

As for Ruslan himself, he modestly deflected questions about his exam results to pay tribute to his school.

“I am very grateful for the knowledge it has given me, knowledge that is necessary

for success,” he said. “Our school is unique – we have a very good atmosphere, warm and friendly, which is why it is named Mishpahteinu (‘our family’). And this

atmosphere helps us to learn better. The most important thing is that this school gives you everything you need to be a really good person.”

Rothschild Prize for Sha’ar HaNegev teacher

The World ORT Innovation Leader at Sha’ar HaNegev High School in Israel has won the prestigious Rothschild Education Prize for her implementation of thematic learning at the school.

As World ORT Innovation Leader, Zohar Nir Levy, is the person who spearheads the full use of new technology which has been introduced to the school through World ORT’s Kadima Mada programme.

Ms Nir Levy’s thematic learning initiative has, according to Yad Hanadiv as the Rothschild Foundation is known in Israel, made strides to help children – particularly the less academically gifted – to make connections between different disciplines.

“Our whole programme is based on the ‘smart board’; everything goes through the Interactive White Board (IWB),” Ms Nir Levy, a geography teacher, said. “It’s a wonderful tool.”

Ms Nir Levy and her colleagues designed their thematic learning programme last summer and introduced it to great effect to the 7th Grade at the start of the academic year.

“We take a subject and teach it from different angles. So, for example, we took as a theme ‘Beginnings’: in Bible we looked at creation, in geography we learned about the Big Bang, in science we studied the origin of life on

Earth. Now we’re teaching ‘Changes’, examining climate change in geography, changes in material states in science, and developments in religion in Bible,” she said.

The IWBs are excellent for the teaching of learning strategies, in which students are shown how to deal with text, how to summarise it and compare content, how to ask questions and how to write their ideas in a clear way.

“We use the boards’ Internet connection to demonstrate things, using animation and short films. We can, for example, show the students a film and ask them to summarise it in their own words. We don’t allow them to copy and paste from the Internet,” she said.

The IWBs which World ORT has introduced to schools through Kadima Mada have raised the level of education, Ms Nir Levy said.

“It’s very hard work to think all the time how to use the smart board properly and in the best way so that the children and the teachers can profit from it. But in the end the level of teaching is some degrees higher than when we only had the regular black board.”

The Rothschild Education Prize is awarded annually in Israel. This year, the \$20,000 prize was shared between Ms Nir Levy and two teachers from other schools.

Business Breakfast bottom line tops expectations

The success of British ORT’s first major event under its new lay and professional leadership shows the organisation continues to have a strong appeal despite the negative effects of the recession.

The annual Business Breakfast attracted more people than ever from the financial world to hear the keynote speaker, Lloyds Banking Group Chairman Sir Victor Blank, give his views on the controversial Lloyds-HBOS merger.

Sir Victor has come under fire in the media for what is seen by some as last year’s hasty merger of the traditionally conservative high street retail bank Lloyds TSB with Britain’s biggest mortgage lender HBOS. This year, the British Government took a majority stake in Lloyds and underwrote £260 billion of Lloyds’ “toxic” assets.

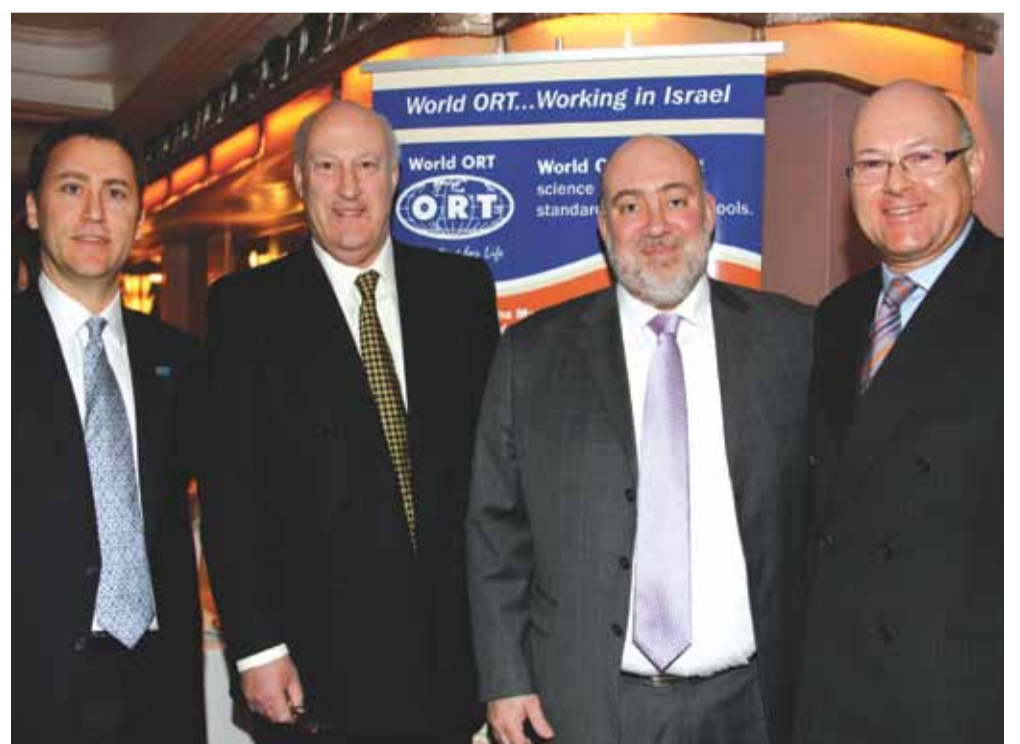
Nearly 300 people from JP Morgan, Blick Rothenberg, Investec, Eden Financial, Heron International and other big names attended the function at the Park Lane Hotel in central London. The money raised forms part of British ORT’s commitment

to Sha’ar HaNegev High School. The school, which participates in World ORT’s Kadima Mada programme, lies just two kilometres from the Gaza border and has been seriously affected by rocket attacks. British ORT aims to provide the school with a rocket-proof science and technology centre among other things.

“I am absolutely delighted; we had a fantastic turnout,” said British ORT Chairman Simon Alberga. “It was a combination of having a very good, topical speaker in Sir Victor and our having expanded our base of British ORT trustees who set to work to get people to come.”

British ORT’s new Director of Fundraising, Dr Noga Zivan, said the event – sponsored by the Aurum investment management group and leading provider of concierge services, Wizz2u – had gone “fantastically well”.

“It was the first big event we have run for British ORT as a team so we were very pleased that it went so well and bucked the economic trend. There was a really positive buzz to the event,” Dr Zivan said.



Cereal profits: (from left) British ORT Chairman Simon Alberga, Sir Victor Blank, Israeli Ambassador Ron Prosor, and Travelex Chairman Lloyd Dorfman at the Business Breakfast.

Message from the Director General



I have just returned from Ukraine and Moldova, where our schools have celebrated the new academic year with flowers, song and dance. And there is much to celebrate. In the 20 years since World ORT returned to its *'alter heim'* we have built a vibrant network of inclusive schools which has helped to restore the connection between thousands of young Jews and their heritage while giving them the best possible start to life.

But behind the joy is the worry shared by staff, pupils and families that these schools could soon disappear. Despite the support of the International Federation of Christians and Jews and the Israeli Government, the Heftsiba programme which funds critical parts of ORT's Jewish education system in the region is teetering on the brink of disaster. As you can see from the story on this page, funding cuts has left our 17 schools in the Former Soviet Union with an uncertain future.

World ORT is doing everything it can to ensure that the extraordinary successes of these two decades are not consigned to the history books. However, the threat is real and our concern can not be overstated.

Perhaps we can glean some hope from our experiences in Latin America. It was not so many years ago, after all, that we faced an appalling socio-economic crisis there. Many middle class families suddenly found themselves all but destitute and ORT's expertise took on a profound new relevance for parents who needed retraining and their children whose chances of finding work depended so much on what we could teach them. We pushed through and now, as our Latin America Campaign enters its final year, we can see a region that is once again bursting with opportunities. The Campaign has resulted in an overall upgrading of the educational services enjoyed by Jewish communities and a consequent increase in enrolment.

Nowhere is our commitment to upgrading more evident than in the way we seek to provide our teachers with opportunities to advance their skills. The latest addition to our professional development seminars is the Terry and Jean de Gunzburg Jewish Education Seminar, which this summer was held simultaneously in Rome, Buenos Aires and Kishinev. The use of videoconferencing technology enabled participants to be linked with colleagues in Israel and the ecstatic response to the training augurs well for the future.

Talking of Israel, our Kadima Mada programme is going from strength to strength. New strategic partnerships herald ever greater numbers of Jewish and non-Jewish students benefiting from World ORT's passion for educational excellence.

So there is much to be proud of in this, our 130th year of Educating for Life. But, like the Patriarch Jacob who told Pharaoh that, although aged 130, he had yet to achieve what his parents had achieved in their lifetimes, we are not satisfied. As we approach Rosh Hashana we recognise that there is still much to be done, still obstacles to be overcome. With your help I and my colleagues at World ORT will work harder than ever to ensure that 5770 (2010) will build on the astounding advances of the past 130 years to open ever more opportunities for our brethren and friends around the world.

K'tiva v'chatima tova.

Robert Singer

Heftsiba in crisis

The future of World ORT's 17 schools in the Former Soviet Union hangs in the balance as negotiations to reverse recent budget cuts continue with Israeli government departments, the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) and others.

Over the summer, World ORT welcomed the decision by Israel's Ministry of Education to release the NIS 3.5 million it had promised to give the Heftsiba programme, without which 44 schools belonging to the World ORT, Or Avner and Shema Israel networks would be absorbed into the mainstream public education sector.

However, the money – which was released after the Founder and President of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ), Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, lambasted Israel's failure to honour its commitment to match the funds provided by his organisation in January – is nowhere near the NIS 27 million (\$7 million) needed to put Heftsiba back firmly on its feet.

"The money is a stop gap," said World ORT's Representative in Russia, Avi Ganon. "These funds are not sufficient to cover

the shortfall caused by the Jewish Agency's withdrawal of \$2 million funding for Heftsiba last year."

For nearly 20 years Heftsiba's contribution towards the schools' budgets has provided for Jewish Studies, the bolstering of teachers' wages and for security. It also provides hot lunches and school buses – critical services for schools serving Jewish communities scattered across urban sprawls and teaching a curriculum that demands long days.

The funding crisis means that the new school year is opening without the Israeli teachers who normally join the schools to teach Jewish Studies and Hebrew.

"The good news is that there is a lot of good will in the Ministry of Education and with key people such as [Minister in the Prime Minister's Office] Meshulam Nahari and [Jewish Agency Chairman] Natan Sharansky," said World ORT Director General and CEO Robert Singer. "But we remain very worried because we don't have a confirmed budget. Teachers need to know that they have jobs; transport has to be arranged. But critical aspects of our schools' administration can't

be prepared because we don't know exactly what the funding situation will be."

Rabbi Eckstein was quoted by The Jerusalem Post as expecting to support the Heftsiba schools again but reiterated that there should be partners, including the State of Israel.

Mr Singer said the IFCJ had not yet made a firm commitment to provide funds.

"All of us deeply appreciate what the IFCJ did last year because without their help the whole system would have collapsed," Mr Singer said. "Looking to the future, I think Rabbi Eckstein is right in principle: the bodies which are traditionally responsible for Jewish communities should pick up the bill for Heftsiba."

He said that Heftsiba was fundamental to the vitality of the Jewish communities of the Former Soviet Union and its demise would have serious ramifications for Israel.

"The Jews of the Former Soviet Union form the largest reservoir for aliyah and without the Jewish schools which form the core of their communities their future as Jews is in danger."



ORT Cuba has helped a group of young Jews reach new heights – 1,974 metres to be precise. The 22 young people became the first group representative of Cuba's disparate Jewish community to reach what is the island's highest point, Pico Turquino. The ascent was the climax of a 12-kilometre

hike by the members of congregations in Havana and five other towns as part of a four-day programme co-sponsored by ORT Cuba in which participants studied Jewish tradition, developed leadership skills, and prepared for this summer's Taglit-Birthright tour of Israel.

ORT schools join the elite

Two World ORT-supported schools in Prague and Moscow have been elevated to the highest rank of secondary education in their respective countries.

The Russian authorities have recognised Moscow ORT Technology School as a gymnasium, the name given to the elite band of high schools in the country; and in the Czech Republic, the Lauder Gur Aryeh Jewish Community Day School, which features the ORT Lauder-Tye Science and Technology Centre, has been permitted to extend its lyceum-standard high school programme from the current four years to eight years.

These developments mean a more confident future for both school communities and bring a sense of fruition to the investment and support which World ORT has brought since the fall of the iron curtain.

"It is always difficult for a new school to make itself well recognised by the educational establishment of professionals, parents and

state officials," said Vladimir Dribinskiy, Head of World ORT's Coordination and Education and Technology Departments. "It's a daunting pedagogical challenge but one which World ORT has taken on, allowing us to be very much a help to these schools."

The Moscow school's certification as the city's only Jewish gymnasium brings with it extra government funding that can be used to raise teachers' salaries, provide more English and Hebrew lessons and additional extra-curricular activities.

ORT Russia National Director Dr Slava Leshchiner paid tribute to the principal, Dr Marina Moiseeva, who had focused on raising the standard of foreign language teaching and fully utilising distance learning technology.

"In her three years as principal she has brought to bear a great experience in management and knowledge of modern educational trends around the world

accumulated in her work for UNESCO and other organisations," Dr Leshchiner said.

Like many schools in the Czech Republic, the Lauder Gur Aryeh Jewish Community Day School (the Czech Republic's only Jewish school) has been offering non-selective 'elementary' education for nine years while providing the more rigorous 'secondary' curriculum only for children aged 15 and over.

This has encouraged some parents to place their children in non-Jewish schools where secondary study options were available from the age of 12. Combined with a demographic dip, this has seen the student roll dip from 190 to 130.

"Now we can offer parents a more intensive education for their children from an earlier age and so keep them studying in a Jewish environment for longer," said Deputy Principal Lucie Soklova, the World ORT Representative at the school.

Record graduation class at ORT Bramson College

More than 170 students have graduated from Bramson ORT College in New York – the largest graduating class in the institution's 30-year history.

The graduates can look forward to succeeding in a competitive job market thanks to the respect employers have for the college's qualifications – and the on-going help of the college's Career Service Department, which enjoys an 80 per cent job placement record.

"The knowledge you've learned and the practical job training skills you've acquired guarantee you a job and a bright future," Dr Ephraim Buhks, Director of US ORT Operations and Bramson ORT College, told the graduation ceremony. "In this increasingly tough job market, Bramson ORT is helping students improve their way of life and get top-quality job by providing them with a college-level technical, business and health service education. Bramson's students possess skills and relevant job experience that set them apart from other job seekers."

The 171 graduates come from a staggering variety of backgrounds – from Orthodox New York Jews to immigrants from as far away as Albania and Asia – but all are united in their ambition to make the best of the opportunities America has to offer.

ORT America Vice President and Chair of US ORT Operations Rosalind Vermut said: "The paths these graduates have travelled to get to Bramson ORT College have been

different but the end result is the same. The training they have received here is essential to their quickly entering the job market and to pursue a four-year degree at another institution. They are well prepared to take the next steps in their journey through life."

Foremost among the graduates was Valbona Kaca, who emigrated from Albania with her husband and two sons four years ago. She took advantage of Bramson ORT's work-study programme to pursue two majors – Medical Office Assistant and Medical Assistant and was awarded the Dean Barry M Glotzer Memorial Award for academic excellence.

"When my family came to this country I didn't know a word of English," said Mrs Kaca, who had been a veterinary surgeon in Albania. "A friend of mine advised me to enrol at Bramson so that I could take their excellent English as a Second Language classes while earning credits for a career in the medical field. I have the utmost praise for my caring instructors who guided me through some challenging times."

New Yorker Ora Lubin, an Orthodox Jewish mother-of-two, graduated with an associate degree in accounting.

"What I liked most about Bramson ORT College was its small classes," Mrs Lubin said. "The teachers give more attention to students, which certainly made it easier for me to learn. This nurturing environment allowed me to build close relationships



Mums know best: Ora Lubin and Kelly Garcia were among Bramson ORT's record-setting graduation class.

with my teachers. My experiences at Bramson have resulted in giving me a newfound confidence."

Fellow New Yorker Kelly Garcia graduated with an associate degree in Administrative Assistance and was awarded the KIS Associates Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement.

"Enrolling at Bramson was the best decision of my life," Mrs Garcia, who has a four-year-old daughter, said. "Their courses

broadened my range of knowledge and gave me hands-on experience in basic and specialised office skills. I thank my teachers because they believed in my abilities and brought out my potential. I have secured a good job and plan to continue my education with a bachelor's degree in Human Resources Management. I owe it all to Bramson."

There are more than 20,000 Jews and non-Jews studying at ORT institutions in the United States.

Accolade for ORT Ukraine President

The scientific elite of Ukraine have elected the President of ORT Ukraine, Professor Dr Yuriy Yakimenko, to join them as an Academician of the National Academy of Science.

Already an Associate Member of the Academy for 10 years, Professor Yakimenko's elevation to the ranks of the 150 Academicians is a huge honour for him personally and, by extension, a sign of the quality of ORT's programmes that the organisation can attract the commitment of someone so eminent in his field.

for ORT because it is well known that I am the President of ORT Ukraine, so ORT's prestige will be raised."

The author of more than 250 scientific works, Professor Yakimenko has filed 35 patents and is the recipient of two national prizes in science and technology. He is one of only two scientists from among Ukraine's more than 150 universities to have been

raised to Academician this year.

He is First Vice-Rector of the 40,000-student National Technical University of Ukraine, which was co-founded more than 100 years ago by Dmitri Mendeleev (creator of the first version of the periodic table of elements). Since 1993 Professor Yakimenko has been an increasingly active and influential lay

contributor to the ORT mission.

"He was part of the group which was instrumental in re-establishing ORT in the countries of the Former Soviet Union," said Vladimir Dribinskiy, Head of World ORT's Coordination and Education and Technology Departments. "No matter what the initiative, he has always been extremely helpful."



Honoured: The President of ORT Ukraine, Professor Dr Yuriy Yakimenko.

"This nomination is the highest recognition that Ukraine's scientific community can give a scientist," Professor Yakimenko, a specialist in electronics and informatics, said. "My new rank is useful

ORT Russia schools win HP grants

Three ORT schools in Russia have each won a substantial grant from technology giant Hewlett-Packard (HP) which will help them to improve their students' achievements through the innovative use of technology.

The ORT high schools in Moscow, St Petersburg and Samara represent one-third of the schools which have received this year's HP Innovation in Education Grant awards in Russia – out of a total of 50 winners in the whole of Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

"The ORT network is disproportionately well represented among the winners – a sign of our commitment to excellence and innovation in practical education, a commitment which has seen ORT become a strategic partner with HP in a wide range of social and educational projects," said Dr Sergey Gorinskiy, ORT Russia's Deputy Director for Development and International Cooperation.

Owen Kemp, HP Vice President and Managing Director of HP Russia, wrote to the schools congratulating them on their win.

"Your educational institution is part of an elite cohort dedicated to enhancing programmes in engineering, computer science, information systems and information technology, the innovations that are possible at the intersection of teaching, learning and technology," Mr Kemp wrote. "Thank you for your commitment to education and for seeking new ways to transform the learning environment in ways that positively affect

student achievement."

The winning schools will each receive a package comprising high-tech equipment, cash and a seat at next year's HP Innovation in Education Conference in San Francisco worth approximately \$100,000.

"These grants will have a huge impact on the schools," Dr Gorinskiy said. "In the current economic climate it is difficult to find money to upgrade equipment so this will be a big help. But another very important benefit is that the recipient schools are now part of HP's regional cooperative network, a privileged 'club' of some of the best educational establishments in Europe and the Former Soviet Union."

The grants were awarded to those secondary schools which were deemed by HP to have submitted proposals for the most innovative teaching and learning initiative.

The ORT de Gunzburg School in St Petersburg, for example, plans to make computer-based molecular simulations a routine part of science instruction.

The Moscow school plans to create a School Centre for Innovation in Learning (SCIL) to fundamentally redesign the learning experiences of students, teachers and parents. And in Samara, some 1,600 students are due to benefit from the development of a High Tech Educational Centre that will increase awareness of and interest in high-tech college degree programmes and careers.

Presentations of the past

ORT students in Russia and Ukraine have shone in an international genealogical competition organised by Beth Hatefutsoth, the Museum of the Jewish People.

Yana Levitan, a student at ORT Geshet High School in Samara, Russia, won the My Family Story Competition, which this year attracted some 20,000 entries in six languages from students aged 12 to 15.

Yana Levitan, a student at ORT Geshet High School in Samara, Russia, won the My Family Story Competition, which this year attracted some 20,000 entries in six languages from students aged 12 to 15.

And Elizaveta Kirichenko and Yuriy Saenko, who prepared their entries using the ORT Technology Centre at their school, the Levi Yitzchak Schneerson Ohr Avner School in Dnepropetrovsk, came second and third respectively.

The competition aims to encourage students to build a connection to the Jewish People by exploring their own families' histories. Students' work is added to the Museum's database for use by future generations.

"I decided to take part in this project because it is important for me and my family to continue the work of my grandfather Pavel Finkelstein," Yana wrote in the introduction to her presentation. "Many years ago he became interested in the history of our big, amicable family and wrote and published a book about it. After reading this book I understood that I should continue the work he started, so I decided to investigate my branch of our big family tree."

Dr Cecilia Waismann, a lecturer at Tel Aviv University's School of Education, oversees the Museum's competition, which is run in cooperation with the Israeli Ministry of Education.

"The quality of research submitted this year was amazing," Dr Waismann said.



Branching out: ORT student Yana Levitan's work on her family tree has proven to be world beating.

"Children are reaching back as far as four generations. Yana, however, did a much deeper work than her peers. She interviewed family members and got their narratives, which is really what we want to encourage. We are not interested in what they can find on the Internet. Most of the information Yana presented was based on what her relatives told her."

Jewish Studies teacher Simona Fleisher said Yana decided to make her submission in the form of a computer presentation to facilitate the display of the large amount of documents, photos and memoirs in an attractive and intelligible format.

"Projects like this motivate children to know their families' history and to be proud of their ancestors and of their roots," Ms Fleisher said. "Through studying family history they understand general history,

and Jewish history, more deeply. They are motivated to undertake independent research while their supervising teachers learn how to encourage students to think independently."

Susanna Khachatryan, Director of the ORT Technology Centre at the Ohr Avner School, added that the equipment supplied by ORT helped them to translate their enthusiasm into accomplished pieces of work.

"Using the technical facilities and with the support of the specialists at the ORT Technology Centre, Ohr Avner students have created a memorial book in which the fascinating and often painful destinies of Jews are described," Ms Khachatryan said. "The increasing ICT skills and knowledge that students have give them a chance to demonstrate their research on an international level."

Top awards for ORT Russia teachers

The Russian Federation's highest award for excellence in the field of education, the President's Prize, has been awarded to four teachers at ORT schools.

Natalia Fomenko, Nadezhda Belova, Vera Egorova and Irina Bobrova have been deemed to lead the country in their use of modern technology, their ability to communicate knowledge and in their students' academic results.

Ms Fomenko, a computer science and information technology teacher, is the third staff member at the ORT Geshet school in Samara who has received this award in the past three years.

"This prize is not only recognition of my merits but of the merits of the school as a whole," Ms Fomenko said. "The support of specialists at the ORT Technology Centre enabled me to produce material of the highest quality for the contest just as it helps me to maintain high pedagogical standards throughout the year. In addition, my development as an educator has progressed thanks to the seminars which ORT provides for its teachers."

The exceptionally high standards achieved by the ORT schools in Russia's cultural capital, St Petersburg, continued to impress adjudicators this year.

History teacher Ms Belova and Biology teacher Ms Egorova are both on the staff of the ORT de Gunzburg School in the city. Their wins places them in the same league of premier educators as their Deputy Principal, Gregory Vodopyan, who won the President's Prize last year, and colleagues who won it in the two years previous to that.

Two years ago, the school itself won the President's Prize for innovation and excellence in education – an achievement mirrored last year by St Petersburg's ORT Jerusalem School, where Irina Bobrova teaches.

"This award is not only recognition by the Government of the long term results of our work," Ms Belova and Ms Egorova said. "It is also recognition of everything we have learned through working at an ORT school. Teaching here has given us the opportunity to use the most up-to-date information technology and to share experiences at international seminars. The award is confirmation of the necessity of constant self-improvement which is inherent in the culture of our school."

The repeated official recognition of the quality attained in the ORT network showed that World ORT was meeting its top priority: attracting and retaining top teachers, said the Head of World ORT's Coordination and Education & Technology Departments, Vladimir Dribinskiy.

"If we want to succeed we need the best teachers; they are our greatest asset," Mr Dribinskiy said. "No matter how good the technology is that we provide, if the teachers are not good then parents will not send their children to our schools. Parents want to see bright, capable, professional people teaching their children."

Back to the future with Kadima Mada

World ORT is reversing the trend among Israeli schools against teaching practical technological subjects.

Learning Science through Technology – Phase 9 of World ORT's Kadima Mada programme in Israel – has been launched in seven schools, providing 12- to 15-year-olds with specially adapted, advanced Lego kits which, when combined with computer software programmes and specially trained teachers, allow the creation of mini-robots.

"Despite the recession there are many opportunities for good careers in low-tech industry for people with the ability to programme and work with robots and associated technology," said Kadima Mada Technology Education field team member, Shmuel Cohen. "So far, we have provided schools with a number of kits which the schools make available to their best students. This has improved the image of technological studies and, as a result, the subject has become very popular; more and more students at all levels want to do it."

In recent years, high schools in Israel have abandoned technological study tracks which were increasingly seen as a last resort for those children who were not doing well in traditional science subjects and the humanities.

The result is a serious shortage of technicians in the IDF and in Israeli industry, meaning that there are good career opportunities for those with the right skills.

The new educational trend has caused a stir in a Druze community, near Lebanon, whose children attend Horfeish Junior



Mapping out a future: Horfeish students demonstrate their robot's capabilities.

High School.

Horfeish Principal Rajach Gadban said: "This is a technological revolution. Kadima Mada is a voyage that has gone far and quickly; it's not only given us smart classes and robot kits, it's also given us a warm embrace which has helped us to achieve. Already Phase 9 has been so successful that parents have been phoning us asking for their children to be accepted into the programme."

The school was chosen for Phase 9's official launch. Among the robots displayed by students was one which, when it detected pieces of metal, lowered a magnet to pick them up and then carried them back to a depository; another was fitted with light

sensors and programmed to follow paths emitting a relatively low amount of light.

The Phase 9 coordinator at Horfeish, Fida Assaf, said: "The teachers gave the children the basics such as how to write a computer programme using NXT software. But the ideas on where to take these skills were all the children's. This project brings scientific theory to life for them."

At the launch was the new Mayor of Horfeish, Salach Pars, who said: "The launch of Phase 9 of Kadima Mada is like a window to how the school has been empowered in its capacity for scientific inquiry and creativity in the realisation of the children's potential."

Picturing the Holocaust brings identity into focus

ORT students in Russia and Ukraine participate in annual visits to some of the many key sites in 20th century Jewish history that dot their region – and for many it is a transformative experience.

This year, students participated in the March of the Living, which brings young people from around the world to Auschwitz-Birkenau for Yom HaShoah, and Masa Shorashim, which sees hundreds of ORT students congregate in Belarus for a week-long study tour of Jewish heritage and culture.

Students from six ORT schools used pictures from their trips to enter an ORT competition on the theme of the Holocaust. The poignant and powerful images created by the students can be seen at <http://ort.ru/en/projects/current/konkurs-fotorobot/konkurs-fotorobot-2009/>.

“The purpose of the competition is to integrate Jewish and Technology education in our schools and centres,” said ORT Russia’s Dr Irina Silaeva. “It is also a great way to develop students’ creativity and increase their motivation.”

The intensity of the images testifies to the effectiveness of programmes like Shorashim (Roots). Through the programme’s tours and seminars, ORT students in the CIS and Baltic States learn about the development of Jewish identity in the 20th century from victimhood to empowerment, from the destruction of the Holocaust to the building of the State of Israel.

An evaluation of the 2008 trip to Belarus, which lost 800,000 Jews during the Holocaust, showed that more than two-thirds of students who defined themselves as “Jewish only” reported that it had

strengthened their Jewish identity. Among students with a dual Jewish and non-Jewish identity there was a 400 per cent increase in the numbers who felt a sense of pride in their Jewish roots. Before the trip only about one-fifth of the students intended becoming involved in a synagogue or Jewish youth club; after the trip about two-thirds planned to do so.

This year’s trip promises to be no less effective if comments made by students from the Levi Yitzchak Schneerson Ohr Avner School are anything to go by.

“Having visited Belarus, having seen and heard how the Jews there lived and died, I now understand how important it is to know who my ancestors are and the price they had to pay for me to live,” said Olya Litvyak.

Olya Reznik said: “Millions of lives were lost because of the awful idea that Jews are not people and had no right to live. But there were those who did not surrender and who defended their right to life. Their actions have given us, their descendants, a life outside the ghetto. Now we need not conceal our nationality; we can study freely at a Jewish school, and we even have our own State.”

For Yana Piyavskaya, visiting the scenes of so much suffering had awakened a deep sense of empathy.

“Together with the victims I suffered those terrible days and understood the horror of war. And I wished for a better world, one without hunger and war, in which kindness and beauty reign,” she said. “There can not be a future without faith and to appreciate life it is necessary to know what you can lose.”



This powerful image, taken at Mauthausen Concentration Camp, helped Moscow ORT Technology School student Elizaveta Khmelitskaya to win first prize in the Holocaust-themed ORT photo competition.

Elizaveta, a Grade 10 student, was part of a tour of the Austrian camp to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Kristallnacht pogrom.

“Elizaveta has not simply pressed the button but has built the shots artistically. She is very good,” said competition judge Alexander Degtyaryov, a well-known Russian photographer, documentary film maker and author.

Mr Degtyaryov, a member of the Union of Artists of Russia and a Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Culture, commended ORT for choosing the Holocaust as the theme of the competition.

“This competition is very important,” he said. “There are people in Eastern Europe who continue to be drawn to Fascism because they did not see the nightmare which Fascists had made in the last century. People need to be constantly reminded to prevent these extremists from gaining power.”

ORT Argentina’s bullish response to recession

Expansion is the key to overcoming the drop in income expected as a result of the economic crisis, according to ORT Argentina’s new president, Hector Rosenzvit. The new facility is being built on a 1,330 square-metre plot with each of the four levels boasting a covered area of 870 square metres and its completion will free up space at Almagro which will allow the school to raise its enrolment.

The process has already started with the building, in collaboration with World ORT, of a science and technology centre adjacent to the campus of ORT Argentina’s Almagro High School. The new facility will free up space at Almagro allowing it to increase its enrolment.

“The best solution to the economic problems will be to expand the schools,” Dr Rosenzvit said. “With more children we will be better able to use our facilities and will have a larger income from the parents.”

The demand for new places is not in doubt. Last year ORT Argentina celebrated a record graduation class of 802 students and the schools’ reputation combined with the difficult job market have served to enhance the attractiveness of an ORT education – but the resources available for providing it are under pressure.

“We receive public funds but because of the economic crisis that income will not increase, so creating a deficit. Also, government rules dictate the amount which parents can pay towards their children’s



Man with a mission: ORT Argentina President Dr Hector Rosenzvit.

schooling. For example, last year teachers’ salaries increased by 20 per cent but the parents’ contribution may rise only 10 per cent. So there is a need for efficiencies and new sources of income,” Dr Rosenzvit said.

In the short term, ORT Argentina can draw on its cash reserves. The long term plan is to professionalise the organisation’s fundraising and options include the sponsorship of buildings, classrooms and other facilities through the use of naming rights.

“Many parents currently find it difficult to pay for their children’s education. We want to ensure that no Jewish child will be denied the opportunity to study in ORT because of economic or financial reasons,” Dr Rosenzvit said.

New President for ORT Italy

The renaissance of ORT Italy is set to continue under the leadership of Roberto Jarach. The son of the national organisation’s co-founder has taken over from Professor Giacomo Saban, who is joining the World ORT Audit and Risk Committee.

Mr Jarach has been presiding over a revitalisation of ORT’s role in the education of Jewish children in his hometown Milan, where he has been flying the ORT flag since the 1970s.

“After the ORT school merged with the community school in 1987 there was a gradual dissipation of the ORT presence in Milan,” Mr Jarach said. “But recently the situation has changed with the installation of a new IT laboratory in the Jewish Community School of Milan-ORT together with Interactive White Boards. And, with World ORT’s support, we are ready to implement a programme of upgrading

teachers’ skills in the use of technology in the classroom.”

The ORT mission runs in Mr Jarach’s blood. His late father, Guido, co-founded ORT Italy after the war with Renzo Levi and his mother chaired ORT Italy’s women’s division in Milan.

He sees ORT fulfilling a critical role in the Italian Jewish community. In Rome, ORT Renzo Levi is the only Jewish day school; in Milan it provides a centrist alternative to the two other Jewish schools which are Hareidi influenced.

“Assimilation is still a great danger for the Jewish community in Italy,” he said. “ORT can be a vital help for schools serving the traditional members of the community in preparing to keep them as up to date as possible and prepare their youngsters for the modern world in a Jewish environment. We can do a good job for the community.”

Mexican school affiliates with World ORT

Mexico's oldest Jewish school has affiliated with World ORT – the first of the community's 16 schools to do so.

The Colegio Israelita de Mexico School's (CIM) signing of a cooperation agreement with World ORT formalises and upgrades a 30-year history of collaboration which has seen ORT provide IT, science and technical training programmes there. Three years ago, ORT Mexico inaugurated a Media Training Centre at the school which services students from all the local Jewish day schools as well young adults seeking to widen their skills base.

"This agreement is only the basis for opening the full menu of options to work together and we're doing it with the world's best educational institution," said Alejandro Fastag Katz, the President of the school's board. "We're very proud about working with ORT and very excited about being part of the World ORT community and for ORT to be a greater part of what we're doing in Mexico. We're redefining the future of Jewish education in Mexico."

The main goal of the agreement is to facilitate and expand academic, technical and administrative cooperation between ORT and the CIM to allow the implementation of best educational and administrative practices at the school in a context which promotes maximum development of the students and prioritises the transfer of educational technology for the implementation of high-performance pedagogic models.

"This is a hugely significant step for us," said ORT Mexico National Director Jimmy

Salinas. "We have been looking to become a school for 15 years but demographic changes mean that there is already overcapacity in the Jewish school network here so the community did not want another school. So having the opportunity to collaborate so intimately with a school in the network essentially fulfils our wish. This is only the beginning; many good things are yet to come."

CIM can now access the experience and expertise of a wide range of schools and programmes in dozens of countries to help it realise its own ambitions. It can also fully participate in all ORT activities from sports to technical to competitions and student and teacher exchanges and seminars.

Collaborative programmes will aim to enhance academic standards, professionalise the school's academic and administrative structure and processes – from curriculum review to teacher selection and training – and use technology as a way of triggering excellence.

"Jewish education in Mexico needs to be reformed, it needs to be brought into the 21st century, and that's what this collaboration is going to do," Mr Salinas said. "We want to make CIM the best Jewish school in Mexico and in this way stimulate similar improvements in the other schools."

Mr Fastag agrees, saying that his school is ideally placed to work with ORT in changing the educational landscape. CIM "has always been about breaking the mould" he said, adding that it had been the first school in Mexico to introduce computer training.

Wingate goes wireless

Teachers at the 10th annual Wingate Seminar have been excited by the prospect of wireless technology enabling them to take students out of the classroom and into more stimulating environments.

The seminar, sponsored by the Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation, brought 16 educators from Argentina, Bulgaria, France, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, Ukraine, Uruguay and the USA to ORT House in London to hear from world experts on the use of wireless and mobile technologies for learning.

The intensive, week-long seminar was an eye-opener for many of the participants, such as Lina Lopez Valls, who develops and implements educational programmes at the Colegio Hebreo Maguen David in Mexico City.

"It has been a great experience, I've learned a lot," Ms Lopez said. "It could be very good to bring some of the mobile devices we have seen into everyday teaching. It could be shocking in the beginning, however. We are always fighting with the students not to use their mobile telephones in class – now we could be asking them to bring them to class in order to use them!"

Mobile phones were just one aspect of technologies which seminar participants learned about; other gadgets included the Nova data loggers which World ORT has supplied to dozens of Israeli schools as

part of the Kadima Mada (Science Journey) programme and PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants), small, hand-held computers.

"The beauty of this technology is that it facilitates learning outside the confines of the classroom," said Dr Yakov Ronkin,



Smiles ahead: the satisfaction of learning new tricks with technology.

World ORT's Research and Development Coordinator. "It takes away the classroom walls and expands the education process; you can learn anywhere and at any time."

S m a d a r A v i d a n , P h y s i c s S t u d i e s C o o r d i n a t o r

at Makif Aleph High School in Be'er Sheva, said the Seminar was greatly appreciated because governments could often fail to back up investments in new technology with training.

"Without adequate training teachers can feel intimidated using new technology because they worry that their students will be able to use it better and faster than them," Ms Avidan said.

Professor Jonathan Drori, Chairman of the Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation, said the Foundation was happy to be associated with the Seminar because of the value of teacher training and their confidence in World ORT to manage it.

"You get a lot of value for money if you train teachers to be better teachers," Professor Drori said. "There's a financial leverage because they are going to train other people. And we think the Seminar is a good way to get to teachers."

Summer School demystifies science

From astrophysics to antibiotics – there was no challenge too big, or too small, for the 18 gifted students from 11 countries brought together by World ORT at the Weizmann Institute of Science for this year's Raya Cowan International Science Summer School.

The 10 boys and eight girls from Israel, Russia, Lithuania, Italy, Moldova, Mexico, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Argentina, Chile and Brazil had been selected from a list of 90 nominated by local ORT professionals for the three-week combination of advanced scientific study and meaningful cultural exploration.

Split into groups of two or three, the students pursued projects ranging from the investigation of the transient absorption of the bacteriochlorophyll derivative, zinc bacteriochlorophyllide, in methanol to the dynamics surrounding black holes. And they strengthened their connection to Israel through a series of tours from Jerusalem to the Golan.

At the end of the Summer School each student prepared a detailed written research report and shared their findings with the rest of the participants in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. They also prepared a report on their activities for presentation to their peers at school.

Doctoral student Omer Korech was impressed by the students' ability to grasp advanced material. He mentored three teenagers in their introduction to interferometry, the technique of diagnosing the properties of two or more

lasers or waves by studying the pattern of interference created by their superposition.

"This material was way beyond the scope of their formal studies," Mr Korech said. "I was talking to them about electromagnetic radiation and lasers which is all very abstract physics that they haven't dealt with before. The fact that they managed to complete the tasks I set them showed they had understood the material well. I was very impressed by this. I think there are definitely some future scientists among these kids."

His students were thrilled by the challenge of learning something new in such an inspiring environment.

Yuri Kirillov, from Moldova, said: "I would like to be able to tell you what has been the best thing here at the Summer School – but there have been so many 'best things'! What has been really special has been working with such advanced lasers. I don't know whether I will ever again have the opportunity to do research using equipment such as this."

And Francesca Hasbani-Kermanchahi, from Italy, added: "The Summer School is a great mixture of fun and work. But what is important is that when we work, we work seriously. What is best about this is that I have the opportunity to check whether I will be any good as a scientist or whether I will have to think about doing something else in the future."

Dr Matthew Belousoff, who mentored two students in the investigation of how antibiotics inhibit ribosomes, the cell



Science test: Anna Pshenichny (left) from Israel and Clara Gomes from Brazil try out an advanced laboratory at the Weizmann Institute.

components which synthesise proteins, felt that the group would make good ambassadors for science among their school friends.

"The more you educate kids that science can be fun and exciting then they will pass that on to their friends when they get home and tell them about what they did here," Dr Belousoff said. "I think more people don't go into science because they don't really know what it's about or they are

terrified by what they think is something very complicated. But once you get into a laboratory you see it for what it is – a fun human endeavour. So the Summer School can help to demystify science."

World ORT's Raya Cowan International Science Summer School has been made possible thanks to a donation of more than \$300,000 to ORT America from the estate of Raya Cowan, a Polish refugee who became a US citizen in 1946.

Argentina's Virtual Campus is not to be sneezed at

Technology for tradition

ORT Argentina's Virtual Campus has enabled its students to keep up with their studies in spite of the Government's closure of the country's schools to contain the swine flu pandemic.

During just the first five days of the two-week closure, there were 80,000 visits to the Virtual Campus and more than 640,000 pages were viewed.

"This has proved to everyone how important, how useful, the Virtual Campus is," said Virtual Campus CEO Guillermo Lutzky. "This has been a stress test to certify that you don't only learn and teach within the walls of the classroom but you also need to learn and teach by Internet. Here we had kids using 21st Century tools. They were working in an information society environment where not everything is done with someone physically present."

Originally designed to expose students and teachers to new technologies, ORT Argentina's teaching staff started adapting the Virtual Campus as soon as it became apparent that swine flu was having a serious affect on public health.

"Mostly this involved changing the role of the teachers," Mr Lutzky said. "Some teachers were assigned to follow students to ensure that everyone was involved and in contact with each other; others were involved in developing content for distance learning, and others were involved in developing content for each subject."

When the Argentine Government ordered schools to close a fortnight early



Homework: the Virtual Campus has mitigated the effects of school closures.

for the winter vacation ORT students who were looking forward to a long holiday were to be disappointed.

But the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. One parent emailed: "I observed and evaluated the operation of the 'virtual exchange' between my son and his teachers during these two weeks. He progressed with his learning, developed the subjects at home and delivered his papers and homework via email. [ORT Argentina's] anticipation of the effects on the school of such an atypical emergency once again showed why ORT's educational provision is different from others'. You are

always a step ahead."

Such responses have vindicated ORT Argentina's approach to education.

"A month without classes in the middle of the year was unthinkable for us," said ORT Argentina National Director Adrian Moscovich. "Here was where well-applied technology came to the rescue. We feel we have passed with flying colours the test of this critical period thanks to the skill and commitment of our teachers and the enthusiasm and maturity of our students."

Guillermo Lutzky died shortly before the World ORT Times went to press. A tribute to Mr Lutzky will appear in the next edition.

Lighting the way to a bright future



This folk dance performed by members of the Muslim Circassian community in Rehania provided a colourful reminder of the diversity of Israeli life at the graduation ceremony for grade 12 students at Horfeish High School.

The Druze students at this school, near the Lebanese border, are among the tens of thousands of teenagers throughout Israel who benefit from World ORT's Kadima Mada programme.

School Principal Rajach Gadban said: "The connection

with Kadima Mada is one of the most important things to have happened to our school in many years."

Kadima Mada Pedagogical Coordinator Shmuel Cohen was invited to present diplomas to graduating students.

"There was a big poster in the sports hall where the ceremony took place which read, 'The diploma is the match – the student is the torch.' Kadima Mada is an important part of the amazing educational flame that burns in teachers' and students' hearts," Mr Cohen said.

Hebrew and Jewish Studies teachers from across the world have united in their praise for the Terry and Jean de Gunzburg Jewish Education Seminars which took place concurrently in Buenos Aires, Rome and Kishinev.

For the 75 teachers from 15 countries who participated in the four-day Seminars there did not seem to be enough superlatives to describe their appreciation for the opportunity they had been given to increase their knowledge of, and skills in, incorporating technology into their lessons.

"It was definitely, undoubtedly a success," said Odelia Libermanome, Coordinator of the Pedagogic Centre of the Department of Education and Culture of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, which organised the Rome Seminar together with World ORT's Education and Technology Department. "We have had extremely positive feedback."

Such feedback demonstrates the effectiveness of taking the seminars to the communities that need them so that the training can be delivered in the language, and with the cultural nuances, with which the teachers are familiar.

With Italy's Jewish schools introducing Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs) in the coming months, a videoconference linking Sha'ar HaNegev High School in Israel with Rome and Buenos Aires was a highpoint of the Seminar. Atar Polak at Sha'ar HaNegev showed her peers how the IWB in her classroom – which World ORT had provided last year through its Kadima Mada (Science Journey) programme – was used to take students through Bereishit (Genesis).

IWBs are also to be introduced at the Jewish day school in Cordoba, Argentina, where Seminar participant David Seiferheld is Jewish Studies Coordinator.

"The videoconference was very exciting," Mr Seiferheld said. "Now I will be able to apply what I saw at the Seminar to our school. IWBs are one of the most innovative developments in education: they are very appealing to our students and they transcend the barrier of distance. We can use them to make joint projects with other schools and bring the world into the classroom."

Together with other teachers from across Argentina as well as Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Chile, Peru, Venezuela and Uruguay, Mr Seiferheld benefited from a series of lectures and workshops by ORT Argentina's experts in Spanish and by World ORT's partner, Israel's Centre for Educational Technology (CET), in Hebrew.

Avi Gonen, Director of the Jewish Education Department at ORT Argentina, lauded the vision of World ORT President Dr Jean de Gunzburg and his family for instituting the Seminar.

"Jewish education is most important for our people because the new generation has to be taught their culture, Torah, Hebrew and history. If not, we're going to lose them in the future. The de Gunzburgs have taken a very important step to create this Seminar," Mr Gonen said.

In Kishinev, the Seminar – which was funded by ORT Moldova President Ilan Shor – brought ORT and non-ORT teachers from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Latvia and Estonia up to speed on, among other things, project-based learning, building lesson plans using software, preparing video materials for class, and the use of Web 2.0 technology.

Moldova's Deputy Minister of Education and Youth, Galina Bulat, told the opening session: "This Seminar is helping dozens of teachers from the CIS and Baltic States not only to share positive experiences but to get acquainted with the achievements of modern professional techniques."