

## **Education revolution: Jewish students to study Mohammed, Arab pupils to learn about Herzl**

By Or Kashti

In order to advance co-existence, each of the sectors -- Jewish and Arab -- must be taught about the other's culture, history, beliefs and heritage, from pre-school to grade 12. Instruction hours should likewise be devoted to learning the "narrative of the other side." These are the conclusions of the public committee established to investigate this issue, and Education Minister Yuli Tamir has adopted its conclusions.

The proposed curriculum for the co-existence education program was formulated at Tamir's request, by Israel Education Prize Laureate Prof. Gabi Salomon of Haifa University and Dr. Mohammed Issawi, head of the Al Qassemi College of Education, in conjunction with other education experts and representatives of the Education Ministry.

According to the committee's recommendations, the education system must nurture the "recognition of the fundamental democratic values of equality and social justice, particularly with respect to social minorities, and should instill critical thinking skills and promote openness and tolerance." It should similarly "develop dialogue skills between the sides and reduce negative stereotypes and prejudices."

The committee determined that these goals will be achieved by each side learning about the other's "culture, society, history, beliefs, heritage, language, and collective narrative in the context of granting respect and legitimacy to that narrative, without necessarily agreeing with it."

In order to implement this policy, the committee recommends teaching the coexistence curriculum from pre-school through grade 12, as part of the civics curriculum, and to include literature and geography as well. These studies will be part of the compulsory core curriculum, and every school will be allowed to add "elective activities" such as holding meetings between Jewish and Arab students.

These meetings, states the committee, should be held over a long period of time and guided by professionals. The recommendation follows the results of various studies that found that the long-term effects of today's practice of holding occasional meetings is nil.

The committee further recommends that Arabic language and culture be taught in the Jewish sector, and that the Education Ministry "promote the establishment of mixed Arab-Jewish schools and support the integration of Arab teachers in Jewish schools and Jewish teachers in Arab schools."

"The Education Ministry has an obligation to ensure education toward Jewish-Arab co-existence," says Salomon. "The goal is to learn the culture of the other, his narrative, and its legitimacy, without necessarily agreeing with it. Education toward Jewish-Arab co-existence is essential; without it we will be a divided society."

"The current elections have heightened the question of whether students understand the meaning of democracy," Tamir told Haaretz Monday, "and the fact that it entails affording the other respect, even if he is very annoying. The need to address issues of tolerance and openness to other ideas throughout the system has also become more pronounced."