

# DREAMS DO COME TRUE

Kindergarten of Dreams | World first educational center for children recovering from Cancer





## The Kindergarten of Dreams | The world first educational center for children recovering from cancer

"Day developer seeds wheat  
Annual developer plants trees  
Generations developer educates people"

Janusz Korczak

The Educational Center "Kindergarten of Dreams" is the world first dedicated to children recovering from cancer and to their families. The Center was built to respond to all the special needs of toddlers and children from the ages of 0-7. The Educational Center building and programs were carefully designed and offer a comprehensive, supportive and separate framework that responds to the physical and emotional developmental needs of the children and their families.

Larger than Life in collaboration with the city of Ramat Gan and the Ministry of Education operates the Educational Center by focusing on all the needs of the children and provide them with social, educational and emotional skills that will assisting them to close the gaps with their peer-group.

It is our basic belief that every child has the right to grow up with their group of equals and acquire precise and suitable respond to their personal, educational and social-developmental needs.

The Educational Center consists of a broad, multi-disciplinary professional team - all believe that will power can overcome all obstacles. Our goal is to reach the highest level of support for the children that needs us, by careful preparation, hard work, learning from our mistakes and being there for the children, for their parents and for our working team. We conduct a monitoring and structured-evaluation process of our working procedures, to continually improve the Center's operations and the response that we give to the children and their families.

Lior Shmueli

CEO, "Larger Than Life" Organization

Ayelet Replin

Manager, Educational Center

Hasida Danai

Chairperson, Educational Center



## Larger Than Life

"Larger than Life" was established in the year 2000 as non-profit organization by volunteering parents who are dedicated to improve the quality of life, advanced medical treatment and well-being of all children in Israel battling cancer, regardless of religion, race or gender. Our activities assist annually an approximate of 1500 children with cancer, some terminally ill and all fighting for their lives. Our dedicated team and volunteers, accompany the children and their families from the initial diagnosis to recovery.

### Larger than Life activities are focused on three areas:

**Happiness** | Our activities provide great moments of happiness and reinforcing the love for life of children with cancer, helping to ensure that the social and emotional support for the sick children and their families will give them the strength they need to fight and win their struggle with the disease. We provide: Psychological treatment for children and families; assistance of mentors and volunteers, social and emotional support groups, a Dream Trip to Disney, summer camps, empowerment-retreats for mothers, a "Smile Train Ride" in Purim and more.

**Health** | We reinforce and support children-oncology departments in all the hospital throughout Israel by improving the quality of medical treatment, purchasing advanced medical equipment, improving hospitalization conditions, build playrooms and purchase games for children, provide financial support to purchase medications that are not included in the State health support and help finance extra hospital medical and social staff as well.

**Hope** | We try to create a long-term change by educating and raising public awareness to the right of our children to receive the best medication and medical treatment they need to ease their pain and save their lives, with no relevance to their parent's financial state.



Battling cancer is an extended struggle of prolonged medical treatments which can take months and often years both in hospitals and at home. At times, full recovery can take up to 5 years.

During this difficult time, children cannot attend their educational settings. Their chemotherapy treatments prevent them from being exposed to the sun; they cannot play in the sand or playgrounds that are not paved and shaded; and their immune system is too weak to protect them from germs and other infectious diseases.

"I would like to say well done, about the important work that you do. You have built a beautiful place, filled with love and compassion. I wish you much success and ask that you view me as a full partner every step of the way..."

(MK Dov Lipman)



**THE REALITY**

Children with Cancer ages 0-7	Diagnosis period	Hospitalization and out-patient treatments period
<b>Contents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Educational framework outside the hospital with high hygiene level.</li> <li>› A facility where children can develop pedagogically</li> <li>› Registration- right after diagnosis according to the child's medical needs</li> </ul>	Socialization - Attendance in kindergarten possible even during treatment
<b>Emotional Level</b>	Loneliness, feeling different and bizarre, fear of changes in appearance and search for friends in similar condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Closing gaps through strengthening social and developmental skills</li> <li>› Developing friendships with children in their age groups</li> </ul>
<b>Medical Level</b>	Weak immune system preventing from being exposed to the sun, playing in sand, grass or anywhere outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Avoiding medical treatments to detach from the hospital</li> <li>› Access to developmental treatments to improve growth impediments</li> </ul>

End of treatment (Approx. a year since being diagnosed)	Recovery and supervision. One to two years after the diagnosis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› An environment where children can develop emotionally, socially and intellectually</li> <li>› An atmosphere with multisensory stimulations for improving all motor skills</li> <li>› Exposure to cognitive, communicational and aural stimulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Assistance of educational staff which will guide the children back into their local educational frameworks</li> <li>› Creation of educational, socially and medical treatment "transitional" plan: from the Sterile-oncology Center to local community kindergarten</li> </ul>
Developmental- Psychologists' assistance providing parents tools to monitor and deal with the challenges their child is facing	Assistance of developmental psychologists providing parents with tools to handle all developmental aspects of their healing child. Fortifying the child self-image, confidence and ego functions.
The hospitals access individual developmental treatments that are not responding to all the children's needs	Individual developmental treatments: Occupational therapy, clinical communication, emotional and sensory treatments within the educational system, accessibility for children with hearing disabilities- classrooms with suitable acoustics.

Children with Cancer ages 0-7	Diagnosis period	Hospitalization and out-patient treatments period	End of treatment (Approx. a year since being diagnosed)	Recovery and supervision. One to two years after the diagnosis
<b>Emotional Level</b>	Anxiety, despair, confusion, shock, denial, anger, uncertainty	Exhaustion, desperation and loneliness	Emotional outbursts, family tension	Loss of attention, Post trauma within the family
<b>Medical Level</b>	Not knowing who to ask and where to start	Logistical assistance in general and with all involved authorities	Integration back into the system and bringing the family back to normal routine	Continuation of integrating the family back into the system and to normal routine
<b>Resources</b>	Support and psychological assistance for parents - processing the emotional experience. Meeting with parents group going through similar process	Medical and financial support, workshops and information on the different medical professions involved	Easing activities	Support groups advising on how to better deal with the disease and keeping the family together

“To the staff, parents and children of Kindergarten of Dreams, a morning at this kindergarten shows that dreams almost always come true. I wish all of the children years of good health, long lives, and quality of life. Yours, with all of my heart.”

(Shai Piron)

“We never allowed ourselves to imagine that one day, we would stand on this side of the screen and that we would learn to receive all of this wonderful work that embraces us time and time again. That we would be able to feel, just a minute after Razi fell ill and the sky fell down upon us, that we are so lucky. That we will remember so many faces for eternity, to show them our appreciation and gratitude, and to carry them in our prayers without speaking with them even once. There are truly no words to describe the gratitude and the emotions we feel for the presence of each and every one of you in our lives, and for the strength that you give us. Thank you that this place exists and helps us ‘busy ourselves’ with things that regular children do, and thank you that you are always here for us when we need you.”

(Parents of Raz, a child who learns at Kindergarten of Dreams)





## THE VISION

### Education Center/ Vision

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Every year there are over 1000 children battling cancer in Israel, 200 are of kindergarten age (up to age 7), and about 130 live in the central region of the country. Many parents are forced to quit their jobs in order to care for their sick children. Up till today, there was no suitable educational setting outside of the hospitals that responded accurately to the medical, social-educational, psychological, developmental and emotional needs of these children and their families.

On the 22nd of September 2014 Larger than Life has opened its Education Center "Kindergarten of Dreams" for children recovering from cancer.

The Center was built in Kafer Azar on a lot allocated by the city of Ramant Gan, in close proximity to the Sheba Medical

Center with the largest children oncology ward and accessible to Schneider and Dana children hospitals.

The uniqueness of the Center is in its special features including: a unique air conditioning system which helps maintaining high sterile level; structure with characteristics of a hospital large isolation room; the walls were painted with anti-bacterial painting material; and windows with special shading and glassware - all to provide the children with weak immune systems a feeling of security and protection while having a normative kindergarten experience.

The Center's highest educational goal is to allow every child to experience a normal childhood, diverse and filled with happiness while reducing the age gaps which might have occurred during their time of treatment. The Educational Center aims to make a difference in the recovering children's lives by improving their quality of living, by developing unique educational and treatment services as well as by raising awareness in

the community while recruiting additional partners to join its journey.

We believe in the importance of giving these unique children the resilience and appropriate wide support to help them continue in their journey even though it faces tough challenges. We believe in the capability of each child to exercise their talents and to fulfill their dreams in the best possible way though faith, love and proficiency.

It is our duty to care for these young children who are exposed to invasive testing and difficult painful treatments. Upon arrival to the educational center, we desire to establish solid acquaintance with the children and their families and create a relationship based on trust with our devoted team and our support staff. In a gradual process of acquaintance we hope to enable an open, direct and trusting dialoged.





## THE CENTER'S PROGRAM

The Educational Center serves as a balancing and completing life experience of the child. "The kindergarten is more than an educational framework; it is rather a social and cultural pattern as well as a framework of values that expresses the highest values of people and society. It is one of the fountains of childhood that people will benefit throughout their lifetime. Thus - the responsibility of protecting the purity of this fountain." (From Activities and Behavior, Chapters in Kindergarten Psychology, Gideon Levin 1971)

Research shows a direct connection between early childhood social interactions of these children, to their roles later on in life as adults. The earlier they start to develop social skills the more they will benefit later on. Children who take part in educational settings are awarded with morals and equality values, respecting and accepting differences, acceptance by society and relating to others in society. Children battling cancer who are not part of educational settings might lack these gifts and qualities later on.

An additional tool in the growth of the child is exercise and physical activity. It had been proven that physical activities contribute to the child's physical, mental and intellectual skills. Children with cancer, cannot attend regular educational frameworks, cannot visit playgrounds or public parks like their friends. They spend a majority of their time in hospitals or at home in front of the TV while their parents have a hard time to contribute to their overall development. At the Educational Center we provide suitable response to the needs of this unique group of children and contribute to their proper development.

## The Educational Field

**Imparting educational content /** Social values are imparted according to the regular educational program of the Ministry of Education for the kindergarten level. The environment of the kindergarten is suitable and enriched with stimuli appropriate for the development of the children and provides them with emotive activities.

**An educational program personally adjusted to the child /** The educational program of the kindergarten is personally adjusted and fitted to the needs of the child in various fields (academic, cognitive, behavioral, emotional, social, life skills, communicational-language, sensory and motor skills). Identifying and monitoring the needs of the child is done at the time of the child's acceptance at the center, by observations, shared conversations with doctors and external care-giving factors, filling in questionnaires and other ways. The program is designed together with a multi-skilled staff, and is based on the child's strong points while striving to strengthen those skills which are weak. The heart of the effort is to determine the program's aims and goals

while enumerating the ways of attaining them by the entire staff.

**The support and counselling format /** This format is provided by a municipal educational counsellor - an expert on early childhood.

**A rich and varied extra-curricular program /** The program is led by a staff of professional and accredited teachers: physical education, dance, rhythmic-music, yoga, computers and more.

**Providing an extended school-day program /** An afternoon activity care-center is provided during the school year, as well as day camps are provided during holidays and the summer. The Center provides educational and stimulating programs whose aims are to enrich the children's social and cultural world in a safe setting. The planning of the activities is in accordance with the medical and emotional needs of the children.

**A high ratio of teachers and assistants to the number of children /** There is a careful assignment of the staff according to their suitability, and the employment of a large number of skilled and certified educational staff in order to provide personal and individual care for each child.



## The Psychological-Educational Field

**Support and psychological assistance for the children and their families /** are provided by an expert developmental psychologist for early childhood. The need for an accompanying psychologist is essential in the process of the children's adjustment to a new framework and the returning of the parents and the children back to a normal routine.

**The Kindergarten psychologist /** is a professional and inclusive address for the parents to get initial advice and direction in the different developmental aspects and providing them with answers to some of their challenges throughout these trying times.

**Support workshop for parents /** once every two weeks there is a supportive workshop for the parents conducted by the Kindergarten's psychologist.

## Rehabilitation Therapy - Paramedical Treatments

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**Speech treatment by a speech therapist /** Treatment and rehabilitation for speech impairment, verbal understanding or expressing word, personal or verbal communication, monitor hearing ability, assistance with strengthening and maintaining communication skills to improve the children's self-expression.

**Occupational therapy with occupational counselor /** Exercising gross and fine motor skills with a goal of maximizing motor skill balance.

**Emotional-Art therapy with extended therapeutic team /** During the treatment session of the children with their team therapist - conduct group or individual emotional processing. The therapists use different types of materials: dough, a wide range of colors and different raw materials, allowing the children express their feelings, emotions and thoughts and allowing a place to open up and expose their inner-world. The treatments are conducted by therapeutic team and the treatment programs are formed according to each child's individual needs.

**Nutritional consultation to the children and their families by a nutritionist /** professional support of nutritionist and creating an intervention plan according to health needs, proper eating habits - all leading to the children's nutritional independence at school and at home.



## Additional Services

**Diapering, cleanliness and personal hygiene /** Hands are washed with soap and water, and disinfectants are used in the Center. Disposable protective robes and gloves are worn before every contact with the child's body, and special masks are worn when necessary. Thus, a high level of personal and area hygiene is preserved at all times.

**Cleanliness of the Educational Center /** At the Center there is a cleaning company which provides rigorous cleanliness on a regular basis.

## Parental Involvement

The Center's door is always open for all children in the care of the oncology wards of all the hospitals. It is possible to come to the Center and meet with the educational staff in order to receive advice and consider the suitability of the child's integration into the Educational Center. During the year the parents meet with the educational staff and the therapists in order to coordinate cooperation between the activities at the Center and at home. In addition the parents are invited to receive advice, to raise parental, family and personal issues, and to receive the optimal answers from the most suitable and accredited source. At the Educational Center - Kindergarten of Dream thought is given to the parents and other members of the child's family. Our desire is to assist as much as possible, to preserve the family routine, the routine of parents who go about their business with the knowledge that their children are protected in a place where everything is arranged and prepared to answer their every need.

	Sunday	Monday
Reception and organization - Acceptance of the child into the educational framework. Developing social communication skills	Arrival, didactic games and socio-drama games	Arrival, didactic games and socio-drama games
Morning meeting - Educational subject - Nutrition - healthy nutrition	Morning meeting with nutritious meal	Morning meeting with nutritious meal
Running Educational and treatment programs (individual / group)  Paramedical treatments	"The Dough group" emotional processing and therapy	Communication workshop with speech therapist
Running Educational and treatment programs. Creating experimental activities.	Playing in the playground. Sightseeing of the grounds around the Center. Activities in the interactive hall	Dance workshop
Nutrition - healthy nutrition: Lunch		
End of a day session: Storytime, activities, games enrichment		
organizing and farewell		

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Arrival, didactic games and socio-drama games	Arrival, didactic games and socio-drama games	Arrival, didactic games and socio-drama games	Arrival, didactic games and socio-drama games
Morning meeting with nutritious meal	Morning meeting with nutritious meal	Morning meeting with nutritious meal	Morning meeting with nutritious meal
Baking and cooking workshop - learning to eat healthy with a nutritionist Yoga	Physical education workshop	Groups of motor therapy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Occupational Therapy</li> <li>› Fine motor Therapy</li> <li>› First grade preparation</li> </ul>	Library - Book exchange  Puppet shows  Kabbalat Shabat
Computer workshop	Music workshop	Gardening Therapy Gymboree activities including reflexology	
Nutrition - healthy nutrition: Lunch			
End of a day session: Storytime, activities, games enrichment			
organizing and farewell			

# CONTACT

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מרכז חינוכי לילדים המחלימים מסרטן

