

### ETAI BEIT HANINA MINI-CONFERENCE REPORT

The ETAI winter mini-conference was held on December 17, 2017, under the name of “Speaking of Speaking.” About 150 inspectors, school principals and English teachers from all sectors, both Jewish and Arab, attended the conference at Beit-Hanina Comprehensive School For Girls in East Jerusalem. Megan Selway, from the America Center, opened with a plenary session about practical techniques and tools to enhance students to speak in the classroom. In the three parallel sessions, Ella Ben Emanuel involved teachers in tools that improve students’ fluency and give them more confidence to speak English in the classroom. Hili Zavaro shared her experience in improving students’ communication with other students around the world through joining a worldwide project. On the other hand, Loubnah Dakwar talked about theoretical and practical aspects of teaching speaking skills. Two teachers from Arab schools, Nasra Khatib and Naela Salman, shared their experience in teaching speaking skills to their students in the classroom. The conference ended with three focus groups based on school levels (elementary, junior and upper level.) The participants left the conference satisfied that it had helped in their professional development, while looking forward to more ETAI conferences to come.

*Nihad Aweida*

*ETAI Board Member*

### ETAI BE’ER SHEVA MINI-CONFERENCE REPORT

The ETAI Be’er Sheva Mini-Conference on February 18, 2018 brought together many enthusiastic speakers and attendees. Our plenary speaker, Roger Cohen, ignited the conference’s topic, “Speaking of Speaking,” with his presentation: “Better Teacher Talk Creates Better Student Speech.” He demonstrated how to reverse the tendency of teachers to dominate classroom discourse (typically a 90%/10% ratio) to more student-centered conversation in which students speak 75% of the time. It is always a pleasure to host Roger, whose day job keeps him busy at the US Embassy in Jordan. Following the plenary were five equally stimulating parallel sessions given by Daniella De Winter, Mitzi Geffen, Lori Roth, Raviv Schwarz and a new ETAI presenter, Karen Yerushalmi. The sessions addressed the following topics; *Teaching Reading to Dyslexic Learners*, *The Importance of Teaching Intonation*, information about the “Speak Up” program, *Encouraging At-risk Students to Speak More*, and an explanation of the “Pause and Remember” method. All participants left the event with renewed energy and more importantly, practical ideas for increasing student participation in conversational English.

*Lisa Leebhoff*

*Mini-Conference Convener*

### READER’S LETTER

Dear ETAI conference participants,

I am not an organizer of the ETAI conferences but just a participant like you. It has come to my attention that often the organizers are blasted with complaints about the conferences. It is so easy to come and enjoy the product of an enormous amount of work behind the scenes. It is true that sometimes things are not perfect, but it is important that even if you feel a need to give constructive criticism, that it should be included with appreciation for all that has gone well and been enjoyed.

I have participated in ETAI conferences for years and have gained an enormous amount of helpful information and ideas as well as enjoying the booths to see (or buy) various products that could be beneficial to my teaching. I personally have no idea of all the behind the scenes planning, preparations, energy, and time that have gone into each and every one of these conferences but I don’t need a huge imagination to realize that it’s a lot. I think the next time anyone feels the urge to complain about something they should stop, think, and consider whether it’s important to mention what might be just a petty complaint, whether their purpose is constructive, (if so it should be phrased as such,) and whether they are taking into consideration all the effort behind the finished product and giving equal time to expressing their appreciation of that.

**MANY KUDOS FOR ALL THOSE INVOLVED WITH PRODUCING THE CONFERENCES FOR THE BENEFIT OF ENGLISH TEACHERS NATIONWIDE! THE TIME AND EFFORT YOU GIVE ON A VOLUNTEER BASIS IS ABSOLUTELY INCREDIBLE! THANK YOU SO MUCH!**

With much appreciation,

Darlene Herman

Beer-Sheva