

## The AlmaLinks Conference

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Although students are busy preparing for exams, the IDC still operates as an important meeting point for conferences and lectures. This week the school was proud to host two particularly promising young entrepreneurs as they unveiled their new program, which combines business entrepreneurship and Jewish connections around the world.

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Last Thursday, the newly created AlmaLinks organization held their launch conference at the IDC. This new initiative, imagined by two young entrepreneurs, is a non-profit organization that aims to reinforce Jewish identity with the will to support the Israeli economy through the establishment of global business connections. The basic idea of the program is to strengthen the ties between the Jews of the Diaspora and Israel through a common interest: commerce. The project developed after an encounter between an Israeli student, Tomer Sapir, and an American University student, Max Bronstein, during a Taglit-Birthright trip. The two young entrepreneurs quickly recognized the need to create additional “after birthright” follow up opportunities. Taglit was an important step to help young Jews discover the land of their forefathers, but to these two brilliant leaders, an additional step was necessary to reinforce the ties between Jewish young adults after their trip, by reinforcing their common connection with Israel.

The concept quickly caught on, drawing the attention even of the IDC’s president, Prof. Uriel Reichman, who generously offered the young team the opportunity to launch their conference at the Interdisciplinary Center itself. The presentation began in front of an auditorium filled with students from the IDC, journalists, and entrepreneurs

who were eager to join the project. Prof. Reichman opened the event by encouraging young businesspeople and especially young leaders to pursue their dreams, and affirmed that yes, in Israel dreams can become reality if they are reinforced with a strong desire to succeed and most importantly, the will to enhance Zionism. Indeed, Prof. Reichman explained that the future of this country is contingent on those people who strengthen the connection between Israel and the Diaspora.



Other prominent guests attended the conference, among them Prof. Ze’ev Ganor, who is a lecturer at the Technion University of Haifa and from whom the young team received the guidance and business plan for such a project. Ganor also seemed very optimistic about the success of the initiative, especially because Sapir, Bronstein, and the whole team managed to recruit very experienced and senior entrepreneurs to be mentors. This cooperation and guidance is meant to provide a high level of professionalism to the program, and also gives to the participants an irreplaceable learning experience.



Alan Baker, the former Israeli ambassador to Canada, also attended the conference and congratulated the initiative as being a tremendous part of the Hasbara worldwide program. Ambassador Baker, who was a strong and outspoken advocate for the state of Israel and the Jewish world, is aware of the challenges that we face, and he is convinced that AlmaLinks is providing a terrific solution for strengthening the link between Israelis, Olim Hadashim, and Jews living abroad. Finally, Uzi Landau Israeli minister of infrastructure also spoke and reaffirmed the support that the Israeli government has for Zionist initiatives, and particularly those that derive from the entrepreneurship and passion of Jewish young adults.

One particularly interesting element of the program was the founders' decision to create Almalinks as a global initiative. Although it would be difficult to start on such a large-scale, they believed that because birthright participants originate from all around the world, there was no reason that the project should exclude any of these potential young leaders. As a school that also derives strength from its international characteristics and strong foundation of Zionism, the RRIS looks forward to seeing Almalinks grow and hopefully playing a part in its development.