

## First Time Ever in Israel: The Sandbox Becomes a Building Site

Thanks to the Jerusalem Foundation, the Bloomfield Science Museum has created a place where children turn into junior engineers – the Schächter Garden sand park that includes drafting tools, construction equipment and a brick-building factory.

On June 19, 2014, the Bloomfield Science Museum inaugurated its "building site," the first venue in the country that transforms children into real engineers. The site, located in the museum's early childhood wing, was dedicated thanks to a contribution from Jizchak and Denise Schächter of Switzerland through the Jerusalem Foundation. The sand garden will be a site for design, drafting and building, at the center of which is an experiential "factory" for constructing sand-based bricks.

Children are invited to experiment through play and to come up with ideas for design and construction like true engineers. So, for example, they can build a shelter for their pet, furniture for their parents to sit on or a gate to prevent toddlers from entering the machinery area. The site is divided into different areas according to building stage, and includes a drafting table for designing the structure to scale and a machine to fill sandbags of different dimensions. The children can wear specially sized hard hats and will also have access to tools, scaffolding, window and door frames, and flooring to build multiple-story houses.



Jizchak Schächter, Jerusalem Foundation Switzerland board member, previously established a Schächter Garden at Beit Yehudit on Jerusalem's Emek Refaim street. When he sought to create another park, the Jerusalem Foundation suggested that he contribute to a novel initiative at the Science Museum. Over the last three years, Bloomfield Science Museum has been spearheading *Engineer*, a broad-based European Union project to advance engineering studies at the elementary

school level. As part of the curriculum, Bloomfield is expanding the target population for this initiative, including elements in the new exhibit that will appeal even to young children.

Within the spectrum of Schächter Garden activities, children can choose among different construction projects or invent their own, and they can cooperate with other children or with their parents. The work at the "building site" encourages

imagination, team-building, fine and gross motor skills and the development of engineering solutions towards the achievement of a goal.

"This is a novel and groundbreaking project that exposes children to engineering principles drawn entirely from their own world," explains Bloomfield Director Maya Halevy. "Utilizing design and building processes at an early age is an excellent opportunity to cultivate creative thinking."

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