



A Proposal to Establish

The Center for Child Education and Development in the Digital Age

Helping Families and Educators Navigate the Age of Artificial Intelligence

The Shift in Childhood

For generations, raising a child meant walking them through friction—a friendship that took real effort, the slow patience of finishing a challenging book, a problem with no simple shortcut. Those experiences helped build relationships, resilience and problem-solving skills.

That foundation is shifting.

Millions of children now turn to generative AI for help with homework, news summaries, and increasingly, for something closer to emotional support. These tools are fast. They skip the cognitive effort that real learning requires. And because they respond instantly, without judgment, they may remove the healthy struggles children need to build perspective, empathy, self-reliance, and confidence in their own judgment.

To a child, it feels like helpful, effortless support. To families and educators, it sometimes looks like an unmonitored shift in how children develop.

The Unaddressed Problem

Yet parents and teachers are navigating this shift without evidence or training. No standard research guides child-AI interaction, and national policy on AI in classrooms remains limited and fragmented.

This unguided adoption threatens to deepen existing social divides. Technology promises to narrow equity gaps, but unguided access usually widens them. Well-resourced schools and families adopt AI with structure and supervision. Underserved communities often adopt the same tools with far less guidance, placing children at greater developmental risk.

The Solution: The Center for Child Development in the Digital Age

The University of Haifa is answering this challenge by launching The Center for Child Development in the Digital Age, built on three pillars: Research & Theory, Applied Practice in Schools & Clinics, and Professional Training for Educators and Counselors.

1. Research and Theory: Establishes the scientific foundation the field is currently missing. Combining experimental design, longitudinal tracking, behavioral coding, and participatory research, Center researchers will map AI's impact on learning, critical thinking, social empathy, identity, and mental health — from early childhood through adolescence.

2. Applied Practice: Translates empirical findings into classroom and clinical practice. Working directly with schools, municipal authorities, and counseling centers across Israel, the Center will pilot age-appropriate AI literacy curricula, build a model demonstration lab in the Faculty of Education, and serve as a national policy advisory body to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Welfare.

3. Teaching and Training: Builds capacity across the educational workforce. The Center will deliver accredited continuing-education certificates, annual national symposia, and hands-on workshops for teachers, counselors, and psychologists, with priority access for Arab, Druze, and socioeconomically peripheral communities.

We are bringing all three functions under one roof, so research informs classroom practice and classroom realities shape the next questions researchers ask.

Why the University of Haifa?

The University of Haifa, home to Israel's leading Faculty of Education, is uniquely positioned to meet this moment. Bringing together expertise in education, psychology, data science, communications, and public policy, the University offers the interdisciplinary perspective needed to understand how generative AI is influencing childhood development and learning.

Located in northern Israel, the University works with one of the nation's most diverse population, spanning Jewish, Arab, Druze, and Bedouin communities across every socioeconomic level. As a result, interventions developed here can be tested and refined across the full spectrum of Israeli society.

Partnerships & Institutional Synergies

- **Industry Research Linkage:** Existing research with Intel's Haifa R&D Center gives the Center an immediate partner for studying how children interact with emerging AI technologies as they evolve.
- **Academic Collaborations:** The Center will build on the University's partnership with the Technion through the joint Center for Humanities and Artificial Intelligence, drawing on its interdisciplinary research and ongoing dialogue around the societal and ethical implications of AI. It will also collaborate with peer laboratories at Harvard, Columbia, the University at Buffalo, and the University of Denver, ensuring that discoveries made in Haifa both contribute to—and benefit from—the leading international research on AI and child development.
- **Public Sector Channels:** Longstanding relationships with the Ministries of Education, Health and Welfare give the Center a direct pathway for translating research into national policy and classroom practice.

Evaluation and Accountability

Progress will be tracked annually against Year 1 baseline data and reviewed externally every three years by an international advisory board:

Pillar	Key Success Metrics
Research & Theory	Peer-reviewed publications, competitive grants (ISF, Horizon Europe), doctoral placements.
Applied Practice	School/clinic partnerships, AI literacy tool adoption, and ministry policy implementation.
Teaching & Training	Professional enrollment, measured gains in AI competence, and classroom impact.

Academic Leadership

Prof. Yair Ziv, Center Founder & Dean of Education: A developmental psychologist specializing in children's social cognition and early childhood education. His pioneering research on conversational AI and children's social information processing—co-authored with the Intel Haifa R&D Hub—anchors the Center's scientific agenda, while his leadership as Dean provides the strategic vision and national policy network needed to scale its impact.

Prof. Zohar Elyoseph, Center Head: Associate Professor and licensed educational psychologist. Independent 2026 bibliometric analyses rank him among the highest-impact researchers globally in both AI in educational assessment and AI in mental health. His work includes multilingual AI simulators for clinical training, suicide risk assessment tools, and ethical frameworks for AI in counseling. He will be joined by a team of leading researchers in psychology, human development, digital learning, and educational change each contributing a different part of the Center's intellectual and practical agenda.

For Your Consideration

Supporting **The Center for Child Development in the Digital Age** will help equip families, educators, and policymakers with the research, training, and practical guidance they need to help children thrive in an AI-enabled world.

We invite you to partner with the University of Haifa to launch the Center and help shape how children grow, learn, and thrive in the digital age.

Contact Information

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