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LSESD MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

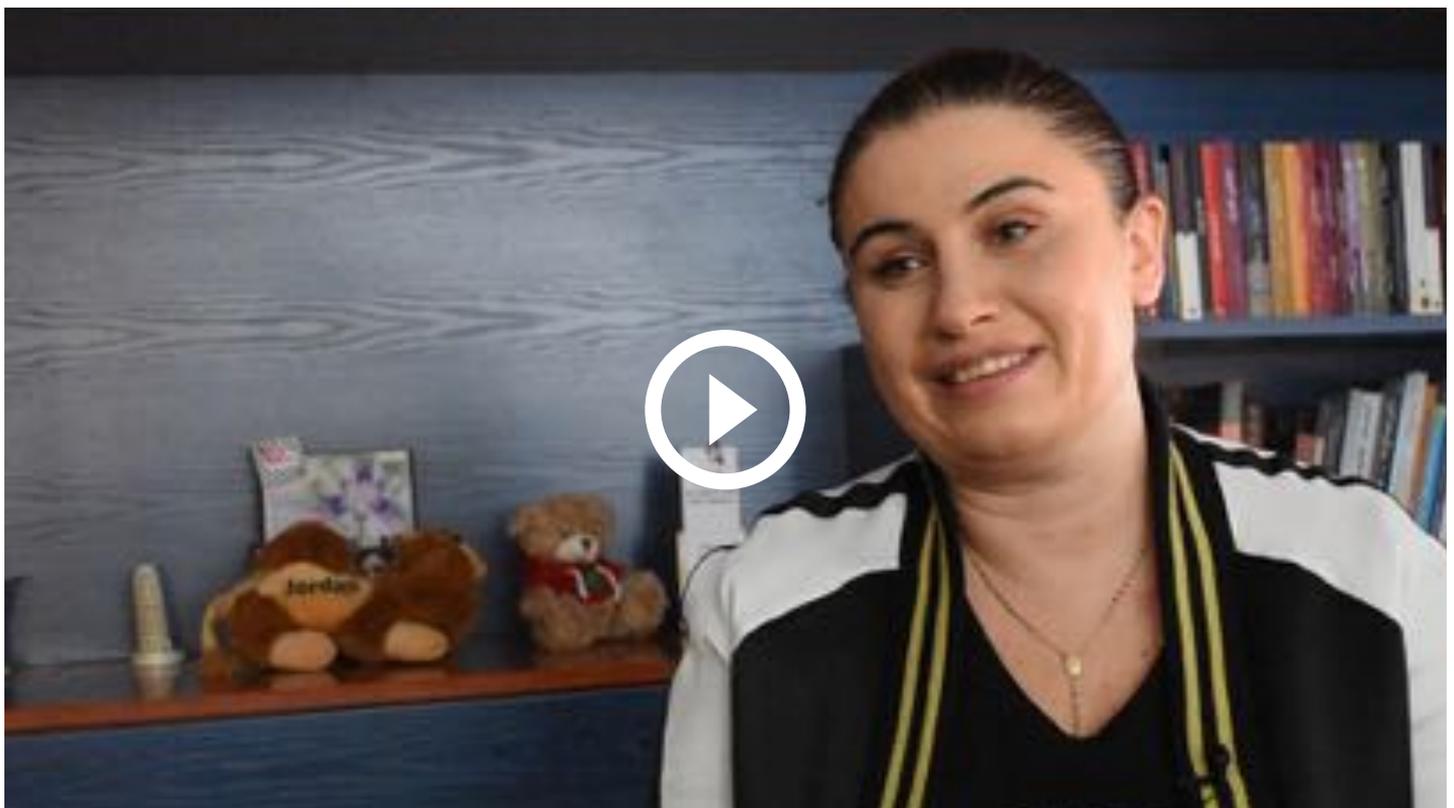
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# SKILD'S PARENT2PARENT IS CHANGING LIVES

BY DANIELLA DAOU

Parents, especially parents of children with special needs, are always actively searching for an invigorating support group to help them deal with their challenges and answer their questions. We are blessed at SKILD to have provided parents with this kind of support. We call it the Parent2Parent support group and it is a comfortable space for parents of special needs children to share their experiences, listen to others, and grow together. Since the group was created two years ago, we experienced changes in the emotions, behavior, attitudes, and perspectives of all mothers who joined the network. We see anger turned into understanding, frustration transformed into a recognition of blessings, and smiles everywhere instead of tears. Watch the video and meet Anna, a mother of a young girl with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Listen to Anna describe her journey from despair to hope after joining the Parent2Parent support group where she found a listening ear after struggling with unanswered questions and fears for five years.



## National Day 2021 is Coming Soon!

The 9th National Day for Students with Learning Difficulties is just around the corner! After supporting educators, schools, and the academic community, the time has come to highlight the important role that parents have been playing during the past year as they took on the role of not only the caregiver, but also that of the educators and therapist at home. Stay tuned for SKILD's online conference on Thursday, April 22nd, which aims to honor, equip, and empower parents through highlighting their amazing efforts and providing them with resources needed to help them along the way. In parallel, a documentary of different cases of children and youth with learning difficulties will be broadcast on national television to raise awareness for their rights and needs and shed light on the challenges faced by some children and the successes in the journey of others.



# 8 MONTHS LATER

BY WISSAM NASRALLAH

*It's been eight months since the August Port Explosion and what has Lebanon seen change since then? LSED's COO, Wissam Nasrallah, shares with us his thoughts on Lebanon and the direction that it is headed in.*



Help one person at a time!



# THE PLIGHT OF LEBANON'S TEACHERS

BY JULIA WALLACE

## BACKGROUND

To date, Lebanon is passing through the worst economic crisis in its history as a nation. According to a recent article[1], the statistics look incredibly bleak: The Lebanese pound has lost around 90% of its value within 18 months. Food prices have risen more than 400% in the last year. The number of Lebanese below the poverty line has nearly doubled in a year (from 28% to 55%) while extreme poverty has tripled (from 8% to 23%)[2]. The nation is reeling as people fall victim to overarching socioeconomic forces and struggle to afford basic necessities, such as food, medicine, and rent. While these compounding crises have impacted virtually everyone in society, there is another—less noticed—group that has been significantly affected by the nation's crises: Lebanon's teachers.

## THE PLUMMET TO POVERTY

Lebanon's entire education sector[3] is at a critical juncture—with 60–70% of all Lebanese students attending private schools, the entire sector could collapse as families are increasingly unable to pay tuition rates. While this impacts the entire nation, Lebanon's teachers are at the forefront of this crisis. The private education sector employs 59,000 teachers and 15,000 administrative staff[4], so the continual loss or reduction of wages is pushing more and more teachers and their families into economic vulnerability. As the economic crisis deepens, teachers across Lebanon are facing immense financial and emotional strain.

[1] <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/2865231/lebanons-economic-collapse-numbers>

[2] <https://www.unescwa.org/news/Lebanon-poverty-2020>

[3] <https://www.lsesd.org/rebuilding-the-ruins/>

[4] <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1682376/middle-east>

## CHALLENGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING

In addition to financial fears, teachers are also dealing with the stress of hybrid and online teaching as COVID-19 rages on. For Sylvia Bardakjian Kamberian, a math teacher at the Beirut Baptist School[5], the stress of in-class teaching lingers on her mind: “COVID-19 is a big stressor in my life. As an only child I live with my parents, both who are above 58, and as a teacher I fear that I might catch it and pass it to my parents. My concern is with protecting them as much as I can.” Yet online teaching also poses its challenges, she notes. “Online sessions are diminishing the real value of teaching. I feel that teaching should be more than transmitting information; it should be about building relationships. But with online teaching it’s hard since I am not able to look my students in the eyes and bond with them on a deeper level.”

Suzy Burji, an English teacher at BBS, agrees that online education poses new challenges. “Teaching in times of instability has been very difficult. One of the many challenges I have faced is the lack of digital resources that can be adapted to match the requirements of the curriculum and appeal to students’ needs as online learners. Personally, I feel this has been the most demanding year when it comes to teaching, especially since I have not gotten to know my students well.”

While all teachers have faced the hardships of adapting their course material for online teaching and attempting to bond with students from a distance, many also face the problem of unreliable technology. “One of my greatest personal challenges this year has been trying to teach without the proper technological resources, such as a good personal computer or reliable internet”, said Nasma Harati, a homeroom teacher in BBS’s preschool. A recent survey sent to BBS teachers revealed that Nasma is not alone in the struggle to teach with insufficient technology: 40% of all teachers surveyed reported that they relied on technology borrowed from the school to perform their teaching tasks. The same survey revealed that 71% of teachers are parents who have children at home—itsself a stressor—and of these teachers 90% reported not having enough devices for each member of their household.

Mrs. Haddad\*, a BBS teacher with two children at home, highlights this struggle. Between the four people in her household, they possess two cellphones, one old iPad, and one laptop. The iPad does not connect to Microsoft Teams—the primary online platform used at BBS for online teaching—the laptop does not have a working microphone and must constantly be plugged into a power source to operate.

Given the economic crisis, many teachers are unable to personally invest in the devices needed for online teaching. Similarly, schools are not able to invest in improved technology because of their already-strained budgets. Yet with the painfully slow rollout of vaccines in the country, adequate technology remains a vital necessity for Lebanese educators as virtual learning shows no signs of abating.

## THE FUTURE OF LEBANON AT STAKE

As Lebanon grapples with crisis after crisis, many people have lost hope for the current state of the nation. However, a sliver of hope remains that change might come through the future generation. Beirut Baptist School holds firm to this belief that Lebanon’s future lays with its children and youth, which is why it remains steadfastly committed to providing quality education that emphasizes the holistic formation of its students, including their moral and ethical formation. In a country marred by corruption, the nation yearns for a generation of people who value honesty, integrity, and diversity—which is exactly what BBS strives to instill within its students.

But BBS’s mission of intellectual and moral formation is not possible without the tangible means by which to live it out. With the economic crisis, this is becoming a difficult task. Specifically, there is a great need to support teachers in securing functioning technology as they continue to pour into the future generation.

[Support a Teacher](#)

[5] <https://www.lsesd.org/bbs/>

“*Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education.*”

-JFK

# We are the Children of Hope

*Our in-house pastor, Joseph Kazzi, shares about the power of the resurrection and its effect on the disciples. As a result of Christ's resurrection we can be children of hope.*



*None of this would be possible if it weren't for you our faithful partners, friends and loyal supporters. ♥*

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