



NEWS

A Word From Our Rabbinic Advisor Rabbi Mansour

It is always a special time when I visit Gesher Yehuda each Rosh Chodesh. Not only do I speak to the entire school; I go into every class. I have the privilege of working with the students one-on-one.

Each class has its unique energy that is all positive; students are sharp, witty, and happy. It is an all around great feeling. There is a strong connection, a wonderful energy among teachers, rabbis and students. The teachers are energetic, loving and compassionate. The school has grown, adding many new classrooms. The spaciousness in the building has helped create a strong learning environment. The education at Gesher is transformative. It is changing lives! Come visit!

Chag Kasher v'Sameach
Rabbi Mansour



A Message from the Executive Director Dr. Eugene Miller

The first half of the school year has seen many new exciting developments. We have built a new state-of-the-art sensory gym, newly outfitted our computer lab, added 7 sun-filled classrooms, enhanced our IT platform including new smartboards, introduced several new cutting edge therapeutic and educational programs, and launched a new professional development initiative. On February 28, 2019 we held a panel discussion, *The New Face of Specialized Education* to highlight our approach in providing a



comprehensive educational experience for your children. The program is described on page 2.

More is to come. Plans are underway to build a science lab, introduce a robotics program, and continue with the enhancement of our facility. Stay tuned!

Chag Kasher v'Sameach

A Message from Our Principal Mrs. Deborah Katz

The year has been in full swing as we continue on this upward spiral of excellence. The teachers have been amazing and the students are thriving. Motivation and positivity are continuously felt through the building. Our expanded facility allows us to use different rooms for specialized purposes and gives us the ability to expand the experiences we offer. One example is our new shul which houses our daily minyan led by Rabbi Leon. It is wonderful to see the pride in our children when they pray.

Professional Development

We are always advancing academically and making professional strides at Gesher Yehuda. Our staff gathered for an in-house training in order to improve their skills to enhance the lives and education of our students.

Highlights from the day included:

- Making Sense of Sensory Integration with Sori Tamir our in-house occupational therapist.
- Developing Writing in Young Children with Susie Garber for the lower grades.
- How to Make Writing Matter- Elisheva Zeffren for the upper grades.
- Zones of Regulation: A Schoolwide Social/Emotional Skills Program, with our own Dr. Chaim Neuhoff.

Presenters from the sessions continue to follow-up in the classroom, enhancing their techniques and motivating students to improve their critical and creative writing. The atmosphere of learning at Gesher should continue!

Rabbinic Advisor
Rabbi Eli Mansour

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The New Face of Specialized Education

Seventy professionals in the educational field attended *The New Face of Specialized Education* at Geshur Yehuda Yeshiva on February 28, 2019.

The overriding theme of the morning was that high-quality special education programs have the power to transform lives. But no longer can they simply rely on quality teaching and small class size. To truly be effective they must be enhanced with research-based therapies, multi-layered, multi-sensory pedagogies and individualized classroom management programs, all embedded in a comprehensive IT infrastructure.

The program was moderated by **Rabbi Eli Mansour** who framed the discussion in the Torah mandate that we have an obligation to educate all our children, and to do so to each child's capacity. The presenters, **all on staff** at Geshur Yehuda, offered perspective on new developments in specialized education.

- **Child Psychologist, Dr. Chaim Neuhoff** spoke of the exploratory work being done at Geshur Yehuda using technology to track student behavior in real time. Such tracking uncovers patterns and allows teachers and administrators to reward positive achievements and make continual adjustments when needed.
- **Occupational Therapist, Mrs. Rivky Teitelbaum, MS, OTR/L** offered a concise, physiological explanation of challenges faced by children and discussed how new research-based therapies employ music and movement to build neural pathways that result in measurable improvements in reading, writing and cognition.
- **Reading Specialist, Mrs. Sheri Harari, MSED, WDP** closed the program with a multi-layered discussion of the components of literacy. She ended where Rabbi Mansour began: The key to quality education is to teach to each child's ability and by doing so grow their capacity to learn.

A lively exchange of questions and answers followed the presentations. Highlights of the program is available at www.gesheryehuda.org

Therapist Corner

Update from Our Occupational Therapy Program

Rivky Teitelbaum, MS, OTR-L

There have been major developments and wonderful progress seen within our therapy department!

Our state-of-the-art sensory gym is currently up and running with new equipment geared to be as therapeutic as possible, including a 3-panel rock climbing wall and a variety of swings. The students are enjoying it to the absolute fullest. These modern resources improve overall body coordination, upper body strength and sensory processing skills. They are motivating and exciting, and get the children more prepared for learning. Using the swings for instance, can give the students an increased ability to calm themselves, by providing them with the level of sensory input that they need and enabling them to feel more grounded when returning to the classroom following therapy sessions.



Individualized Sensory Diets have also been implemented multiple times a day specifically in the lower grades. These are specially designed exercises/activities for individual students to give them the sensory support they need to tackle subjects that require a lot of concentration, such as reading and math. This type of input to muscles and joints improves children's ability to sit for longer periods of time and enables them to learn and function at their optimal level.

Reflex Integration: There may be specific primitive reflexes that have not been properly integrated throughout the early stages of a child's development. The persistence of these reflexes can interfere with the child's ability to access higher levels of learning. We assess each child when he or she comes to Gesher Yehuda and work to integrate these primitive reflexes so that they no longer act as a barrier to learning.



Update From Our Speech & Language Department

Dear Parents,

After several long months of winter, spring has finally arrived, and here at the Gesher Speech & Language Therapy Center we couldn't be happier to talk about it!

- Did you know that the word "spring" has more than 1 meaning?
- Or that the phrase "spring in my step" is called an idiom, a form of figurative language?

- Or when you look out of your window in the morning and see that people are walking down the streets wearing sweatshirts and no coats you instinctually make inferences about the weather.

These are just some of the things you may learn about when you take a peek inside our Speech & Language Therapy Center. In Speech & Language, we focus on each child as a whole.




- Our team of therapists uses ongoing assessments and a collaborative, interdisciplinary model of intervention that is designed to meet each child's unique speech and language needs.
- We use a multisensory approach to build students' intelligibility, receptive, expressive and social pragmatic language skills.
- We use an evidence-based approach to ground our therapy practices, combining more traditional models with innovative techniques.

We are proud of our students and look forward to seeing them grow and "blossom" throughout the rest of the school year and beyond!

Chag Kasher v'Someach
Rivky, Malky & Sophia

Rivky Susskind, MS, CCC-SLP TSSLD; Malky Hirsch, MS, CCC-SLP, TSSLD A; Sophia Dweck, MS, CCC-SLP, TSSLD



-  Visit us at: www.gesheryehuda.org
-  Like us on Facebook @gesheriyehudayeshiva
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Around The School

- Our newly expanded sensory gym is now open. Among other equipment, it features, swings, tunnels, a trampoline and a rock climbing wall. The children love it. Never has therapy been so helpful and so much fun.
- In science, Mr. Schwartz built an impressive 'Chain Reaction Machine' with the students. It was hands-on using Dominoes-tracks and drop marbles to cause a reactive process.
- Our new, fully networked, state-of-the-art computer lab is open.
- Our 3C's Goal Trips have so far been to: Bounce U and ice skating at Aviator and we are going on the third grand trip of the year soon!
- *Pizmonim* hours with Rabbi Elnadav have been extended. He has more time to prepare the students for chagim, kerieah and being chazzanim.
- Our Chanuka Chagiga was delightful, with donut decorating, pin the shamash on the menorah, pass the Chanuka present and candle making!
- The Art Show, led by Mrs. Cindy Zalta involved creating and painting hot air balloons which are displayed throughout the school.



- Purim Chagiga run by the Junior High with a fantastic program that included different booths like decorating clown cupcakes, Bouncy House and face-painting. An 8th grade student was the DJ for the balloon dance!



- We now have a game-room filled with a foosball table, a giant Connect Four, table tennis and basketball hoops. The students earn time in the game room as rewards for different goals.
- Our popular Hall Of Fame pictures on the wall alternates monthly. The students excitedly seek out their photos each month!

T.A.G. (Technology Awareness Group)

An important event was held by Alex Paskie from T.A.G. (Technology Awareness Group). He spoke about technology and how careful we need to be while using it. One point he stressed was how the iCloud has access to all of our information and how there is no privacy over stored information. Evie Caracocly is our representative from T.A.G. and comes to Gesher every Wednesday to work with students on regulating the use of internet to protect everyone. She is also in touch with parents to filter electronic devices.

Special 8th Grade Privileges

Every Rosh Chodesh 8th grade students organize a schoolwide canteen to raise money for specialized events and graduation expenses.



This past December, the students used part of their funds to experience the unique talents of the Harlem Globetrotters in Madison Square Garden. The students were mesmerized by the electrifying performance of the team. The players combined comedy, theatrics and their athletic abilities to entertain the enthralled audience.

It was an experience never to be forgotten.

