

## **The New Face of Specialized Education at Gesher Yehuda Yeshiva**

Seventy professionals in the educational field attended, *The New Face of Specialized Education*, at Gesher 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 not only do we have an obligation to educate all our children, but we have to tailor our teaching to the capacity of each student. The presenters, all on staff at Gesher Yehuda, offered perspective on new developments in specialized education. Child Psychologist, Dr. Chaim Neuhoff spoke of the exploratory work being done at Gesher 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 neuropathways 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. Gesher Yehuda teaches children with learning differences in grades K-8. As its name implies, it is designed as a bridge to mainstream programs. It is for children who need a customized educational program in order to excel. It offers small class size, a full program of therapies and enrichment and high school tracks. Applications are now being accepted for the 2019-2020 school year.