

Haifa Educational Leaders Visit Boston

Partnership programs between American and Israeli Jewish communities offer educational professionals the opportunity to learn from and build relationships with one another. This spring, Oranim International School facilitated an inspiring delegation of educational leaders from Haifa to Boston.



The delegation from Haifa to Boston facilitated by the Oranim International School included middle and high school principals, as well as representatives from the Haifa Municipality Department of Education, the Ministry of Education, and the Hartman Institute. Educational leaders from Haifa explored the successes and challenges of the Boston Jewish community's educational system, by visiting diverse educational institutions and meeting with key figures there. Participants in the delegation built relationships with their Boston peers while gaining insights that they will bring back with them to their schools and communities in Israel.

This delegation was part of the Boston-Haifa Connection Jewish Education and Identity Committee's ongoing professional development programming. Oranim International School has provided supervision and support for the committee's educational activities for the past ten years.

Preparing for the Delegation

In preparation for the delegation, Oranim International School led a series of educational sessions for participants in partnership with the Hartman Institute, the Haifa municipality, and the Ministry of Education. These sessions included a keynote presentation on Jewish peoplehood by Professor David Mittelberg, Chairman of the Oranim International School, as well as sessions on Jewish renewal, and the

American Jewish community by other members of the faculty of the Oranim International School. Participants also met with lay-leaders from the Jewish Education and Identity Committee in Haifa. This preparation enabled participants to begin thinking about the issues they would encounter during the delegation, and receive relevant background on those issues.

Meeting Our Partners in the Boston Jewish Community

The trip began at Brandeis University with a presentation and panel discussion of rabbis from the major American Jewish denominations exploring issues in American Jewish life. The delegation went on to visit Boston Jewish community day schools, a Jewish Community Center (JCC), congregational schools, a university Hillel, and educational non-profits. During each of these visits, the Haifa educators had the opportunity to hear firsthand from their Boston colleagues and see how these educational institutions impact Jewish life.

Participants also spent a day visiting public schools in both urban and suburban communities, in order to better understand the American public educational system.

Making a Change in the Next Generation

On Shabbat, the Haifa educators visited a variety of synagogues in Boston and got a taste of this important element of American Jewish life. The entire group attended Shabbat morning services at Temple Emanuel in Newton, where they received an *aliyah* to the Torah and spoke with congregation members. Ofra Tendler, the principal of a junior high school in Kiryat Hayim just outside of Haifa, shared the following words with the congregation there:

[The last few days here in Boston have been an outstanding experience for me and for my friends. We met here a warm community and wonderful people who have been doing everything to make us feel at home. People who work hard to do things to make the world a better place.](#)

[Together, we faced questions and dilemmas which concern the Jewish people but beautifully enough, touch the future of the rest of the world. It inspires us to see the way you cope with Jewish identity.](#)

[I would like to tell you that we will take with us, back to Israel, things we learned from you: the way you keep strong bonds with Israel over the years. Your loyalty to Israel. Your persistence in building bridges between the diverse denominations of Judaism, and the fact that it is all done with so much sensitivity, respect, and a lot of thought.](#)

[As educators, it is our obligation and privilege to bring all this to our students and to try and make a change in the next generation.](#)

Tendler's words sum up the far-reaching impact of the delegation on all those who participated. We hope that the educational leaders will bring back their insights to create meaningful change in their schools, their students, and their entire communities.