

## **Meet Prof. Sharon Feiman-Nemser, Fulbright Senior Specialist from Brandeis University**

*In Israel, student teachers often do not have enough hours in the classroom. Oranim's new Shemesh program aims to revolutionize teacher education in Israel by emphasizing classroom experience. Prof. Sharon Feiman-Nemser is providing expert consultation to help Shemesh articulate and achieve its goals.*



Oranim was honored to welcome Prof. Sharon Feiman-Nemser as a Fulbright Senior Specialist for two weeks in June 2017. In this interview with the Oranim International School newsletter, Prof. Feiman-Nemser describes her experience during her visit and her ongoing partnership with Oranim.

### **A Unique Experiment in Israeli Teacher Education**

The Fulbright Specialist Program sends U.S. faculty to serve as expert consultants on curriculum, institutional planning, and related subjects at academic institutions throughout the world. Prof. Feiman-Nemser came to Oranim in order to provide consultation to faculty in building Oranim's new field-based teacher education program, Shemesh. She is very excited about the Shemesh program "which represents a unique experiment in Israeli teacher education."

As Prof. Feiman-Nemser explains: "These... two weeks I had the privilege and opportunity to get inside the thinking of the Shemesh leadership team... and learn about the program's vision and design. I am impressed with their dedication and hard work as they lay the groundwork for a new program based on close partnerships with area schools and a commitment to serving at risk students. "

### **Developing A New Teacher Education Program**

Prof. Feiman-Nemser is the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Professor of Jewish Education and a Senior Scholar at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education at Brandeis University. She has experience developing and directing teacher education programs at University of

Chicago, Michigan State University, and Brandeis College, and has done research on teacher education, learning to teach, and teacher mentoring. She brought this experience to Oranim, helping Shemesh faculty articulate learning goals for their students in terms of what they want their students to know and be able to do.

Prof. Feiman-Nemser has done extensive work in teacher education in Israel over the years. She served on an international committee appointed by Israel's Council for Higher Education to evaluate schools of education in Israeli universities. She was a keynote speaker at Oranim's international conference on school-based teacher training in math and science and at the recent graduation of MOFET's first class of post-doctoral students.

Prof. Feiman-Nemser thinks that the clinical component in most teacher education programs in Israel offers limited opportunities for students to learn in and from practice. She celebrates the recent interest in residency programs which offer more intensive and extensive classroom experience. She is delighted to be working with Shemesh, a leader in this reform of teacher education in Israel.

As a Fulbright Senior Specialist, Prof. Feiman-Nemser met with the Shemesh leadership team and with groups of teacher educators associated with the various teacher education programs at Oranim – elementary, secondary, special education, and early childhood. She explored ideas for program research and evaluation, taught two classes to teacher education students (she was excited to teach partly in Hebrew!) and gave a public lecture on clinical teacher education. She also met with faculty and staff of HaMidrasha Education Center for Israeli Judaism.

### **Continuing the Conversation**

Looking to the future, Prof. Feiman Nemser welcomes opportunities to “continue the conversation” about the Shemesh program. She says: “I think Oranim is a wonderful institution with a strong reputation and visionary leadership.” As she explains, “I am delighted to be a thought partner in this important undertaking.”