

Top Chinese Educators Partner with Oranim

Leaders in the Chinese educational system turned to Oranim to learn about creativity and innovation in early childhood education. Following a successful visit of Oranim faculty to China, a delegation of educational leaders from China visited Oranim.



Chinese Initiative for Early Childhood Education

In China, leaders in education are focusing on an initiative to improve early childhood education throughout the country, and particularly in underdeveloped, rural areas. As part of this initiative, a group of Oranim faculty was invited to lead a conference last November on early childhood education in Guizhou, a remote region of China. In January, a delegation of top Chinese educators visited Oranim to learn more about Israel's innovations in early childhood education, and we plan to continue the partnership in the future.

Guy Almog, CEO of I. C. Global Connections, works together with Oranim to help the college develop partnerships with China.

The early childhood education system in China is the largest in the world, with over forty million children and two million educators. The system, however, faces many challenges, particularly in rural areas, including insufficient government funds, non-academic training for early childhood educators, low salaries for educators, and lack of people interested in the profession. In response to these challenges, in 2010, the government of China developed a nationwide initiative focusing on early childhood education and allocated significant funds to the initiative. Guizhou, China's poorest region, is one target of this initiative, as well as being a region designated for investment and development in other areas.

In this context, Bijie Pre-School Educational College in Guizhou hosted a delegation of Oranim faculty in order to learn from them about innovations in early childhood education. The college is devoted exclusively to early childhood education, with 3,500 students. It was founded in 1916, and since then has grown and become professionalized.

Oranim faculty who visited China included: Professor Yaarah Bar-On, President of Oranim College; Dr. Roberta Bell-Kligler, Director of Oranim International School; Dr. Orit Dror, Chair of Early Childhood Education at Oranim; and Gail Suskin, Head of Creative Arts in Education Program at Oranim.

International Conference in Bijie

Bijie, a city of over 6.6 million people, hosted an international conference on early childhood education, where Oranim faculty were the keynote speakers. Oranim faculty presented Oranim's approach to training early childhood educators in Israel. Five hundred students and faculty members attended the conference, as well as the Guizhou regional director of education, heads of preschools, and representatives of other colleges and universities. In addition, Oranim faculty speeches were broadcast to other colleges in the area, reaching approximately 2,000 people.

Lectures discussed the idea of Israel as a start-up nation and what that means for early childhood education, including how Israeli educators encourage creativity, initiative, and independence. They also explored how to integrate art, nature, and free play into early childhood education.

In addition, Oranim faculty visited preschools in the area, with 1,000 students per school. Their Chinese hosts welcomed Oranim faculty with warmth and generous hospitality, both at the colleges and the preschools. They were enthusiastic and curious to learn more about Israel and early childhood education there.

Delegation from China to Oranim

Following up on the Oranim delegation to China in November, a delegation of national leaders in early childhood education from China visited Oranim in January. They attended workshops by Oranim faculty on movement, animals, and literature in early childhood education. They also visited a range of innovative early childhood centers in the area, including urban, kibbutz, and a center on the sea that incorporates the sea in education. In addition, they celebrated a Tu B'Shvat seder to gain an understanding of including holidays in educational settings.

Future Plans

Oranim plans to continue developing its partnership with China, and Oranim faculty have already been invited to visit China later this year to share their work. Oranim faculty see the partnership with China as a wonderful opportunity to define their own educational approach better; to travel and learn from another culture; and to develop research projects building on the partnership.