

Educating Hebrew Teachers for Communities around the World

Hebrew teachers in Jewish communities around the world need tools and knowledge to make learning experiential, effective, and fun. This fall, Oranim International School facilitated a one-month intensive course to meet this need, followed by a yearlong mentorship process where Oranim faculty guide teachers' work in the field.



Eight Hebrew teachers from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia participated in Oranim International School's professional development course in September. The course was in partnership with the Prime Minister's Office Nativ program, and with the support of the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration.

All of the students teach Ulpan Alef (an intensive Hebrew course for beginners) at Israel Centers in their home communities - Minsk, Odessa, Kharkov, St. Petersburg, and Moscow. They will continue to receive mentorship from Oranim faculty after they return home.

Gaining Hebrew Language Skills and Teaching Tools

During the course in September at Oranim, students gained pedagogical skills for teaching Hebrew as a second language, as well as improving their own Hebrew language skills. As one student wrote: "I enriched my professional experience and discovered many new things that will help me in my work in the future."

One important element of the program was the class, Pedagogical Supervision for Teaching Ulpan Alef. Students learned diverse formal and informal educational methods for teaching Hebrew. They also gained digital learning tools, such as online quizzes and trivia. Each student had the opportunity to share the needs and challenges in their classroom, so that pedagogical supervision could be adapted to focus on these issues. Students developed lesson plans and teaching tools for use in their classroom based on what they learned.

In addition, students participated in Hebrew language skills and enrichment classes, including: Practicing Hebrew Skills, Learning Hebrew through Israeli Songs, Standards and Norms of Contemporary Hebrew, and Introduction to the Hebrew Language.

Learning Hebrew with Our Feet

Students also learned the language through educational field trips to get to know the land and people of Israel and their history. Field trips included studying relevant Hebrew texts at the sites. Students visited Zippori, Caesarea and Zikhron Yaakov, the Botanical Gardens at Oranim, and the Art Institute at Oranim.

Impact

In their evaluations at the end of the course, students discussed its impact on their Hebrew language and teaching skills: “Thanks to this course, my language level improved, and I stopped being embarrassed about expressing my thoughts in front of others;” and “I received many tools for teaching.” They also appreciated the warm environment at Oranim and the top-level faculty: “I got to know many good people and wonderful teachers, and I learned a lot about teaching in Israel. I had a perfect opportunity to live at this place Oranim, to feel the home-like atmosphere and to really feel that I was at home.”

Follow-Up

A crucial part of the program is follow-up after the course in Israel. The pedagogical director provides supervision for the teachers after they return to their home communities, addressing challenges and issues that arise in their work. Supervision is provided via emails and Skype. The director visits each student in their communities to observe the students teach, give feedback, teach model lessons, and provide ideas and suggestions.

Program Success

We have already seen the success of the program through tangible results in the field. Last year, Oranim International School facilitated this course for the first time, with four teachers from Moscow and Kiev participating. After completing the course at Oranim, the teachers returned to teach Ulpan Alef in Israel Centers back home. The students who studied Hebrew with graduates of the Oranim course had a 100% success rate on the Ministry of Education’s Hebrew test (the same test that Ulpan students in Israel take), with most of them scoring higher than 90%.

The ultimate goal of the program is to enable students around the world to acquire Hebrew language skills through fun and experiential educational methods. The Hebrew language connects students to Israel, Jewish history, and the Jewish people. In addition, if the students choose to make aliyah to Israel, these skills will help them integrate to Israeli society.