

Student Exchange with Alice Salomon College in Germany

75 years after the Holocaust, German and Jewish Israeli students of education come together to have fun and learn from one another in Germany and in Israel – and it isn't all about the Holocaust.



This March, Oranim College hosted a group of students from Alice Salomon College in Hanover, Germany, as part of an ongoing student exchange. The students from Germany had hosted Oranim College students in April 2018.

The exchange was for early childhood and special education students from Oranim and Alice Salomon. Students learned about the educational system in the other country, got to know a new culture, and made connections with students from abroad.

Oranim College's Dr. Maayan Shalev, Pedagogical Mentor in Special Education, and Dina Gilbey, Mentor in Early Childhood Education, led the delegation in both Germany and Israel. Dr. Orit Dror, Chair of the Early Childhood Education Department at Oranim, and Dr. Tali Gur, Chair of the Department of Special Education at Oranim, developed and promoted the partnership. Dr. Tali Gur and Dina Gilbey travelled to Hanover in advance of the Oranim delegation in order to get to know their partners and prepare the program there.

Oranim Students Visit Germany

Oranim students' visit to Germany last spring included touring Berlin together with the Alice Salomon students, and a visit to Hanover, where Alice Salomon is located. In Hanover, Oranim students enjoyed home hospitality at the Alice Salomon students' families. For many of the students, home hospitality was the highlight of the delegation, giving them an opportunity to hang out together with their German counterparts and their families, eat meals together, and share about their lives.

Oranim students visited early childhood and special education settings in Hanover, comparing and contrasting them to educational frameworks in Israel. Students found the visits eye-opening; one student said that she learned as much in three days visiting German preschools as in a whole course

back home. For example, students were intrigued by how preschools in Hanover were integrated together with family centers, so that educating the child took place in the context of relationships with the entire family.

The delegation to Germany also addressed the Holocaust, including a visit to the concentration camp, Bergen Belson, together with the German students, and a visit to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Berlin. Dealing with questions of the Holocaust in a mixed group – as second and third generation Jews and Germans – was complex but also moving.

Alice Salomon Students Visit Israel

In March, the Alice Salomon students came to Israel and were hosted by the same students whom they hosted the year before. The students developed meaningful connections with one another. Many of the students kept in touch over the year in between, and plan to maintain contact in the future.

For the first week, the Alice Salomon students toured the south of Israel, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv, and the Oranim students joined them whenever possible. The second week, the Alice Salomon students travelled to the north where they were hosted by the Oranim students and visited early childhood and special education frameworks. The German students got to see first-hand examples of innovative Israeli educational institutions, such as pre-schools on a kibbutz, and a Jewish-Arab elementary school.

In Israel, the issue of the Holocaust did not come up as strongly, though the students did visit the Yad VaShem Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem. But as Dr. Orit Dror said: “I felt proud that today, three generations later, we can meet together here, Germans and Israelis, Christians and Jews, in the State of Israel.”

Building Understanding Between Young Germans and Israelis

Oranim hopes to continue the student exchange with Alice Salomon, with another group going to Germany next year. Oranim and Alice Salomon students agreed that the exchange expanded their professional knowledge, while contributing to international understanding between young Germans and Israelis.