

# Feature



## Growing Happy, Successful Children

Walking into the classrooms of Yeshiva Eitz Chaim, one is reminded of a bygone era; a time when children learned in small groups around a warm, focused rebbe, and each child was known and worked with on his own level.

Yeshiva Eitz Chaim was created with one overriding philosophy: to custom-tailor the chinuch of every child, from the gifted to those who need help academically or socially. Through its individualized programming, children flourish; they come to love learning and love school, and they are imbued with the skills, self-awareness and core confidence they need to navigate life successfully.

Founded in 2005 by Rabbi Reuven Eidlitz and Mrs. Sarah Eidlitz, M.A. Spec. Ed., with the support of HaRav Shmuel Kamenetsky, Shlita, the program includes three distinct tracks:

**Yeshiva Eitz Chaim**, a mainstream program where boys of all ages thrive in a small, personalized classroom setting. The staff knows each boy intimately and designs a program to bring out his greatest potential. The mission of Yeshiva Eitz Chaim is to build happy, confident boys whose enthusiasm for life and learning continues into adulthood.

**Bnos Bracha**, a mainstream girls program, offers small classes and an individualized, cutting edge curriculum in Limudei Kodesh and secular studies, as well as creative programming such as movement and art. The goal

is to infuse a love of yiddishkeit and of Tefillah, with a strong emphasis on middos and on behavior that is m'kadesh Shem Shamayim; as such, teachers instill in the girls a deep Ahavas Yisrael at a young age. Ultimately, Bnos Bracha strives to create an environment in which girls enjoy school, and where their elementary years are ones in which they develop positively.

**The Skill Building Center**, for children with learning, language and social challenges, and those who simply need more time and attention to mature before entering a traditional school environment. The Skill Building Center is a truly inclusive program, meaning that throughout the day, most students- from those with Down syndrome to those with mild learning disabilities-are integrated into the mainstream classes of sister schools Yeshiva Eitz Chaim and Bnos Bracha. Students with special needs gain from this mainstreaming arrangement in their skills and in their self-esteem, while students without special needs learn respect and compassion for all different types of children, as well as how to be a true friend.

The school's comprehensive program replaces the need for a resource room; instead of being pulled out of class for an hour a day of remedial tutoring, a child's needs are met throughout the day, without the stigma of feeling different or unable to "keep up." When a child's needs are addressed at an early age, he can often enter a traditional school later and thrive.

### A Bird in Paradise

By Rabbi Mordechai Swiatycki

You visit the bird exhibit at the zoo and marvel at the many different species on display. Most of the exhibits are behind glass, so that the birds won't escape. But one exhibit is different. In it, dozens of tropical birds fly free, with no glass enclosure to keep them in place.

"How do you do it?" you ask the zookeeper. "How do you keep the birds from flying away?"

"We don't have to," explains the zookeeper. "We have provided them with the perfect tropical environment here. We ship in the ideal food for each type of bird, and make sure that the area mimics the temperature and humidity of a rain forest, and shape the birds' habitats so that each of them feels completely taken care of. As for flying away, why would they want to escape? The environment would be foreign and unsuitable to their needs, and here, they have everything they need."

Rabbi Mordechai Swiatycki explains that this mashal holds the key to successful chinuch. The job of the home-and by extension, the school-is to give children exactly what they need to thrive. Parents and teachers should strive to nurture every aspect of a child: mind, body, and neshama. This means creating an environment that acknowledges and respects their needs. And when they feel safe and nurtured, why would they want to fly away?

This is the learning environment that Yeshiva Eitz Chaim and Bnos Bracha strive to create.