



Yeshiva Eitz Chaim: Three Tracks to Growing Happy, Successful Children

Yeshiva Eitz Chaim's philosophy is a simple one: **give children a positive environment in which they can succeed, and they will.**

Founded by Rabbi Reuven Eidlitz and Mrs. Sarah Eidlitz, M.A. Spec. Ed., Yeshiva Eitz Chaim was created with the support of HaRav Reuven Feinstein, Shlita, as a small, individualized, Torah-based school for children in the younger grades. The program is personalized to fit the academic, social and emotional needs of each and every child; ultimately instilling the children with the skills, self-awareness and core confidence they need to navigate life successfully. Research has clearly shown that reduced class size, particularly for younger children, has a long lasting, positive effect on every aspect of student achievement. An intrinsic part of Yeshiva Eitz Chaim is its small class sizes.

With its growing success, **Yeshiva Eitz Chaim has expanded to include three distinct curricula**; The Skill Building Center, for 5- to 7-year-olds who struggle with learning or social challenges; and Yeshivas Eitz Chaim and Bnos Bracha, where mainstream children of all ages, whether, slow, average or gifted learners, can thrive in a small, warm and loving environment.

The Skill Building Center

Working with children ages 5 to 7, The Skill Building Center alleviates the stresses children with even mild learning difficulties face. 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 being unable to "keep up."

To address learning, language and social problems, The Skill Building Center incorporates cutting edge, research-based methods developed by leading experts in the field. Cross-curricular teaching places a strong emphasis on phonemic awareness and literary skills. The children learn Hebrew and English using memory strategies, and they learn to understand math conceptually.

In addition to therapists provided by the school district, Yeshiva Eitz Chaim employs consulting therapists to train teachers how to integrate sensory and other programming into the classroom. Social skills are woven into all aspects of the curriculum, including parsha, so the children can apply what they are learning in all situations.

"We teach the children to break down life into understandable pieces," explained Mrs. Eidlitz. "We teach children in a way that works for them.

We give them self-awareness that they can use for the rest of their lives, and we build their confidence, so that, IY'H, they can grow up to be happy, successful adults."

Yeshiva Eitz Chaim

The mission of Yeshiva Eitz Chaim is to build happy, confident boys whose enthusiasm for life and learning continues into adulthood. The staff knows each boy intimately and designs a program for him to bring out his greatest potential. "My son loves his rebbe," said Malka Arons, mother of a Yeshiva Eitz Chaim third-grader. "He brings Chumash to life, and instills a love of learning, and of davening. Because the class is small, Rabbi Eidlitz has an extremely strong connection with my son; he really knows him. I feel like this is how Yeshiva is meant to be."

Bnos Bracha

This warm, small school uses "center based" learning and a curriculum that caters to the individual needs and abilities of girls at various academic levels; girls can learn at the pace that meets their needs and builds their confidence. And they are often academically ahead of their peers in other schools. Most important, they feel loved and nurtured. "My daughter loves going to school," said Aliza Goldberg, mother of a Bnos Bracha first grader. "She's learning

quickly, above grade level. And most important, she's internally happy, and she feels great about herself."

Children Headed for Trouble

All children have inherent strengths and areas of difficulty. A child may outgrow some issues on his own, but by the age of 4 or 5, certain negative behaviors or learning disabilities, even mild ones, may have already manifested themselves, which, if not addressed, could lead to failure in Yeshiva and beyond. Lack of reading and/ or social skills (which are often connected to language development) are the most common issues that can hinder a child's success later on.

"Many kids who start out in an environment that overwhelms them socially or academically end up with terrible problems; low self-esteem, depression, and *chas v'shalom*, going off the *derech*," said Mrs. Eidlitz, who has taught special education in both public and private schools in New York and New Jersey. "I've seen it happen often. Between kindergarten and 2nd grade is the best time to address problems before they become completely debilitating."

If a child with reading or social deficits is taught the skills he needs to compensate at an early age, before he reaches first or second grade, before he

is thrust into an environment in which he is unable to keep up, and before his issues can really impede his ability to function and feel good about himself, he should be able to move ahead, reach his potential, and thrive.

A Parent's Checklist: Is My Child on Track?

Reading problems:

If a child's reading problem is not addressed at a young age, he may quickly fall behind, destroying his confidence and causing both him and his parents great frustration and heartache. When he sees that he is not able to learn like other children, he may feel alienated from his peers, and may grow to hate and dread school.

Early clues to reading problems in the preschool years (up to 4 or 5 years old):

- Difficulty learning and remembering names of letters, and retrieving sounds
- Failure to know the letters in his own name
- Trouble learning nursery rhymes, such as "Jack and Jill"
- Lack of appreciation of rhymes: e.g. inability to pick the rhyme when given a choice between "foam and phone" vs. "foam and roam"
- Mispronunciation of words: e.g. persistent baby talk past the appropriate age

- A history of reading problems in parents or siblings

Social Issues:

A child with social issues, no matter how bright, will often suffer academically. The frustration of not fitting in and of not being able to develop friendships, will not only affect his self-esteem, but can also impact his ability to learn and retain information.

Clues to potential social problems:

- Impulsivity; explosiveness
- Difficulty switching tracks
- Difficulty explaining his needs; easily angered and frustrated
- Inadvertently alienating other children when trying to make friends, e.g. breaking a toy when he wanted to play
- Difficulty approaching a group and in understanding how to be included
- Lack of ability to see another person's perspective; not recognizing that what he is doing upsets another
- Lack of physical boundaries; invades others' space without realizing it

**For more information,
please call Yeshiva Eitz
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