

Travelling Chassidim inspire Yavneh



Yavneh Yeshiva High School were treated to a very special visit by The Travelling Chassidim on Zos Chanukah. R' Berish Dresdner, R' Shloime Stark, R' Moshe Ostreicher and R' Gershon Rose introduced the boys to the world of Chassidus, teaching them new songs and sharing inspirational messages.

R' Berish introduced the boys to the song, Ribbon Ha'olomim yodati..., which was projected onto the large screen so all the boys could see the words, and explained what it meant. His Chanukah message to the boys was the reminder that we are not in control. We have to do our hishtadlus, and remember that Hashem is in charge and to daven and connect to Him, as is evidenced in the Chanukah story, and as was so apparent in Eretz Yisroel in recent months. Our intelligence may be the best in the world, but if Hashem wants something different to happen it will, said the inspirational speaker.

R' Gavriel Wulwick – one of Yavneh's Rebbes – provided the music for the event. Following the lively singing and dancing, the boys were treated to ice-cream and nosh, which were kindly sponsored by a parent, before lighting the Menorah and davening Maariv for the last time this Chanukah.

The event, which was organised by Rabbi Chaim Cohen, Rov of Yavneh Boys, was a resounding success and both the boys and the guests are looking forward to reconnecting again in the near future.

R' Berish Dresdner commented how beautifully everyone connected to other. "We really all hit it off so quickly, and formed an excellent rapport almost immediately. The boys were amazing; they really enjoyed the singing and dancing and we hope to go back there again very soon. I was also very impressed by the warm relationship between the staff and the boys at Yavneh, which was so apparent to see."

Write right

A training session was held at Salford's Broughton Hub, where numerous representatives from 20 different local schools – sencos, teachers, teaching assistants – listened to advice on dealing with poorly formed handwriting and the underlying skills involved.

The meeting was organised by Compass, a partnership between Binoh of Manchester and Salford Children's Directorate, working with and for children with special educational needs.

The talk was given by Alannah Mackasie, paediatric occupational therapist from Salford NHS Enhanced Services. Its purpose was to give insight into the function and development of handwriting, and of the underlying skills required; to identify handwriting difficulties, including impact on learning and engagement in school; and to suggest activities and strategies supporting and improving handwriting skills.

Handwriting, she said, is one of the most complex skills we learn and teach. Legible writing requires not only motor control but also advanced sensory, perceptual, praxis and cognitive functions, and the integration of these functions and skills. By 8-10 years, children should begin to produce clear, legible, joined-up writing, in both printed and cursive styles.

Amongst many other points, Alanna emphasized the importance of correct pencil grip, as one's grasp controls efficiency, flow and speed of writing. She suggested various strategies to support and improve handwriting, such as pencil-grip modifications – involving placing a tape to indicate the preferred area to hold the pencil; or using shorter or chunkier writing tools, to facilitate a better hold.

Another important point was the necessity for correct sitting posture when writing, and strategies were given to improve poor upper limb and hand strength. Experimenting with the height of the work surface was another practical idea.

The numerous representatives gave lots of positive feedback, finding the lecture helpful, clear and informative, providing a good understanding of how handwriting develops in children, as well as the sources of potential problems.

Singing together

Manchester's Beenstock Care Home is a true Kiddush Hashem: bright, clean and attractive, with a devoted staff, there's a pervading atmosphere of warmth and friendliness.

Situated in the heart of the *kehilla*, "Beenstock" is supremely accessible and convenient for locals – including friends and family – to visit the residents, who thrive on their company, on human interaction. It's heartwarming to see teenage girls (and younger) visiting the residents, usually on Shabbos, engaging in conversation, often with perfect strangers. It's also an opportunity for the older people to tell their life stories, and for the youngsters to benefit from their wisdom and experiences, learning history first-hand. Sometimes the girls come in groups, singing to the ladies, bringing a warm feeling of Shabbos to the home.

Chanukah is a perfect time to spread the light and joy of *Yiddishkeit*. The dining hall of the Beenstock Home was filled with residents, their families, and staff, watching the stars of the occasion: Year 3 girls of Broughton Jewish Primary School, under the direction of their devoted teacher, Mrs Simi Aberman, singing a beautiful collection of well-known Chanukah songs. The performance began with each girl introducing herself by name, and concluded with "Acheinu", in which the captivated audience were invited to join in. Afterwards, the girls were encouraged to go up to each resident and wish them a Happy Chanukah.

The event was a truly moving experience, a wonderful example of how meaningful and beneficial it is for people of all ages to join together, with no generation gap. As the girls sang, "Acheinu Kol Beis Yisroel",

ADHD in the classroom

Manchester's Torah UMesorah held a Zoom session for ladies discussing the topic of ADHD in the classroom. Presenting the event was Mrs S. Guttentag, a teacher – trainer who has developed insets and training on a range of relevant topics for today's teachers.

The interactive session was divided into two parts: understanding ADHD and dealing with ADHD. In the first part, Mrs Guttentag explained that ADHD is a biological, neurological condition. The ADHD brain differs from a neurotypical one. Three observable features of an ADHD brain are: lower levels of dopamine – a chemical that passes messages in the brain; underdeveloped frontal lobe, which means that ADHD sufferers struggle with executive (management) function; and no "gating system" to block out unnecessary information – which means the ADHD person is bombarded with more information than a typical person.

There are different areas of symptoms: inattention, difficulty in focusing yet noticing details; hyperactivity resulting from a lack of dopamine – which they seek to increase subconsciously, through movement, such as fidgeting, rocking on a chair; impulsivity, where they blur things out without thinking.

It's important to know that the ADHD child's brain is 30% less mature than their age, resulting in social immaturity such as age-inappropriate tantrums. However, they need to grow up with their self-esteem intact.

Life is more vibrant for ADHD kids: they have the gift of seeing a wonderfully rich world and we must not crush them. They are blessed with the gifts of creativity, multitasking, imagination, easily forgiving, living life to the max, sensitivity, out-of-the-box thinking and resilience.

However, such gifts can make it difficult for a teacher in a classroom setting. "Their skill sets are not designed for school!" So how does one manage them in school? Beneath the obvious

symptoms lie many more, such as: poor sleep, easily bored, disorganized, hyperfocus, learning difficulties, low self-esteem, relationship problems, high anxiety, sensory issues, poor working memory, all contributing to a feeling of failure. Because of this, we need to empathize, to make the kids feel successful. To maximize their gifts. If they don't find success in the classroom, they'll look elsewhere.

Mrs Guttentag advised teachers to build a strong relationship and make them feel good. The kids will then respond well and try to please.

Another strategy for success is to increase the dopamine, helping the brain to function better. This is the purpose of ADHD medication. Not all children with ADHD need medication to be successful, however, if they don't take medication when they need it, they're set up for failure. The medicine is not addictive. One has to find the right type and the right dose.

Another way of increasing dopamine is by creating interest, getting them to work things out for themselves. Movement and exercise also stimulate dopamine. The worst thing is to take away their break, as they need to move around.

Besides this, ADHD kids thrive on clear, consistent rules and boundaries. Rules and timetables should be displayed on the classroom wall. In class, they should be given every opportunity to use their gifts and talents. They should be seated strategically, with as little distraction as possible, and the teacher, besides making frequent eye contact, should acknowledge their successes, however small. Goals should be specific, small and reachable.

Assign them jobs, said Mrs Guttentag, - make them teacher's helper. Change activities often to prevent boredom. Mediate social interaction, as ADHD kids often can't problem-solve like other kids and can't read social cues correctly.

Above all, said Mrs Guttentag, we need to focus on the good and appreciate how hard they're trying.

A Q & A session concluded the highly informative meeting.