

Ohr Zvulun - Room for Everyone

Contributed by Avi Zimmerman
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"Although I understand that you're children do not have special needs", explains Ofra Wiesel, principal of the Ohr Zvulun elementary school, "it's important for me to stress the unique programming that we have at our school. We pride ourselves on the fact that Ohr Zvulun caters to everyone's needs".

Education is a very big issue in Israel, and a rather complex one amongst Israel's observant and religious population. On the one hand, many of the religious elementary schools in the country focus primarily on religious studies. On the other hand, the Mamlachti Dati schools (government sponsored religious schools) tend to water down the religious studies in favor of a focus on secular subjects. Ohr Zvulun is rather unique amongst Israeli elementary schools. It values each realm – both the Torah foundation and the secular topics – and strives for excellence in both.

In terms of Torah studies, Rav Avner Ben-Yosef is the school's rabbi. Over the last few years he and his staff have developed the curriculum in such a way so that the students get the maximum amount of Torah exposure possible – both quantitatively and qualitatively. In addition to the hours of study dedicated to Torah, all of the school's textbooks are written from a religious perspective. Whether it's history or mathematics, Judaism and Jewish culture are the focus. Rav Avner has also created an after school Torah enrichment program for those families and students who choose to enroll.

Of course, the Torah focus does not compromise Ohr Zvulun's high level of academic achievement. In addition to the school's high standards, enrichment programs are available in a wide variety of fields: art, graphic design, dance, model construction, chess and more. The students have created a "Land of Israel Museum", located in the school. The walls of the school are decorated with art galleries (not art projects – art galleries). The aesthetically pleasing environment is no accident. There's a "School Climate Staff" which meets and determines how to enhance the learning environment. From local to national competitions, whether in religious, secular or extra-curricular fields, Ohr Zvulun makes its mark.