

TURNING EDUCATORS INTO LEADERS

By: N. Aaron Troodler

Along with imparting knowledge to children and adults, educators also function as role models for their students. As they train people, young and old to become leaders in their own right, educators themselves serve as leaders. The challenge is how to make that leap from “educator” to “leader.”

Fortunately, there is a fully developed program whose sole purpose is to teach leadership skills and facilitate leadership opportunities for individuals in the Orthodox community.

Rabbi Pesach Lerner, D.Adm. founded the YIEP (Yeshiva Initiatives Educational Programs – www.theyiep.com) in 2004, and worked to create a rubric that would offer quality graduate programs to Orthodox students. The dream became a reality through a partnership with Bellevue University, which is regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, and the YIEP Master of Arts in Educational Leadership was created.

The MA in Ed Leadership cohort program empowers students to use critical thinking skills to incorporate their everyday experiences with their academic coursework and train themselves for leadership positions in their communities. Students study leadership theories, current educational leadership issues, historical and modern-day leaders, organizational behavior, team and group dynamics, strategic leadership, and cognitive psychology applied to learning.

The required courses for the MA in Ed Leadership, which are studied online and accessible anywhere, take approximately a year-and-a-half to complete. The next cohort, which will be the 15th MA in Ed Leadership group, begins in November 2019.

Rabbi Lerner noted that yeshiva and seminary degrees are accepted as fulfillment of the undergraduate degree requirement and tuition is lower than New York area programs because it is based on Nebraska rates, which is home to Bellevue University.

“The program objective is to provide graduate educational opportunities for students who work in Jewish educational institutions and other organizations and are interested in obtaining a quality degree for career advancement purposes,” said Dr. Stephen Linenberger, director and instructor of the MA in Ed Leadership program. “It enables teachers, professionals and rabbis to increase their professional development in various ways, and is perfect for people who want to take the next step into an administrative role, as well as individuals who want to enhance their leadership skills both inside and outside of the classroom or in other work settings. We are proud to be able to help our students embrace their critical leadership roles.”

“Our program is extremely unique because we allow students to contextualize material in their own world view

and in their own environment,” added Dr. Linenberger, who pulls in culturally relevant lessons and encourages students to bring teaching from Judaism into the classroom. “Much of what we teach has its roots in the Judaic teachings of leadership. Learning from leaders in Jewish history how to improve one’s self through self-development is a big piece of what we do.”

Through the MA in Ed Leadership program, students can get involved in various professional networks and are exposed to different opportunities that enable them to take that next professional step. YIEP students have gone on to pursue additional degrees in Ivy League schools such as Harvard, Yale, and Columbia.

“Our students who ultimately go on to other programs feel that they have a leg up after completing our program,” Dr. Linenberger said.

Students take courses such as “Leadership Theories and Practices,” which explores the subject of leadership within diverse organizational and situational contexts, “Team and Group Dynamics,” which examines the need for leaders to understand group functions, and “Strategic Leadership,” which studies how leaders strategically create and affect organizational missions and goals. There is also a “Leadership Project,” which is an experience designed by the student and approved by a professor which provides the student with opportunities to develop an applied leadership development plan or generate a thesis or case study.

“The MA in Ed Leadership offered me a graduate-level education about topics such as leadership, education, non-profits, psychology, and group dynamics, subject matters that I deal with in my current career on an almost daily basis,” said Doni Silverstein, who earned his MAEL from Bellevue University in 2006 and then earned a Master’s degree in Social Work from Columbia University in 2014. “I really enjoyed the content and subject matter of each course, and it afforded me an interesting and fun learning experience.”

“The doors and opportunities that this program opened for me are vast,” said Elad Barmatz, a former student. “Almost every aspect of this program is tailored for success, from the program itself, its environment, and the amazing individuals who run it. From its incredible teaching methodology, deadline flexibility, superb communication flow with the professors, and a schedule that is truly suitable for observant individuals, this program is invaluable.”

Rabbi Lerner noted that the YIEP attracts all types of Orthodox Jews, including Yeshivish, Chasidish and Modern Orthodox, and that classes are for both males and females, but is sensitive to the guidelines of Tznius and Halacha.

For more information about the program, contact Rabbi Lerner at THEYIEP@gmail.com or call 917-209-8204