



IN ASSOCIATION WITH SHALOM YELADIM

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*Educate each child on according to his individual way [‘Al Pi Darko’],
and even when he grows old, he will never veer from Torah.
Proverbs 22:6*

Our Mission

Gan Aliya takes a unique approach to early Jewish education that encourages each child to feel responsible for his or her own growth, cherish challenge, and cultivate both self-respect and respect for others. In a nurturing environment, the children deeply experience the reality of Hashem and the truth and beauty of the Torah. Drawing on Montessori, the program enables children to teach themselves in a personalized pace and manner that builds skills and self-confidence. Gan Aliya’s individualized approach helps maximize children’s cognitive, emotional, physical development, preparing them to make their unique contributions to the Jewish people and society at large.

Personalized Instruction

As King Solomon teaches in Proverbs 22:6, before we can educate children, we must first observe them and identify their individual learning style and strengths. While the students determine the pace and modality of their learning, the curriculum goals are set by the teachers. Under the leadership of our principal, Rebbetzin Bassie Goldman, an educator with extensive experience in child-centered classrooms, the Gan Aliya instructors create personalized lesson plans based on skill level. After a brief one-on-one mini-lesson, each child works independently or in a small group with enticing and developmentally appropriate physical materials. This work reveals which parts of the lesson require further instruction, which elements the student has mastered, and his or her preferred learning style. The personalized approach at Gan Aliya builds self-esteem as students witness their own success in mastering academic, internal, and interpersonal skills.

Teaching Tools

Rabbi Jonathan Rietti and Rebbetzin Bassie Goldman have developed hundreds of Judaic learning materials designed to facilitate self-paced learning and reflect multiple learning styles and skill levels. The methods and hands-on materials cover a range of preschool and elementary grade levels across math, science, *Aleph Bet*, *Nekudot*, English and Hebrew reading accuracy and fluency, vocabulary building, English and Hebrew grammar, Chumash story line, *Taryag Mitzvoth*, Jewish History and *Emuna Chushith* (experiencing Hashem’s love for the child and His plan for the world).

This fusion of Montessori methods with powerful Jewish curricula and *hashkafa* is known as the “Al Pi Darko” approach to Jewish education because of Al Pi Darko’s deep respect for needs, pace and strength of each individual child. Gan Aliya’s Al Pi Darko method is designed to access multiple pathways to a child’s learning,

leveraging his unique blend of the following aptitudes or intelligences: visual–spatial, verbal–linguistic, logical–mathematical, bodily–kinesthetic, musical–rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and existential.¹

Fostering Interpersonal Skills

Students develop strong interpersonal skills through collaboration as partners or in small groups. The rules of the classroom include respecting each other’s workspace, asking for permission to observe another student engaged in independent work, taking turns with the educational materials, and sharing snacks which the students prepare for themselves. The self-confidence students build through their work allows them to applaud other students’ accomplishments, which builds self-confidence and a sense of community.

Each day also includes circle time, in which children share their experiences relating to classroom, recess, lunch, and transition times. During these brief group discussions, the children learn to communicate their feelings calmly and respectfully, finding the words to express their needs. The teachers focus on making each child feel safe to share and to know that what he or she says counts.

The Al Pi Darko method at Gan Aliya utilizes effective conflict resolution strategies to help children confront each other during a disagreement. Children learn to express their feelings, understand each other’s perspective, apologize, and forgive. By modeling courteous behavior both during independent work time and group circle time, the teachers promote respectful socialization, and emphasize the importance of Ahavas Yisroel and interpersonal Teshuva.

Extracurricular Activities

Gan Aliya’s program features athletic class, music class, yoga class, creative art, baking and cooking, gardening, and exciting field trips.

Facility

Gan Aliya’s facility at 135 Bennett Avenue, Washington Heights features a beautiful new classroom, indoor gym, enclosed outdoor play area, industrial kitchen, and renovated bathrooms.

The Nurtured Heart Approach

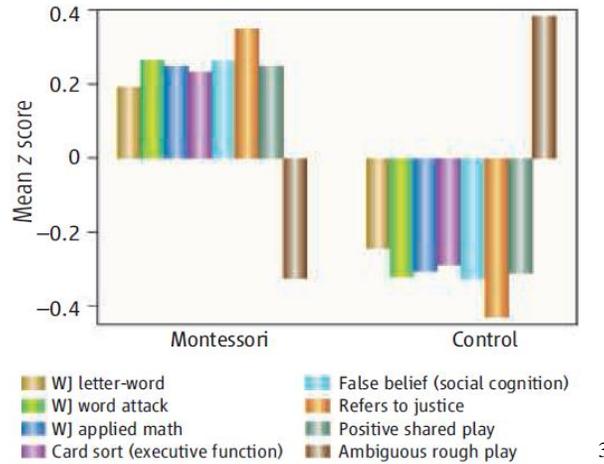
Gan Aliya practices the Nurtured Heart Approach, which is a dynamic relationship-focused methodology that builds inner wealth in children, empowering them to channel their intensity in productive ways, ensuring their successful future. We identify and praise positive behavior and qualities in every child. Howard Glasser, Creator of the Nurtured Heart Approach, explains: “wonderful things happen, peace in the home, peace in the classroom, and peace in life. Best of all, these kids find out who they really are. They are not the “bad kid.” They are not even the “good kid.” They are the Great Kid! And they can contribute in productive, positive ways.” <http://www.childrensuccessfoundation.com/about-us/about-nurtured-heart-approach/>

Supported by Childhood Brain Science

The Al Pi Darko method at Gan Aliya builds on Montessori and other child-centered approaches that have outperformed conventional, teacher-led models. In *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*, Dr. Angeline Lillard explains how “modern research in psychology suggests the Montessori system is much more suited to how children learn and develop than the traditional system is.”² In a 2006 study published in *Science* magazine, she found that the Montessori students performed significantly better on both cognitive and social measures:

Results for 5-year-olds

Montessori students achieved higher scores for both academic and behavioral tests.



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Among the 5-year-olds, Montessori students proved to be significantly better prepared for elementary school in reading and math skills than the non-Montessori children. They also tested better on “executive function,” the ability to adapt to changing and more complex problems, an indicator of future school and life success. Montessori children also displayed better abilities on the social and behavioral tests, demonstrating a greater sense of justice and fairness. And on the playground they were much more likely to engage in emotionally positive play with peers, and less likely to engage in rough play.⁴

At the end of elementary school, Montessori children wrote more creative essays with more complex sentence structures, selected more positive responses to social dilemmas, and reported feeling more of a sense of community at their school.⁵

The Al Pi Darko method at Gan Aliya encourages the development of life skills that research has closely linked to long-term happiness and success, including self-regulation, executive function,⁶ perseverance, focus, impulse control, empathy, communication, and curiosity. The scientific studies suggest that if children work on these skills, and use different parts of their brains during the short formative neurological window of early childhood, their brains and abilities become stronger and more effective as adults.⁷ Childhood brain development science supports the Al Pi Darko emphasis on self-directed, engaged learning; praising a child’s effort rather than intelligence, which promotes a healthy desire for challenge; developing the child’s sense of responsibility for his learning; and practicing empathy, communication and conflict resolution.⁸

Seven Foundational Blocks

Gan Aliya utilizes these interrelated foundational steps for building the excellence in our Jewish children:

- 1. Self-Awareness** – Give the children the ability to learn about themselves and to discover how to appreciate and use their strengths. Learn how to embrace and overcome their challenges.
- 2. Building a Connection with Hashem** - Increase the children’s awareness of their Creator and enable them to build a loving relationship with Hashem. The children will see that everything in the universe is harmoniously interdependent allowing us to recognize and serve Hashem. When learning Tefillah, Torah, English, Science, Math, History or Geography, the children will come to see how every aspect of reality, history and Torah develop our *Emuna* build our relationship with Hashem.

3. **Interpersonal Relationships** – Help students recognize their part in increasing *Shalom* in the world, beginning with their interactions, actions and reactions with their family, classmates, neighbors and friends.
4. **Love for Torah** - Build a foundation of loving to learn Torah, to understand Torah, and to appreciate that Torah guides our lives in holiness. Imbue the children with Emuna chushis, Ahavas Hashem and Yiras Hashem during every moment of the day. Through direct lessons, activities, the teacher’s modeling of those Midos, and the teacher’s reaction to all situations in the classroom, the children acquire a strong foundation and a constant connection to their Creator.
5. **Teaching in Context** – The children see themselves as a link Linking in the extended chain of Am Yisroel. They master the 44 main events in the Jewish History timeline of the year 0 to 6000, and apply this timeline through all their Torah learning. This creates an integrated understanding of their identity through their the past, present, and future destiny of the Jews. Through every subject that they learn, they encounter the fact that they are an imperative link in that chain. We guide the students to ask and know the answers to: “Where do I fit into this big picture of Klal Yisroel? Who am I? Where do I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?”
6. **Concrete Learning** – By utilizing the most comprehensive and sequential curriculum, children will use concrete learning activities to explore, experience and master skills and concepts in Math, Language, Art, Reading, Writing, Science, History, Geography, Music, Art and Health sciences.
7. **Independent Learning** – The children learn to take responsibility for themselves, their environment and their learning by utilizing the multitude of activities. This is done by connecting the children to the material, guiding them with instructions and stepping back and allowing them to challenge themselves with their allotted task. They absorb the message that they are a people who can accomplish: I can learn Torah. I can concentrate. I can be a good friend. I can start a task and complete it on my own. I can ask for help. I can contribute to my community. I can communicate my sometimes-strong feelings with calm words. I can think. I can be successful!

Contact Information

For more information or applications, contact us at 310-922-1745 (admissions@ganaliya.org).

Video Overviews

1. Child-Centered Education
 - a. What is Montessori child-centered education?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcgN0IEh5IA#t=179>
 - b. Theory of Montessori: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOZIQ-43oX0>
 - c. The first 60 seconds of this video explains the problem addressed by Al Pi Darko:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abRtYNkmBao>
2. Rabbi Jonathan Rietti
 - a. Introductory Video to R. Rietti: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zobt23sIF54>, especially from minute 6 onward.
 - b. More aspects of the program are explained here, including the approach to Hebrew reading, contextual learning, and uniquely integrated *chol* and *kodesh* curricula:
http://jewishinspiration.com/watch_videos_hands_on_chinuch.php
3. Rebbetzin Bassie Goldman
 - a. Boys Al Pi Darko 2013 program in Brooklyn:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1_Pg12Qy3wdTnpMMk4zZnBHU0U/edit?usp=sharing
4. Brain Science Research
 - a. The Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University produced this video discussing the importance of executive function and self-regulation, and shows how they are developed in a Montessori classroom:
http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/inbrief_series/inbrief_executive_function/

- b. Dr. Steven Hughes, a pediatric neuropsychologist, explains how the Montessori approach anticipated and corresponds to the latest findings in brain science. Dr. Hughes explains that Montessori education offers nothing less than “the development of a human person and their consciousness, their brain.”
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faYco1b-IJI>
 - c. Carol Dweck: The Effect of Praise on Mindsets. The Al Pi Darko approach at Gan Aliya praises effort and encourages children to pursue challenge.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTXrV0_3UjY
5. Nurtured Heart Approach
- a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uugsTBCIDHo&index=7&list=PL0972DC9158399D2D>
 - b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFKDz-3bY9I&list=PL0972DC9158399D2D&index=10>

¹ This list is based on Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, as summarized here: <http://surfaquarium.com/MI/overview.htm>.

VISUAL/SPATIAL - learning visually and organizing ideas spatially. Seeing concepts in action in order to understand them. The ability to "see" things in one's mind in planning to create a product or solve a problem.

VERBAL/LINGUISTIC - learning through the spoken and written word. This aptitude was always valued in the traditional classroom and in traditional assessments of intelligence and achievement.

MATHEMATICAL/LOGICAL - learning through reasoning and problem solving. Also highly valued in the traditional classroom, where students were asked to adapt to logically sequenced delivery of instruction.

BODILY/KINESTHETIC - learning through interaction with one's environment. This intelligence is not the domain of "overly active" learners. It promotes understanding through concrete experience.

MUSICAL/RHYTHMIC - learning through patterns, rhythms and music. This includes not only auditory learning, but the identification of patterns through all the senses.

INTRAPERSONAL - learning through feelings, values and attitudes. This is a decidedly affective component of learning through which students place value on what they learn and take ownership for their learning.

INTERPERSONAL - learning through interaction with others. Not the domain of children who are simply "talkative" or "overly social." This aptitude promotes collaboration and working cooperatively with others.

NATURALIST - learning through classification, categories and hierarchies. The naturalist aptitude picks up on subtle differences in meaning. It is not simply the study of nature; it can be used in all areas of study.

EXISTENTIAL - learning by seeing the "big picture": "Why are we here?" "What is my role in the world?" "What is my place in my family, school and community?" This aptitude seeks connections to real world understandings and applications of new learning.

² http://www.montessori-science.org/Montessori-Genius/Lillard_Montessori_Science_Genius_Ch1.pdf.

³ <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/313/5795/1893.full.pdf> or

<http://www.sciencemag.org/content/313/5795/1893.full?ikey=3UWZqF01vQgbY&keytype=ref&siteid=sci>.

⁴ “Montessori Education Provides Better Outcomes Than Traditional Methods, Study Finds” http://www.montessori-science.org/montessori_science_journal.htm.

⁵ <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/313/5795/1893.full.pdf> or

<http://www.sciencemag.org/content/313/5795/1893.full?ikey=3UWZqF01vQgbY&keytype=ref&siteid=sci>.

⁶ Video: http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/inbrief_series/inbrief_executive_function/

⁷ See video “Brain Development and Young Children” available at <http://vimeo.com/24129433>; *Your Fantastic Elastic Brain* by JoAnn Deak Ph.D.

⁸ See *Brain Rules for Baby: How to Raise a Smart and Happy Child from Zero to Five* by Professor John Medina; *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character* by Paul Tough; *Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs* by Ellen Galinsky; *NurtureShock: New Thinking About Children* by Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman.