

PELE HANDBOOK

Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education

PELE (Progressive Education Laboratory Experience) offers a special and unique opportunity to learn how to be a truly student-centered teacher, through our truly student-centered 1-year master's program. In the PELE program we model constructivist philosophies and progressive educational approaches to offer a rich and robust educational experience for every student.

This handbook addresses important aspects of PELE and shares a detailed overview of the PELE experience, by answering these questions:

1. What is the **philosophy of education** guiding PELE?
2. What will my **schedule** look like as a PELE student?
3. What do I need to know about **student teaching** with PELE?
4. What will the **field visits** look like?
5. How is PELE **different** from the traditional program?

Please reach out with any questions.

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What is the philosophy of education guiding PELE?

PELE aims to prepare teachers who take a student-centered, constructivist approach to education.

These quotes highlight some foundational constructivist elements:

“Constructivism is a theory which is based on observation and scientific study, about how people learn. It says that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences” (Bereiter, 1994).

“In the constructivist classroom, the focus tends to shift from the teacher to the students. The classroom is no longer a place where the teacher ("expert") pours knowledge into passive students, who wait like empty vessels to be filled. In the constructivist model, the students are urged to be actively involved in their own process of learning. The teacher functions more as a facilitator who coaches, mediates, prompts, and helps students develop and assess their understanding, and thereby their learning.” (Olusegun, 2015).

Constructivism is based on the belief that learning best occurs when learners are actively involved in the process of meaning and constructing knowledge, as opposed to passively receiving information. Learners are the makers of meaning and knowledge.

Major characteristics of a constructivist classroom are:

- *the learners are actively involved*
- *the activities are interactive and student-centered*
- *the teacher facilitates a process of learning in which students are encouraged to be responsible and autonomous*
- *there is a focus on collaboration and exchange of ideas*
- *learners research and learn topics on their own and share with the class*
- *students work in groups*

The PELE program prepares student-centered, constructivist teachers, by crafting a program that is - in and of itself - student-centered and constructivist. The PELE cohort of students work collaboratively towards attainment of goals, take ownership of their learning and are active contributors towards course goals and knowledge attainment.

What will my schedule look like?

Overview of the Program:

- 3 courses each Summer
- 2 courses in both fall and spring semesters: synchronous (Mon or Tues) or asynchronous
- Student Teaching Seminar course in fall and spring semesters: online sessions meet both synchronously and asynchronously Monday or Tues evenings.
- Student Teaching or Teaching: Mon-Fri, entire academic year
- School Visits:
 - Two (2) virtual school visits, two mornings each semester
 - One (1) 3-day in-person gathering for school visits and cohort meetings in the NYC area

Overview of Course Offerings:

Summer I:

- Models of Teaching I - *1-week Intensive*
- Learning & Cognition - *asynchronous online*
- Teaching Chumash/Navi- *asynchronous online*

Fall:

- Curriculum & Assessment - *option of asynchronous or synchronous*
- Big Ideas in Jewish Ed - *option of asynchronous or synchronous*
- PEP/Student Teaching Seminar - *live online*

Spring:

- Models of Teaching II - *option of asynchronous or synchronous*
- Promoting Jewish Values - *option of asynchronous online or synchronous*
- PEP/Student Teaching Seminar II - *live online*

Summer II:

- Teaching the Holocaust - *1-week Intensive*
- Teaching Chumash/Navi or other choice elective -*asynchronous online*
- Science of Hebrew Reading - *asynchronous online*
- Final Portfolio (final assignment, not a course - see last page)

What do I want to know about student teaching?

- You may complete student teaching requirements in a paid teaching position or Azrieli will place you in a school with a cooperating teacher, in an unpaid arrangement. PELE students should not take on a heavy load of teaching if this is their first year of teaching; the demands of the program will be too overwhelming.
- Please be sure to [complete this form](#) to communicate your intent to complete student teaching. Once you do, the Student Teaching coordinator will reach out to you to discuss your planned teaching arrangement and confirm that that it meets our requirements.
- You will be assigned a supervisor from Azrieli who will observe you teaching at least 4 times over the course of the school year. More information on Student Teaching (PEP) observations is found in the Azrieli Student Teaching Handbook.
- You will need to miss some days of teaching to participate in school visits - two days in the fall and three full days in the spring.

Note: PELE is a full-time commitment. The workload is heavy and you will have to take off from work to participate in school visits. Completing the PELE program is contingent on successful participation in all aspects of learning (courses, student teaching, school visits) throughout the PELE experience.

What do I want to know about coursework?

PELE students complete the same number of credits and courses as all Azrieli students. Coursework consists of **10 three-credit courses**. 7 of these 10 courses are core courses and 3 are electives.

The 1-week Intensive courses and the Student Teaching (PEP) Seminar will be taken *with your PELE cohort only*.

The **PEP (Professional Enhancement Program/Student Teaching) Seminar** meets in addition to the 10 courses described above. PEP Seminar is an opportunity to share, process and reflect on your student teaching experiences. The Seminar meets approximately 16 times over the course of the year (approximately 11 in the fall and 5 in the spring). Dr. Salomon will meet with you on some of the weeks that the Seminar is not meeting, so you are expected to be available during the PEP Seminar time slot *weekly*. You will register for PEP Seminar I in the Fall and PEP II in the Spring.

While Azrieli holds a constructivist philosophy, the extent to which courses model constructivist practices and principles will vary.

Expect this to be a rigorous year of coursework with the understanding that the opportunity you have been afforded as a PELE fellow is special and unique. Please be prepared to, at times, prioritize your schoolwork over other personal needs. You will likely experience some very busy weekends and late nights, as would be expected in a 1-year master's degree fellowship.

Azrieli has a strict policy regarding Incompletes and it is especially important that PELE students adhere to this policy. As noted in the Azrieli Handbook: *Incomplete grades must be completed within one semester. No student may register with more than one "Incomplete" grade on his/her transcript.*

Students may take a maximum of ONE Incomplete throughout their time in the program and may only do so with permission from Dr. Salomon *and* the professor for that course. Students have up to one semester to finish incomplete work. Incompletes that extend beyond one semester become "withdraws" ("W") on the transcript and will need to be retaken *at the student's expense*.

What do I want to know about field visits?

Field visits present the unique opportunity for PELE students to experience the learning systems, cultures, philosophies and educational models of schools throughout the country. One of the major goals of these visits is to see various approaches for applying constructivist, student-centered principles in schools.

Approximately two days each semester, we will visit schools across the country virtually. The schedule for each visit varies so we expect your flexibility and availability on those days. We aim for at least 3 weeks' notice before a scheduled school visit.

A 3-day mid-year intensive will afford the opportunity to visit schools in person, as a cohort. Full participation in this 3-day gathering is mandatory.

Take notes (and, when permitted or applicable, take pictures) during these visits; you will share the learning gained from them in a post-visit debrief with Dr. Salomon (or school visits coordinator) and in your final PELE project.

You are responsible for all fees related to transportation and food during the 3-day Intensive meeting.

Here is a list of schools we've visited in the past, though this is obviously subject to change from year to year:

- Kohelet Lab School - Philadelphia, PA
- Naaleh High School - Teaneck, NJ
- Shefa School - New York, NY
- Innovations Academy - San Diego, Ca
- High Tech High - San Diego, Ca
- YULA High School - Los Angeles, Ca
- Shalhevet High School - Los Angeles, Ca
- Luria Academy - Park Slope, NY
- The Heschel School - New York, NY
- Yeshivat He'Atid - Teaneck, NJ
- SAR Academy - Bronx, NY
- Netivot Montessori School - East Brunswick, NJ
- Avenues: The World School - New York, NY
- Bais Yaakov Machon Ora - Passaic, NJ

What aspects of this program are unique to PELE?

There are a few characteristics of the PELE program that are unique to the PELE experience and not part of Azrieli's traditional program:

- Cohort Model - The exclusive 8-10 member cohort model offers a special opportunity for camaraderie, collaboration and friendships.
- Field Visits - Your full-time commitment to the program affords the opportunity to explore schools, meet with school administrators, and experience - first-hand - different models of instruction.
- Guest Speakers - Various advanced learning seminars and sessions may be offered throughout the school year. These classes will be incorporated into the PEP/Student Teaching Seminar and will be facilitated by Dr. Salomon.
- Final Project - A final portfolio is the capstone project for Azrieli's traditional students, where students showcase their learning and growth in an online portfolio. PELE's final project will be different from Azrieli's and will not necessarily take the form of a portfolio. In accordance with constructivist principles, design of the final project will be determined mostly by students, will be a collaborative endeavor, and will call for the synthesis of all learning from coursework, student teaching and field visits. You will complete your final project towards the end of the Spring semester.
- Scholarship - As a fellow, you receive tuition scholarship above the 50% that Azrieli generally offers most students. Additional YU fees, such as technology, registration, and graduation fees, are not covered through this scholarship.

The scholarship offered through the PELE fellowship is contingent upon completion of all master's degree requirements. Azrieli reserves the right to revoke full or partial scholarship should a student fail to satisfactorily complete, or comply with, all aspects of the Azrieli PELE program.