



NEWSLETTER

A Message from Dr. Nachman Shai



The Jewish people in Israel and throughout the globe have always championed an ongoing conversation between us. While we may not always see eye to eye, we come together around a dialogue enshrined with mutual respect and understanding that can transcend any language or barrier.

Israel Connect serves as a model in the Jewish world by combining cross-cultural bridge building and learning. This initiative, which brings together Israelis and retired North Americans on a weekly basis, fosters shared language and understanding regardless of differences in time, space or generation. For that, I thank you.

**Dr. Shai, Minister of
Diaspora Affairs for the
State of Israel**

A Message from Sarah Gordon



The end of the year is such a fulfilling time. All year long, our little team at Israel Connect puts our heads down and works through what feels like an endless stream of hurdles. Bringing education to all is not a simple task and we feel honored to be able to facilitate so much learning. Yet, at the end of the year, we get to hit pause and listen to our impact. We get to hear of the wonderful friendships that were built and the learning that was done. We get to hear from parents and teachers who are astounded by the academic and social progress that was made by students we did not think we were able to reach. It is so wonderful to take a moment and collect feedback.

**Sarah Gordon
Director, Israel Connect**

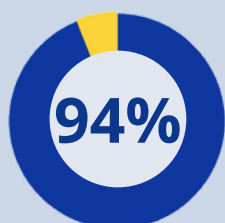
This year has been collectively gratifying. Our organization is beginning to find its footing and make sense of the last two years that demanded endless change and flexibility that Covid forced upon the education system. We are so proud to not only have weathered the storm but come out stronger. This is entirely due to the fact that we get to work with the most incredible people in the world. I was telling a friend that in the for-profit world you have to work with everyone since everyone needs to make a living. In the nonprofit world, you only get to work with the most incredible individuals; the rest do not show up.

In Israel today, English is the number one barrier to social mobility. It is the fundamental difference between the "haves" and the "have nots". While universities, academic entry exams, and jobs require English, in some homes it is a third language and in some neighborhoods, it is not heard on the streets. Together we have broken down this barrier. Today in Israel, any student with an internet connection can now find the authentic English exposure needed to master the language. We have reached the scale where we will be making an impact on youth and therefore Israel's future in a measurable way. We have provided between 2,000 - 3,000 hours of tutoring every month. Tutoring not only provides assistance with academic achievement but gives each student a mentor during a pivotal time in their life.

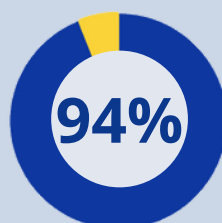
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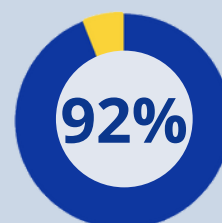
The feedback from our students speaks for itself!



♥
Loved the program



♥
Felt their mentor cared



♥
Would recommend to a friend



From one our teachers, Ronit Rechavia

Today you cannot get by without speaking English. It is not just jobs and Higher Education. My students increasingly live larger and larger parts of their lives online and in English. My students love ordering items from Asia. I have frequently heard that they cannot navigate how to return an item without English.

Our students receive 4 hours of English instruction every week. It is not enough. Getting kids to read is especially a problem. We assign the reading at home, but the students do not like reading the classics. They will watch the movie and write a report based on that. Also, they are not reading aloud to an individual, so their pronunciation suffers. Hebrew is a very phonetic language, but with English, you need to practice pronunciation, which is difficult to give in a classroom. Often times religious schools like ours test lower on English language ability. Not all of our students have English in their lives, and they need to use the language to learn it.

Israel Connect gives the ability to speak in English for 45 minutes a week. That is equivalent to $\frac{1}{4}$ of class instruction time. The entire 45 minutes is their time, one-on-one. They talk about the issues that are important to both of them. It is a real relationship. It is not an artificial environment created in a classroom. They are using English not just for a test but using the language in the trial of life.

This program has given my students a unique, memorable, and needed opportunity. Thank you for taking the time to do that for them. Our students can feel the mentors' love, dedication, and attention. It gives our students a view of the impact of giving to others. A lesson we indeed cannot teach in the classroom but can only be felt.

From one our mentors, Linda Slotin



I have been volunteering with Israel Connect for many years. I have enjoyed all my students. This year was no exception. I worked with a delightful young woman. Always pleasant, and always anxious to learn, she made good progress. Her reading skills improved over the course of the year, and best of all, her ability to express herself in English improved. She was pleasant and patient, which enabled her to work at figuring out the meaning of what I tried to explain to her. With continued study, I am sure she will become bilingual, switching from Hebrew to English and vice versa, with ease.

From one our students, Liat Israelov



My name is Liat Israelov and I live in Petach Tikvah. I attend an all-girls Amit Yeshurun school. I have found English to be a very hard language. Especially when you have to interact with an English speaker, their pace is so fast. Reading on my own is a little simpler as I can go slowly and look up new words. In our school, we mostly practice reading and writing.

I was determined. You cannot really do anything in Israel without English and you certainly cannot leave the country. There is no other country in the world that speaks Hebrew, but everywhere they speak English. I would like to become a doctor when I grow up, but for that, you need very high English and Math scores. If I do not get in, I plan to become a fashion designer. English is such a hard language and I worry that no matter how hard I try I will not master it.

I am so lucky to have the most incredible mentor named Linda Slotin who tutored me all year. She is truly an angel. I gained a lot of self-confidence working with her. I never spoke to someone before this. I would lose words at times and get embarrassed. She was always so patient. I can now explain myself and I can read much faster and with fewer errors. All my friends love this project as well. Not a single mentor has made faces or gotten impatient with any of my friends, and we are all so slow. The mentors are just kind and generous people.