



NEWSLETTER

A Message from Dr. Tziona Levi



Dr. Levi, Director, English Language Education

As educators, we enter the teaching profession to make a difference in our students' futures. This year has tested them and our capacity to teach, like no other. While it is worrisome to think of the long-term impact that Covid19 will have on our youth, from an academic point of view, we can attempt to bridge the learning gaps that have grown wider over the past year. However, on social and emotional levels, the ripple effects of the pandemic will leave their mark on these children for years to come.

I want to express my thanks for your time. I have no doubt that the hundreds of hours all the Israel Connect mentors poured into our students will positively affect our entire country for years to come. Not only did all of you graciously give of yourselves so that our students could continue to flourish academically during these challenging times, your time and dedication have assisted our youth in navigating the difficult situations in which they were placed. I know that the impact all of you have had on the emotional well-being of our youth is immeasurable. Any good educator will tell you that children thrive on consistency and this year all of you have maintained a consistent educational relationship with our students.

I have no words to express my thanks to each and every one of you for just being there, generously giving of your time every week to help someone that you have never personally met.

A Message from Sarah Gordon

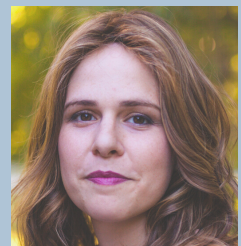
When directing an organization, you expect the ups and downs of heading an operation. This year has tested us unlike anything we signed up for, and I can confidently say we passed with flying colors. If you would have told me two years ago that Israel Connect would have had to make the changes it did this year, I don't think I could have imagined it. If you would have told me that not only did we survive, but we came out on the other side thriving; I would not have believed you. But thrive, we did.

This year we had our largest year of growth. We were able to step up and fill some of the void left by so much academic instability. As an Israel Connect family, we worked to provide a social connection at a time when social isolation caused a mental health crisis, the likes of which we have never seen before. We were able to ensure that not only did we thrive as an organization, but that over 500 students took this opportunity to flourish in their English language acquisition. In Israel, English constitutes about one-quarter of the high school exit exam and university entry exam. It is the number one barrier to social mobility in the country. I am so proud that we could make a lifelong difference for so many.

I am so proud of our Israel Connect family. We managed to take lemons that the 2020/ 2021 year handed us and turned them into lemonade for hundreds of individuals. Thank you to our mentors and staff for giving their time and effort, and most importantly, for being a light during this time of darkness.

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**Sarah Gordon
Director, Israel Connect**



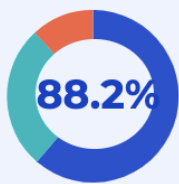
From one of our mentors, Mark Palmer

I first heard about Israel Connect through my sister. She had been mentoring for a few years and raved about it, so I thought I would give it a shot. It was intriguing to connect one-on-one with someone in Israel, especially a young person, and hopefully be able to help in some way.

I enjoyed connecting with my student, Harel. It was gratifying to see his progress in English; his pronunciation and reading ability significantly improved. I had him listen to how I speak. Hebrew tends to be spoken with the mouth more closed than English. "Harel, open your mouth wide and speak like this!" As we know, proficiency in English has a significant impact on career and other outcomes for kids in Israel. Harel made a real effort and picked things up quickly.

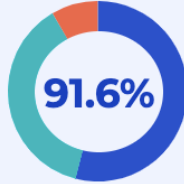
Focusing the curriculum on Israel, I think is a brilliant idea, and while Harel and I had both been to many of the places talked about in the weekly lessons and were familiar with some of the content, there were always fascinating things to learn for both of us. After each lesson, we would speak about other topics. I learned about his after-school activities, especially his involvement with Bnei Akiva. I was not familiar with the organization, and am so impressed with the responsibilities he took on voluntarily. It is clear he takes great pride in helping children in his community. Harel, in turn, enjoyed hearing about things in Canada and was intrigued to hear about and see photos of our Canadian winter. We also discovered that we have common interests; we both love the outdoors, hiking, and exploring. There are so many amazing and diverse natural environments in Israel. Turns out we have been to many of the same places and we shared photos.

Harel is a great kid and I'm sure he has a bright future ahead of him. I greatly enjoyed being an Israel Connect mentor and hoped Harel gained as much as I did from the experience. Looking forward to the next session in September.



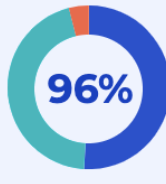
Percent of students who saw their grades improve.

61.3% of students felt their grades improved significantly.



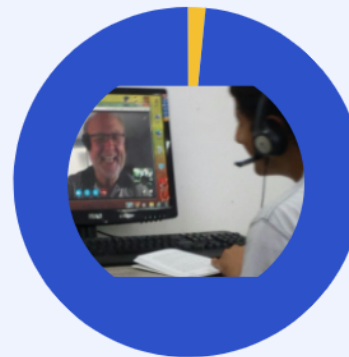
Percent of students who felt more confident when speaking English.

54 % of students felt their confidence improved significantly and 37.6% felt their confidence improved somewhat.



Percent of students who felt their reading improved.

51% of students felt they made immense progress and 45% of student reporting some progress in their reading.



98.4% percent of students were extremely happy with their mentor and felt their mentor cared a lot about their success.



526

Students participated in the Israel Connect program this year.

In the words of our mentors and students



From a Student

My scores on the tests were always good but when it came to speaking I did not have the confidence to start a conversation or to speak at all. And now, after all the meetings that have been, I have a lot more confidence to speak and I had a lot of fun attending Israel Connect.



From a Mentor

My student went from hesitating to speaking English fluently, she even began to smile more.



From a Student

Thank you!! This is the best program I have participated in in my life! Beyond the English which improved greatly during the year, very surprisingly I enjoyed meeting my mentor, and after each session I was happy. Thank you very much!!



From a Mentor

My student gained the ability to speak about a wide variety of subjects. He is now able to pronounce the "th" sound.

From one our Students, Harel Uruqiza

I heard about the program from my teacher. I wanted to polish my English when I speak with people. I want to become an Engineer, and I am considering learning abroad. I know I need English for my plans, and since I had no other options, I decided to jump on this opportunity.

It has really helped A LOT. For the first time, I started speaking English in school. I learned English my whole life but was never able to construct sentences when I tried to talk. I even started sometimes speaking English with my friends. My grades have improved significantly, even though I am not required to speak English in class, but my overall English proficiency improved so much that it improved my reading, grammar, and fluency.

My favorite part of the program was listening to my mentor's stories, and he at least pretended to like my stories. I heard how his family survived the Holocaust and shared with him that my grandparents are survivors as well, and it was very interesting. I am very happy I took the time to be part of this wonderful initiative.



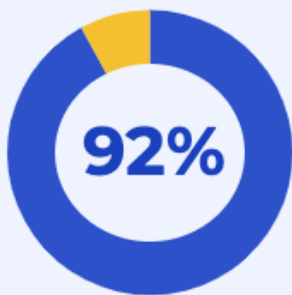
From one our Parents, Racheli Uruqiza

I first heard about Israel Connect from my son's teacher. My children attend the local Yeshiva High School in our community of Bruchin located in the Shomron. I signed up my two sons, who are in grades 9

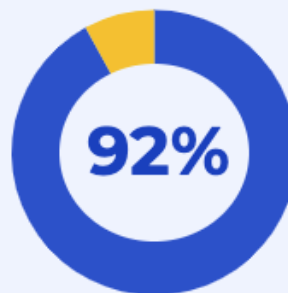
and 10. They both receive relatively good grades in their English studies, but they struggle to speak English. They can only read. The results from the program have really surprised me. Both my sons feel so confident now and are speaking English for the first time.

Their English grades have really improved since starting the Israel Connect program, which is wonderful. Here in Israel, they will need the English language to do anything. It is not just about achieving academic goals. You really cannot get ahead here without English. Wherever they will work in the world, people will speak English. The English lessons in the schools here are very text-based and grammar-focused. They have no opportunity to talk in the classroom with the teacher. The class sizes are just too big. The Israel Connect opportunity is unique and brought them to a level of proficiency that kids here in Israel really do not achieve unless they can afford all the fancy after-school programs.

The personal connection my sons forged with their mentors has been such a bonus. They spoke of the weather and other things, and it was a friendly conversation. One of their mentors, Mark Palmer, showed them the snow through his video camera, it introduced them to new things. My sons and their mentors talked a lot about food. The program has made the world feel smaller for my sons and they were exposed to things from across the world right here in our little town.

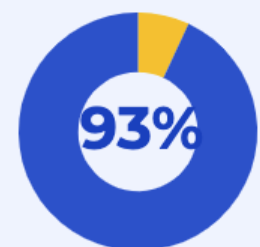


Percent of mentors who felt their students made progress in their English this year.



Percent of students who felt they made progress in their English this year.

60.2% of students felt they made immense progress.



Percent of students enjoyed their weekly sessions.

72% saying they enjoyed them immensely and looked forward to them every week.