

ENGLISH OVERSEAS (EOS) VOLUNTEER MANUAL

FALL-WINTER 2022-2023



**marlene
meyerson jcc**
manhattan THE WECHSLER CENTER FOR MODERN AGING

Dear Volunteers,

On behalf of the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, we extend our thanks and gratitude to all participants for volunteering with this very special project and embarking on the English Overseas journey with us. We are incredibly excited about these meaningful connections with children from schools in Jerusalem and are delighted to be partnering with the Jerusalem Municipality. We look forward to hearing feedback from both students and volunteers and know these interactions will be both valuable and fulfilling.

With Best Wishes for Success,

Susan Lechter, Director, Wechsler Center for Modern Aging, Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan

Rabbi Brian Fink, Director, Engage, Wechsler Center for Modern Aging, Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan

INTRODUCTION

Israeli High School Students Study English with Older Adults Living Abroad

This initiative is a collaboration between the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan and the Municipality of Jerusalem and connects Jerusalem high school students with adult English language native speakers from abroad. The goal is to provide Israeli students with a valuable and comfortable opportunity to practice and build their oral English language speaking skills with someone who is proficient and is interested in them and their life and in sharing the experience. This is the second year of the program. Last year we had over 90 volunteer-student matches. Over 50 volunteer-student matches from last year will continue this coming school year!

The MMJCCM Wechsler Center for Modern Aging's Engage Program is the lead organization for identifying senior volunteers. Volunteers will be matched with High School Students in Jerusalem.

The Municipality of Jerusalem will be leading the overall effort. The municipality established the overall goals for this program and delineating key guidance principles and goals that will be followed by both the students and the MMJCC volunteers. The Municipality of Jerusalem has created a website for this program:

<https://www.jerusalem.muni.il/en/residents/education/english-overseas>

Exhibit 1 (presented at the back of this manual) presents a detailed description of Jerusalem's educational system.

The students are selected from a range of Jerusalem high schools and religious backgrounds. The volunteers will need to be sensitive to the international nature of this program as well as potential cultural differences, and must follow the curriculum and guidance established by our partners in Israel.

An important component of their English curriculum is the ability to demonstrate proficiency in oral English conversation. Many students may not have optimal opportunities to practice speaking English, so initiatives like this can be an important resource for them.

This program will consist of weekly discussions in English, over Zoom for approximately 20-30 minutes to help students prepare for their English exams given at the end of their school year.

English language education in Israel: English language education in Israel consists of three tiers: primary education (grades 4–6, approximately ages 6–12), middle school (grades 7–9, approximately ages 12–15) and high school (grades 10–12, approximately ages 14–18). Learning English is compulsory from the fourth grade.

English instruction is taught by qualified English teachers both from Israel and abroad. Pupils study with approved materials mainly published in Israel according to the English curriculum. The emphasis is on the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Matriculation (Bagrut): High schools in Israel prepare students for the Israeli matriculation exams (*bagrut*). These exams cover various academic disciplines, which are studied in units (*yehidot limud*) of one to five on an ascending scale of difficulty. A Bagrut certificate and Bagrut scores often determine acceptance into elite military units, admission to academic institutions, and job prospects.

The English Bagrut consists of three modules and an exam where students are required to express themselves orally (Oral Bagrut). The three modules deal with reading comprehension, listening comprehension tasks and writing essays.

Today the Oral Bagrut (COBE - Computerized Oral Bagrut Exam) is a computerized exam which includes talking about different topics, discussing a project that the pupils have done and answering both lower and higher order thinking skills questions after watching a video clip. The students are offered a choice and guidance on certain topics. Pupils with special needs are entitled to be tested face to face with special accommodations.

1. Goals of the Program:

- Enable Jerusalem students to improve their English language skills through weekly conversations of about 20-30 minutes
- Socialize with seniors abroad during this period of Coronavirus isolation through dialogue with Jerusalem high school students
- Strengthen intergenerational and cross-cultural connections in a safe and welcoming environment



2. KEY POINTS OF CONTACT

Name	Role	Email Address and Phone Number
Susan Lechter, Director, MMJCC Wechsler Center for Modern Aging	Overall Leadership of the JCC EOS program	slechter@mmjccm.org 646-505-4412
Rabbi Brian Fink, Director/Community Organizer, MMJCC Engage Program	EOS JCC Program Director	bfink@mmjccm.org 646-505-4408
Sherri Lerner	JCC Volunteer Coordinator	slerner@mmjccm.org 646-505-4396
Marcy Gregory, Engage Volunteer	EOS Volunteer Co-Lead	marcygregory29@gmail.com 917-273-4283
Barry Langer, Engage Volunteer	EOS Volunteer Co-Lead	blanger@outlook.com 347-570-0771
Randy Solomon, Engage Volunteer	EOS Volunteer Co-Lead	randyellen993@gmail.com 732-668-4431

For issues regarding overall JCC policies or questions regarding volunteer relations please contact Rabbi Brian Fink or Susan Lechter.

For general day-to-day operational or educational content issues, please contact Marcy,Randy or Barry.

3. PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Key Program Dates	
Zoom Launch Party (initial meeting with students):	November 14th, 11:00 AM
First weekly chats	November 2022 (coordinated between student and volunteer)
Program Completion	The official end date is currently May 26, 2023

Israeli School Calendar

Hanukkah	Evening of December 18 th -26
Purim	Evening of March 6 th - March 8 th
Pesach (Passover)	Evening of April 5 th -13 th
Independence Day	April 25 th - 26 th
Lag B'Omer	May 9 th
Shavuot	May 25 th th - 27 th

4. PROGRAM POLICIES

The primary guidelines for the program have been provided by the Jerusalem municipality and are listed in **Attachment 3**. In addition, the MMJCC is establishing supportive policies and procedures to ensure that this program is executed in accordance with its policies and behavioral expectations.

- **Attendance:**

- Regular and prompt attendance is important. Your consistency and enthusiasm will demonstrate that volunteering to help your student is important to you.
- We understand that conflicts do arise, however, we hope that they are not the norm, and that both the high school student and the MMJCC program leadership are notified in a timely manner. Hopefully a satisfactory alternate date can be scheduled with the student. If the student does not attend two sessions in a row, please inform the JCC program staff *immediately*.

- **Confidentiality:**

- All personal information obtained from and about the student should be closely held and not disseminated to any third party.
- There should be no communications outside the Zoom sessions other than for scheduling the Zoom meetings for at least the first 2 months. Communications beyond the Zoom meetings will be re-reviewed at that point in the program.



- Exchanging Personal Contact Information should be limited to email and phone numbers.
- Privacy and confidentiality – Taking pictures or posting any interactions anywhere outside of Zoom is prohibited.
- **Appropriate Behavior:**
 - All volunteers are expected to act in a professional and courteous manner. Volunteers are expected to avoid the use of inappropriate language.
 - Always provide feedback in a constructive manner and with positive reinforcement.
 - Avoid topics that could potentially be controversial, such as politics, religion, sexuality or individual or family information that can be deemed very personal.
 - Be sensitive to potential cultural issues. Certain feelings and behaviors (both yours and/or the person with whom you are communicating) can be indicators that cultural differences are at play when interacting with someone from another country.

5. OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

- **Student/Volunteer Matching:** The Municipality of Jerusalem will be matching students and volunteers based on the volunteer information sent to them by the MMJCCM- (such as interests and hobbies).
- **Scheduling of Weekly Meetings:** Once the matches are made, the students and volunteers are free to reach out to their partner (either by email or WhatsApp) to set up the first meeting. Please ensure that the time works for both the volunteer and student and establish consistency so that there is no confusion over scheduling from week to week. Also, please note that there is a 7-hour time difference between NYC and Jerusalem.
- **Selection of Discussion Topics:** – There are guidelines in this manual for suggested topics for discussion. However, if the student would like to speak about other topics of interest (sports, friends, happenings in their families, happenings in Israel and in the US) it is perfectly fine to expand the discussions to whatever interests your student.
- **Weekly Meeting Invitations and Initiation of Calls:** These will be initiated by the students via Zoom, scheduled a mutually convenient time for both the student and the volunteer. The weekly sessions will most likely take place on a Sunday-Thursday between 8am-2pm NYC time. It is strongly encouraged that the volunteer-student pairs establish a regular weekly schedule to insure consistency.

- **JCC-Team Zoom Meetings:** The MMJCC will hold volunteer Zoom meetings throughout the school year where the program leaders will provide program updates and volunteers will have an opportunity to share their experiences, lessons learned, problems and issues. We want this program to be collaborative, social and fun. We also want the volunteers to feel that they are being supported in every way possible and that any issues and concerns are addressed as quickly and thoroughly as possible. We will use these meetings to identify overall adjustments or changes in procedures that can help improve the program.
- Issues or problems that need prompt attention should be brought immediately to the program leaders (Brian, Marcy or Barry).

6. GUIDELINES FOR THE WEEKLY DISCUSSIONS

- **Be sensitive to the student's comfort level:** The students may not have had much opportunity to speak English before this program. As a result, they may be very shy and even embarrassed about their English-speaking abilities. It is important to encourage them to speak and to make them feel comfortable talking to you in English.
- **Listen:** Second language students often develop a "script" in their mind of what they want to say to you before they engage in conversation. Allow them to get through the script so they feel certain that you have heard what they have to say. Having the students speak is the first priority of these discussions. Don't dominate the conversation!
- **Limit** the use of acronyms, abbreviations, jargon, colloquialisms, and idioms when speaking (or writing) to an international student. These may need extra explanation.
- **Be curious:** Take the time to learn at least a little about your students
- **Speak clearly and at a moderate or slower than usual pace:** If you know you are a fast talker or a mumblor, slow down your speech.
- **Speak simply and clearly:** Avoiding slang or confusing idioms; explain any technical terms.
- **Ask questions/guide the conversation:** And let the student speak. Avoid asking questions that can be answered with a yes or a no. You can start conversations by asking questions that they may feel comfortable answering and that will encourage them to give detailed answers.

Example questions can include:

- Tell me about your favorite activities.
- Tell me about your friends
- How hard has the lockdown been for you and your family?
- What's it like to prepare for the Army or Israel's National Service?

There are addition topics and suggested guidelines in **Exhibit 2**

- ***Be alert to misunderstandings:*** If you do not understand, try as quickly as possible to clarify the point of confusion.
- ***Correcting/Helping student with their English:*** You can help your student by correcting their English, but always do this in a positive, constructive manner. The goal is not to criticize, but rather to help them improve in as fun and friendly a way as is possible.
- ***Zoom location:*** Try to Zoom from as quiet a location as possible and with a minimal number of distractions (pets, TV, other family members, etc.).

Exhibit 1

Message From Yoav Zimran

The department for Education of the Municipality of Jerusalem is in charge of the entire field of education in the city from the age of early childhood until the end of high school, and of developing various educational fields.

In the year of 2020, 275,571 pupils from all the different sectors are learning in Jerusalem's educational system: 62,409 boys and girls are registered in municipal kindergartens, 17,943 started in first grade, and 195,219 learn in grades two to twelve. In Eastern Jerusalem are studying this year 12,000 pupils, 3000 more than in the past year. This year, the municipality of Jerusalem develops the "Model for Comprehensive Education" which offers every pupil a real opportunity to express his personal capabilities, to fulfill his dreams and to change worlds. This unique model relates to each pupil in a comprehensive way as in the field of social welfare as well as in formal and informal education. It enables innovative studying programs that are meeting the personal needs of each pupil on one side and the challenges and values of the changing reality on the other. Jerusalem's education focuses on a comprehensive approach and tries to meet the needs of all its populations and sectors in an equal way.

Centers for innovation have been set up in different neighborhoods: "The Center for Innovation in Nature" offers learning through informal meeting with ground, flora and fauna by various technological means. "The Center for innovative experiencing in different pedagogic methods and in creating local educational communities in subjects like digital creativity, crafts, electro robotics, new media and neighborhood gardening. In addition, 150 Jerusalem schools are part of the Jerusalem educational accelerator, an initiative with the intention of exchanging the old educational methods of "frontal teaching of a teacher vs pupils", for the benefit of individually chosen focus by each school. According to this and with cooperation of mentors and designers, teaching methods as well as the design of the school will be adapted to the new educational concept.

Moreover, the municipality created the "full room" program for preventing pupils from dropping out of the school system. Social workers with a specific training will be an integrative part of the educational school team.

Besides schools, the municipality also offers a variety of classes as social sciences, humanities, art, science and technology where highly interested students of all neighborhoods can

participate and improve their knowledge.

We at the department of education want to offer all students equal opportunities for education, regardless to his socioeconomic status. We also started and subsidy the "Jerusalem College", a program that offers a variety of academic courses for high school students who are committed to ongoing active study and social involvement. It is intentionally written "*Kee meZion tetze Torah*" (from Zion shall go fourth the message of Torah): Jerusalem is leading year for year in achievements, youth initiatives, social involvements, creative and multicultural activities.

We welcome you and thank you for your interest and cooperation in this important project that connects different communities from Israel and the Diaspora, young students and older adults, and enables students to learn and improve their language skills in English by practicing and understanding the importance of language in building bridges between people.

Yoav Zimran

Deputy of Education Administration Head of the Department of Pedagogy Jerusalem
municipality

Exhibit 2

Additional Topics and Guidelines

Suggested Topics:

Advertising ● Animals ● Education ● Fame and celebrities ● Favorite books and movies ● Food ● Free time activities ● Friendship ● Future plans ● Games ● Health ● Hobbies and habits / routines ● Holidays and customs ● Hometown ● Languages ● Music ● Personal belongings ● Personal strengths and weaknesses ● Professional ambitions ● Reflection on personal experiences ● Respect ● Role models ● School ● Sports ● Suggesting individual/ community change ● Technology ● Transportation ● Vacations ● Volunteering

Additional Guidelines for the Volunteers

- Students need to feel comfortable and secure during the interaction.
- Volunteers should speak slowly and clearly.
- If you feel the need to correct the student, try to do so gently, ideally by emphasizing the correct vocabulary/pronunciation/sentence structure in your response.
- Pupils will be told before the meetings what topic will be discussed and will be given 10-15 vocabulary items on the relevant topic.
- The volunteer should allow the pupil to choose the topic for the following meeting.
- The conversation should focus on enabling the pupil to converse in English.
- If the pupil does not know the appropriate word the volunteer should encourage the student to explain what he/she means.

The students should be encouraged to:

- Answer simple questions about familiar topics and everyday situations
- Explain what they like about something

- Describe plans and arrangements, habits and routines, past activities and personal experiences
- Briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions
- Express their thoughts about cultural topics (such as holidays, customs, traditions, etc.)
- Express and support ideas, personal views and opinions
- Provide in-depth reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions
- Describe events, real or imagined
- Express their thoughts about abstract topics (such as friendship, ambitions, reflections, possibilities, etc.)

Sentence openers:

- Tell me about your school/ favorite place in Jerusalem/ a member of your family/ a friend/ a pet.
- If you could change something in your school, what would you change? What does a regular day look like for you?
- Would you recommend your school to other students? Why? What do you like/dislike about your school?
- Do you think what you learned in school will help you in the future? What is your favorite subject?
- What soccer/ basketball etc team do you like? Tell me about the team.
- Where do you like to shop? What is your favorite store? Why?
- What do you like about your teachers? Tell me about a favorite teacher.
- What would you like to know about where I live/ my family/ my life?
- What is your favorite food? What is your favorite restaurant?

- Tell me about a recent happy event you had in your family? A wedding, Bar Mitzvah and more. Where was it? What made it that special?
- What can you tell me about your school? What makes it special? Which subjects do you like to learn? Why? What do you think about distance learning?
- Would you like to hear about the electoral system in the US? It is different from the elections in Israel- would you like to know more about it?
- I heard that the army service in your country is very important to you and you start preparing for your service- Can you share and tell me about it? Where would you like to be? What kind of a job would you like to get?
- For religious girls: Are you going to the army? national service? where? what will you do there?
- I heard that in your country there is a special program in schools- “Personal Commitment” in which you volunteer to help others in your community - Tell me about it.
- Tell me about a country/ a place you would like to visit and travel.
- I know that Israel has beautiful sites and attractions - Can you tell me about Eilat? Kinneret? The Dead Sea? The Galilee? Tel-Aviv?
- I understand you live in Jerusalem. Do you like living there? What is special about Jerusalem?
- Do you like reading? What kinds of books do you prefer? Tell me about a book that you have read.
- What do you prefer: watching movies or reading books?
- What are you good at? What do you like doing in your spare time?

Exhibit 3

Municipality of Jerusalem's English Overseas Guidelines for the Students

1. **Contacting the volunteer** – The volunteer is waiting for you! You should contact them to schedule a Zoom chat within a week of receiving their email information!
2. **Arrive at meetings regularly and on time, don't be late (log on five minutes before the Zoom meeting)** – that's a basic thing! The volunteer expects the video calls to take place and start right on time.
3. **Be fully and appropriately dressed** – the video chat is held as part of the study program, so you should attend the chat dressed as you would dress for your educational institution.
4. **Be in a quiet place, without noises or interruptions (put your mobile phone on flight mode)** – in order for you to be able to concentrate on the Zoom video chat without being distracted, make sure you are in a quiet environment without any television or other background noises (it is recommended to have a calm background behind you, such as a clean white wall).
5. **Come prepared for the conversation** – organize your work environment before the start of the chat so that you have quick and easy access to materials, writing implements and other tools.
6. **Connect your device to a power source** – online video chats and watching videos consumes more electricity. This is true for laptops as well as iPhone or Android mobile devices. In order to ensure the operation of your device throughout the Zoom video chat, it is recommended that you connect the device you use for the chat to a power source.
7. **Don't lie down. Sit up!** – Video chats are conducted while sitting. If you participate in a video chat while lying down or from your bed, you're showing that you don't take either yourself or the volunteer seriously.
8. **Put your computer on your desk and aim the camera at eye level** – place your computer/mobile phone on a stable surface, adjust the height of the camera to eye level and speak into the camera. The volunteer is watching you.
9. **Don't chew gum or eat in front of the camera** – chewing gum makes a bad impression. Don't eat or drink in front of the camera during the meeting. Eating in front of the camera shows disrespect and a lack of consideration, and that's not what you want to convey to the volunteer.
10. **There is no place for animals in the video call, and don't play with toys.**
11. **Check the integrity of your camera and microphone when you enter the video chat** – to make sure you enter the chat with a working camera and microphone, the Zoom software allows you to check the integrity of your equipment before you begin broadcasting – make use of it.
12. **Use your name in English** – when entering the video chat make sure you appear under your full correct name in **English**. Sometimes you join video chats from someone else's computer, , and then their name will appear in the chat and not yours.
13. **Be patient** – be patient and listen to what the volunteer says and expresses in the conversation; you don't know what the volunteer feels or thinks, you only hear what they say.
14. **Human behavior** – so what if the camera is on? Continue exhibiting respectful behavior toward your environment and toward the volunteer.