

2020-2021 Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Research Program for U.S. Teachers (Fulbright DA)

Israel Country Profile

Partner organization: [United States – Israel Education Foundation \(Fulbright Israel\)](#)

Eligible program dates: February 2021 – June 2021

Language requirement: None

Host institution: Fulbright DA fellows may choose a host organization according to needs and a preferable affiliation. Fulbright Israel commission will then approve the terms with the host.

Dependent Information: An allowance of \$2,000 per eligible dependent will be provided as part of the Fulbright DA grant. School age dependents may attend local public schools in Israel for free. The spoken language in public schools is Hebrew.

Country Overview

Israel is a country of immigrants. Since its inception in 1948, Israel's population has grown almost ten-fold. Its 7.8 million inhabitants comprise a mosaic of people with varied ethnic backgrounds, lifestyles, religions, cultures and traditions. About 90% of Israel's inhabitants live in some 200 urban centers, some of which are located on ancient historical sites. About 5% are members of unique rural cooperative settlements - the kibbutz and the moshav. Thousands of years of history, the ingathering of the Jews from over 70 countries, a society of multi-ethnic communities living side by side, and an unending flow of international input via satellite and cable have contributed to the development of an Israeli culture which reflects worldwide elements while striving for an identity of its own. Cultural expression through the arts is as varied as the people themselves, with literature, theater, concerts, radio and television programming, entertainment, museums and galleries for every interest and taste. The official languages of the country are Hebrew and Arabic, but in the country's streets many other languages can be heard. Hebrew, the language of the Bible, long restricted to liturgy and literature, was revived a century ago, accompanying the renewal of Jewish life in the Land. Israel is a land of pioneers and innovators, and as such tell a diverse and interesting story to those who come to study and learn from its institutions and people.



Educational System Overview

School attendance is mandatory and free from age six to 18 (education is free from the age of 3). Formal education starts in primary school (Grades 1-6) and continues with intermediate school (Grades 7-9) and secondary school (Grades 10-12). About nine percent of the post-primary school population attend boarding schools.

The multi-cultural nature of Israel's society is accommodated within the framework of the education system. Accordingly, schools are divided into four groups: state schools, attended by the majority of pupils; state religious schools, which emphasize Jewish studies, tradition, and observance; Arab and Druze schools, with instruction in Arabic and special focus on Arab and Druze history, religion, and culture; and private schools, which operate under various religious and international auspices.

In recent years, with the growing concern of parents over the orientation of their children's education, some new schools have been founded (Rudolf Steiner anthroposophical education, Democratic education etc.), which reflect the philosophies and beliefs of specific groups of parents and educators.

Curriculum

Most hours of the school day are devoted to compulsory academic studies. While the subject matter to be covered is uniform throughout the system, each school may choose from a wide range of study units and teaching materials, provided by the Ministry of Education, which best suit the needs of its faculty and pupil population.

With the aim of enhancing pupils' understanding of their society, each year a special topic of national importance is studied in depth. Themes have included democratic values, the Hebrew language, immigration, Jerusalem, peace, and industry.

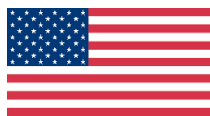
Secondary education

The majority of secondary schools offer academic curricula in science and in the humanities leading to a matriculation certificate and higher education. Certain secondary schools offer specialized curricula, which lead to a matriculation certificate and/or vocational diploma.

Technological schools train technicians and practical engineers on three levels, with some preparing for higher education, some studying towards a vocational diploma, and others acquiring practical skills.

Agricultural schools, usually in a residential setting, supplement basic studies with subjects relating to agronomy.

Military preparatory schools train future career personnel and technicians in specific fields required by the Israel Defense Forces.



Yeshiva high schools, mainly boarding schools, with separate frameworks for boys and girls, complement their secular curricula with intensive religious studies and promote observance of tradition and a Jewish way of life.

Comprehensive schools offer studies in a variety of vocations, ranging from bookkeeping to mechanics, electronics, hotel trades, graphic design, and more.

Youth not attending one of the above schools are subject to the Apprenticeship Law, requiring them to study for a trade at an approved vocational school. Apprenticeship programs are provided by the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labor in schools affiliated with vocational networks. Lasting three to four years, these programs consist of two years of classroom study followed by one or two years during which students study three days a week and work at their chosen trade on the other days. Trades range from hairstyling and cooking to mechanics and word processing.

Administration and Structure

The Ministry of Education is responsible for school curricula, educational standards, supervision of teaching personnel, and construction of school buildings. Local authorities are charged with school maintenance as well as with acquisition of equipment and supplies. Teaching personnel at the kindergarten and primary school level are ministry employees, while those in the upper grades are employed by local authorities, which receive funding from the ministry according to the size of the school population. The government and local authorities finance 80 percent of education, while the rest comes from other sources.

Educational Television (ETV), a unit of the Ministry of Education, produces and broadcasts scholastic programs for use in school classrooms and educational programs for the entire population. In addition, ETV collaborates with education professionals at universities and teachers' seminars in developing new teaching methods.

Dedicated to providing lifetime learning, ETV gears its production to people of all ages through enrichment programs for preschoolers, entertainment programs for youth, educational courses for adults, and news broadcasts for all.

Education for Exceptional Children

Gifted children, who rank in the top three percent of their class and have passed qualifying tests, participate in enrichment programs, ranging from full-time special schools to extracurricular courses. A classroom for the gifted is characterized by the level of its students and its studies, with emphasis not only on imparting knowledge and understanding, but also on applying the concepts mastered to other disciplines. Children in these programs learn to research and handle new material independently.

Children with Special Needs

Children with physical, mental, or learning disabilities are placed in appropriate frameworks according to the nature of their needs, to help them eventually achieve maximum integration



into the social and vocational life of their community. Thus some are taken care of in special settings, while others attend traditional schools, where they may be assigned to self-contained groups or to mainstream classes with supplementary tutoring.

Responsibility for their wellbeing is shared by health-care personnel, psychologists, social workers, and special education professionals, as well as by the family and various community support groups. A committee constituted by law and appointed by the Minister of Education determines the eligibility of handicapped children for special education programs and facilities, which are free from age three to twenty-one.

Primary and Secondary School Education: Challenges

Education in Israel is a precious legacy. Following the tradition of past generations, education continues to be a fundamental value and is recognized as the key to the future.

The educational system aims to prepare children to become responsible members of a democratic, pluralistic society in which people from different ethnic, religious, cultural and political backgrounds coexist. It is based on Jewish values, love of the land, and the principles of liberty and tolerance. It seeks to impart a high level of knowledge, with an emphasis on scientific and technological skills essential for the country's continued development.

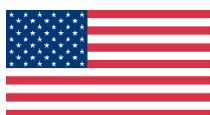
Challenges

When the State of Israel was founded (1948), a fully functioning education system already existed, developed and maintained by the pre-state Jewish community, with Hebrew, which had been revived for daily speech at the end of the 19th century, as the language of instruction.

However, since shortly after the establishment of the state, the education system has faced the enormous challenge of integrating large numbers of immigrant children from over 70 countries - some coming with their parents, others alone - thereby fulfilling Israel's *raison d'être* as the historic homeland of the Jewish people. The mass immigration of the 1950s, mainly from postwar Europe and Arab countries, was succeeded in the 1960s by a large influx of Jews from North Africa.

In the 1970s, the first sizable immigration of Jews from the Soviet Union arrived, followed intermittently by smaller groups. Since the beginning of the 1990s, over one million Jews from the former Soviet Union have come to Israel, with tens of thousands more still arriving each year. In two mass movements, in 1984 and 1991, almost the entire Jewish community of Ethiopia was brought to the country. Over the years, many Jews from the Americas and other Western countries have also settled in Israel.

In addition to meeting urgent demands for more classrooms and teachers, special tools and methods have had to be developed to help absorb youngsters from many cultural backgrounds into the school population. Programs designed specifically to meet the needs of the newcomers include preparation of appropriate curricular aids and short-term classes to introduce immigrant pupils to subjects not learned in their countries of origin, such as the Hebrew language and Jewish history. Special courses were initiated to train teachers to deal with immigrant youngsters, and



retraining courses for immigrant teachers have facilitated their employment in the education system.

At the same time, the Ministry of Education is involved in an ongoing process of bringing educational standards in line with modern pedagogic practices, such as mandating gender equality, upgrading teacher status, broadening humanistic curricula, and promoting scientific and technological studies. A key aspect of its policy is to provide equal opportunities in education for all children and to increase the number of pupils passing matriculation examinations.

Israel has been at the forefront of pedagogical training and research for many years. Today there are scores of university departments, teacher training colleges, and research institutes that focus on pedagogy. While Israel would be a good match for all interested teachers, applicants with interest in technology usage, immigrant integration, and agricultural education might find particularly interesting opportunities for inquiry.

Additional Resources

- [Educational System in Israel, an overview by the Taube center](#)
- The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs has an extensive website which details the Israeli Education System: <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/Education/Pages/EDUCATION-%20Primary%20and%20Secondary.aspx>

Possible topics of interest to U.S. educators:

Celebrating more than 70 years of *pioneering and leadership*, from establishing a state all the way to becoming a *start-up nation*, Israel is a leader in education as well. Israel provides the opportunity for American educators to explore issues in a society with many parallels to the U.S. The education system in Israel is known for its *excellence in promoting literacy* among kids from *diverse populations*, working with *kids with special needs* and *technology-based education*.

