



K-12 Program

Background Information

Institution: Melvin Berman Hebrew Academy

Program address: 13300 Arctic Avenue Rockville, MD 20853

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Contact person

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Languages/dialects taught: Hebrew

Grades taught: PreK-12th

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: The language program strives to establish Hebrew as a second language for the students. Importance is placed on culture and skills are developed so that students can read, write, listen, and manage at all levels. One of the goals of the program is for the students to be able to succeed in Israel.

Type of program: Hebrew as a heritage language

Program origin: The program was founded in 2003.

Parents

Parents' expectations for the program: Parents are involved in the program and provide useful input. Their expectations lie alongside the goals of the program: For their children to acquire a high level of Hebrew for cultural and future enrichment.

Staff

Instructors' and administration's expectations for the program: Staff members are mostly Israeli and at times differ in their goals, but overall the staff share the expectations and mission of the program.

Students

Students: 700 students

How the program identifies heritage speakers: Students are given a placement test from NETA after the 5th grade.

Possible reasons for student withdrawal: The school has a 90% completion rate, but only about 30% complete the NETA program for Hebrew language.

Students' expectations of the program: Most of the students are enthusiastic about acquiring the language and learning about the culture, but some students may see it as a chore.

Instructors

Number of instructors in the program: 6 instructors

Languages in which instructors are proficient: Hebrew

Proficiency level: Native, near-native

Credentials: NETA certified and proficient in Hebrew

Professional development opportunities instructors have: Every year the NETA program provides instructors with three days of training. Instructors may also participate in the Master teacher programs for 12 days.

Professional development opportunities instructors need: Instructors need a long-term professional development program.

Instruction

Total contact hours per week: 5 hours a week

Student grouping: Students are divided into 4 levels, and class-size ranges from 15 to 20 students.

Language skills

Skills developed by the program: Reading, writing, speaking and listening

Culture

Aspects of culture taught: Geography, art, music (classical and contemporary), literature, and dance

Kind of student identity program fosters: Focus is placed on building and strengthening confidence in the students' self-perceptions. Leadership and skills as a Hebrew speaker are also emphasized.

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program: Students are exposed to interactive role-playing games, whether in small groups or with the entire class.

Materials

Other materials used for instruction: Workbooks and textbooks

Technology used for instruction: CDs, SmartBoards, and very little computer use

Assessment

Assessments used to evaluate students' progress: Students take the NETA tests found at the end of each booklet. Tests are divided into writing and listening skills. Every quarter there is an evaluation from the school to assess content, organization, and richness and correctness of language.

Articulation

How the program develops home/school connections or promotes parent involvement: Parent involvement is mostly positive, but the overall level of involvement depends on each instructor. Parents are very supportive of the program and the instructors.

Opportunities for using the heritage language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program: Students can attend Hebrew films, keep up with articles from Hebrew newspapers, and read novels. About 80% of the students travel overseas to Israel.

What the program has in place

Financial support the program receives: The program receives virtually no external support, only through tuition.

Other support the program receives: There is almost no additional financial support besides tuition.

Solicitation of funding: Funding is not sought for the language program.

Assistance or funding the program would like to receive: The program needs more information on how to locate external funding sources. There is also a need for more resources and regularly updated Hebrew newspapers, magazines, and films.

How students graduate and/or how they receive credit: Students receive credit for all language courses after 4 mandatory years of study.

Program research or evaluation: Every year there is an evaluation of the program.

Special challenges

Challenges the program has experienced: Our challenges include finding and retaining language teachers and being knowledgeable about different types of funding sources. It can be difficult to turn some teachers into language teachers.