



Heritage Voices: Program



Tarbuton, Israeli Cultural Center
PO Box 591, Del Mar, CA 92014
(San Diego Metropolitan Area)
www.tarbuton.org

About the Director



Jennie Starr is the Director of Tarbuton. She has 20 years of experience as a lawyer and manager of software product management teams. She has a B.A. from Northwestern University, an M.A. in information science from the University of Illinois, and a J.D. from Washington University in St. Louis. Jennie serves on the Del Mar Public School District DELAC (District-Level English Learner Advisory Committee) Board for English Learners, which is focused on improving students' English language skills. She also encourages families to maintain their native language skills. In addition to managing Tarbuton, she advocates for Hebrew language instruction in San Diego Public Schools and has launched after-school language programs. She also advocates for Modern Hebrew as an elective in middle school and high school programs to establish a path for language instruction in Grades K-12.

Jennie was born to an Israeli father and an American mother and raised in the United States. English was spoken at home, and she had minimal and inconsistent Modern Hebrew instruction as a child and no exposure to a Hebrew-speaking community. Inspired by research showing that the influence of an ethnic enclave (in this case a heritage language center) can support language instruction and proficiency, she created Tarbuton for the Israeli community in San Diego and expanded the program to include nonnative speakers of Hebrew as well. The program emphasizes Modern Hebrew and includes Israeli cultural components, including music, dance, food, and literature, to connect the language to Israel and its people in meaningful ways.

About the Program

Oversight and Management

Founded in 2006, Tarbuton is a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Students from all cultures and backgrounds are welcome. A board of directors oversees the finances and staffing decisions and helps with long-term sustainability planning. All board members and the director are volunteers. Volunteers also manage the literature and film groups, facilitate meetings and events, and help with selection of speakers and shows. As of 2012, there are 14 paid part-time teachers, a part-time program manager, and a volunteer director. Teachers are native Hebrew speakers, and most are also professional educators with degrees and experience in education.

Mission and History

Tarbuton offers Israeli-themed programs and classes (in Hebrew and English) for the local community and Modern Hebrew instruction for heritage language speakers as well as for students of Hebrew as a second language. Tarbuton provides opportunities for students of all ages to acquire and maintain Hebrew language skills, share their traditions, and build deeper connections to Israel through Israeli culture.



Advanced Reading and Writing Class

The program began with 11 students in 2006. As of 2012, the average annual enrollment is 80 to 100 students. The children's programs serve students from preschool through eighth grade. The program for preschool through fourth grade is offered on Sundays; the middle school program, for Grades 5–8, is offered on Mondays in the late afternoon and early evening. Tarbuton also offers a high school credit program and an adult learners program called an *Ulpan*. Classes are held in a rented space in a central location in San Diego. As of 2012, children can also enroll in Tarbuton Modern Hebrew classes in Del Mar and Solana Beach School Districts on campus after school. A summer camp with immersion activities in Hebrew, including songs, arts and crafts, and electives such as karate, aikido, and ball sports, has also been offered.

Weekly or monthly, 200 to 300 participants engage in Tarbuton Israeli cultural activities, including a Mommy and Me playgroup and a literature, film, and social Modern Hebrew conversational group. Cultural activities take place in coffee shops, private homes, and rented theatres.

The program serves heritage language students (first, second, and third generation), students who want to live or work in Israel, and Israeli families who have been living in the United States and are returning home and need to become proficient in Hebrew. Teachers also participate in our adult *Ulpan* to strengthen their language skills.

Modern Hebrew Teaching Methodologies



Students perform *Dira L'Haskir (An Apartment for Rent)*, a classic story by Israeli author Leah Goldberg

Our program is different from other Hebrew language programs, because our emphasis is on Modern Hebrew and not Biblical Hebrew. We focus on developing language facility and everyday use of the language. Instructors are fluent Hebrew speakers who spend time in Israel nearly every year, bringing back authentic materials and using their personal experiences and teaching knowledge to identify materials that will connect our students with modern Israel and with language instruction techniques and materials used in public schools in Israel. This personal connection of our instructors and a large number of our students with Israel ensures that there is a current connection to the country

and its music, literature, and culture. Our program also provides students and teachers with an ethnic enclave, or local community, in which they are able and inclined to use their language skills.

Our teachers adhere to *Ivrit b'Ivrit* (Hebrew in Hebrew) approaches in their teaching, adopting Total Physical Response techniques and games to develop comprehension skills and confidence. The reading readiness stage of our program provides cognitive and visual preparation for students before they begin the formal curriculum in the reading and writing program.

Multiple hours per week of involvement with the language are critical to student success. The program provides students with the option of 1 to 4 hours per week of instruction at the center or at their public school. A variety of classes are offered to suit different student needs and interests, and after-school classes on public school campuses are convenient for busy families. While many students enroll for 1 hour per week of reading and writing instruction, students who enroll for 2 to 4 hours per week of instruction develop their language skills more rapidly. In addition to the core programs, students can add a bilingual literature class, cultural singing and dancing programs, and Modern Israel classes conducted in Hebrew. A weekly Hebrew story time for preschool ages gives an early start for families to gain comfort in a Hebrew-speaking play environment using classical Israeli literature and memorable and familiar stories.

Modern Hebrew and Israeli Culture: Music, Dance, Literature, and Food



Singing group performs at San Diego Celebrates Israel—Yom Ha'atzmaut Festival

Children can also participate in an Israeli dance and singing group, which performs in a city-wide Israeli festival and at our House of Israel in Balboa Park. Authentic materials from Israel are woven into the curriculum, with an emphasis on Israeli classic children's authors and music, which connects the community of expatriates and American children to Israel in a meaningful way.

Programs involving Israeli food provide opportunities to share recipes, techniques, and tips and bring the community together. These programs inspired the writing of a cookbook with recipes in English and Hebrew: [*Israeli Food in America*](#). A Hebrew/Spanish version will follow.

Cooking Israeli food outside of Israel can be a challenge. The authors of the cookbook, who are board members of Tarbuton, make the dishes by identifying ingredients and measurements that re-create the tastes of classic recipes in Israel. The authors wrote the cookbook hoping that many would benefit and enjoy Israeli food in their homes. This was a fundraiser idea that became a community service project and created meaningful connections among community members as they worked together on the project.



Israeli Culture in San Diego



Israeli Dance Troupe performs at the House of Israel in Balboa Park

Parent volunteers assist at our city-wide Celebrate Israel Festival and at our House of Israel in Balboa Park. Parents have also been involved in assisting with holiday celebrations. Together we are building a Modern Hebrew library collection in our center and a lending library in our public library. We have offered story times in the public libraries, and we offer after-school classes on some public school campuses in San Diego.

To learn more about Tarbuton, read the [Program Profile](#). Visit the Tarbuton [website](#) or send an [email](#) for more information.



This Heritage Voice on Tarbuton Israeli Cultural Center was prepared by Jennie Starr for the Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC.

The Heritage Voices Collection is designed to spotlight individual heritage language speakers and programs. The information presented does not necessarily represent the views of the Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages or the Center for Applied Linguistics.



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