



Jerusalem Ambassadors

Introduction – Overview of the Program

Jerusalem Ambassadors offers Jewish teens a chance to become activists for Israel on their school campuses and within their communities. Through its innovative programming, the Jerusalem Ambassador curriculum will effectively educate teens to develop their leadership skills and teach teens how to raise Israel awareness amongst their peers. Those accepted into the program will partake in a five week enjoyable, fun and educational trip to Israel during the summer months. They will engage in learning about the complexities and realities of political and social structures within Israel. Throughout the following school year, each Ambassador will continue with the program and participate in a series of lectures and Israel activism projects. The summer portion of the program ran from June 30, 2010 through to August 3, 2010.

The Jerusalem Ambassador Program saw to it that the teens completed the summer with a well rounded knowledge of Israel and Judaism and returned as more highly educated individuals. Nightly sessions required teens to participate in discussions, which conveyed the biblical and historical significance that teens experienced during the day. Jewish history and Zionism were the center of these informal educational sessions.

With the culmination of the summer program, teens received a certificate of completion along with a detailed letter of commendation detailing their achievements.

Upon their return, each Jerusalem Ambassador returned a more informed, educated and inspired individual.



Jerusalem Ambassadors

Program Structure

Phase I - Five week summer experience

- Tour Israel
- Lectures from Political Leaders and Military Officials
- Interactive seminars including, but not limited to
 - Leadership Skills Building - Dale Carnegie Institute leadership training course
 - General Jewish Knowledge
 - Comprehensive Israel Advocacy
 - Visit to Knesset and discussions with MKs
 - Tour of Security Fence with IDF General
 - Key Insights into Israeli Politics
 - Taking Home Real Skills and Abilities
- Community Service for the people of Israel
 - Summer Camp for Underprivileged Israeli Youth
 - Developing leadership skills
 - Coordinating camp logistics
 - Developing and implementing educational and recreational programming



Jerusalem Ambassadors

Jerusalem Ambassadors set out to create a unique program geared towards motivated students to further educate and inspire students about their connection to Israel. The following information is a summary and assessment of the summer program.

Questionnaire

A brief evaluation questionnaire was sent to participants upon their arrival home from the trip. Below is a summary of highlighted data from the evaluations, broken up into sections.

Evaluation Section One:

Highlighted Programs

Students were asked to rate nine programs integral to Jerusalem Ambassadors on a scale from one through five. Each program evaluated included two components: overall experience and the educational value of the program, and any additional comments. Below are a summary of five programs.



Jerusalem Ambassadors

Ammunition Hill

Immediately after stepping off the plane students were immersed in programming of historical significance and began their journey through modern Israeli history with a tour of Ammunition hill.

- Overall experience: 3-5 out of 5
- Educational Value: 4-5 out of 5
- Comments:
 - Great way to be immersed immediately in Israeli history!
 - It was great to get off the plane and walk through tunnels with so much history to them.

Observation

Slightly lower scoring on the overall experience was due to participants feeling that they were tired and it was a lot to absorb and delve into immediately off the plane.

In the Future...

The timing of the first program will be taken into account, but as the majority of students still gave the tour a high score I see no reason to change this type of program which immerses them immediately into their Israel education.



Jerusalem Ambassadors

Lecture: Former Bureau Chief to Prime Minister Netanyahu

Ari Harow

Participants had the honour of hearing from Ari Harow in a closed session only open up to the Jerusalem Ambassadors, where students were also able to verbalize any question they wished to and receive answers from a top official. They heard about topics ranging from the relationship between American and Israel to negotiating with Terrorists

- Overall Experience: 3.5-5 out of 5 (83% between 4 and 5)
- Educational Value: 80% of Ambassadors gave the educational value of the program a 5 out 5
- Comments:
 - It was such a great experience having time to ask one on one questions to someone who really knows the ins and outs of the situation.
 - Having such a high ranking Israeli official take time to speak to a group of American teens, added true significance to what we are doing and accomplishing.



Jerusalem Ambassadors

Observation

I found that a program such as this, an audience with a high profile speaker, accomplished several successful points.

- The most important in my mind was the feeling it gave the participants.
 - The message sent to the teens when Mr. Harow **came** to speak to them showed that what they are doing and learning is important and acknowledged by Israel. This set the tone for the remainder of the trip leaving teens empowered that their actions do matter and are taken note of.
- When the Ambassadors asked probing questions to Mr. Harow it gave them a chance for the material they view and read about to come alive interacting with a person who is “part of the history” they are learning about.

In The Future...

I would and would recommend to any program to have a lecture or informal session of the same nature. The message of importance delivered to the participants combined with the educational value I found was unique to this type of session. It would be recommended to have the program as early on as possible (understanding scheduling will more likely than not be the choice of the speaker) as it can and will set the tone and inspire the teens, only uplifting the rest of the programing.



Jerusalem Ambassadors

Hasbarah Seminar

Neil Lazerus

One of the most successful programs run during the summer was the Hasbarah Seminar led by Neil Lazarus.

- Overall Experience: 4-5 out of 5, (80% of participants rated 5 out of 5)
- Educational Value: 4-5 out 5, (80% of participants rated 5 out of 5)
- Comments:
 - Learned so much while having a lot of fun doing it!
 - He taught us how not only to respond to uninformed people when it comes to Israel, but also split us up into groups and each group had to make their own mock rally to support Israel.

Observation

A greater educational message which I believe can apply anywhere is: if people enjoy what they are doing they will gain the greatest from it. From start to finish Ambassadors learned how to create an Israel rally and many other Hasbarah techniques, which due to the style of program and were still spoken about and used upon their arrival home.

In the future...

I will incorporate as many programs of this type, high impact education “fun” programs, as I felt it gave a great chance for education and fun to merge together.



Jerusalem Ambassadors

Dale Carnegie Leadership Seminar

Leadership being a major focus of the trip we felt it necessary to have a practical leadership seminar to continue to foster leadership skills.

- Overall Experience: 3-5 out of 5 (50% of participants rated 5 out of 5)
- Education Value: 3-5 out of 5 (50% rated 5 out of 5)
- Comments:
 - One student commented they are running a holocaust memorial program in their public school and said “Dale Carnegie fostered great ideas and the practical know how to undertake such a challenge.”

Observation

The head madrich commented that the program took up a better part of a day, and suggested it might be make for an easier program by splitting it up into many sessions. From a logistical point of view it makes much more sense to have the program in one time given the type of traveling summer program. Even if it is not possible to split up the actual session, the leadership exercises that Dale Carnegie taught can spaced out throughout the summer. Judging by the numbers, though it was a long day, the kids enjoyed the program immensely and really felt it added to their experiences. The Dale Carnegie institute will be on the schedule for another iteration of Jerusalem Ambassadors.



Jerusalem Ambassadors

Organizing and Running a Day Camp

Ambassadors organized and ran aspects of a day camp for disadvantaged Israeli children in Sderot.

- Overall Experience: 80% of Participants rated a 5 out of 5 (The remainder were 4 out of 5)
- Educational Value: 100% of Participants rated 5 out of 5
- Comments:
 - This was Amazing!
 - I love those kids and want to start a charity for them!
 - I loved helping the children and it was an experience to set up the camp without the help of our advisors

Observation

Ambassadors took charge and actually ran a summer camp themselves. Aside from the emotional connection to the children, the camp was a true manifestation of their leadership skills. As one can see by the rating, the program was a great success and will be run in another iteration of Jerusalem Ambassadors.



Jerusalem Ambassadors

Evaluation Section: Two

Emphasis on Israel

In the next section participants were asked to rate several statements on a scale from 0-5. The following is a summary of their results. All results are on a scale from 0-5, 0 being the least and 5 the most.

- Before the summer 80% of the students recorded their interest in Israeli Politics or even picking up a news paper with headlines relating to Israel as 3.5 or less.
- After the summer 100% of the students gave a four out of five or higher when asked if they are now confident to hold a conversation expressing their opinions on what they learned of the Israeli situation.
- 100% of participants recorded a five out of five when asked if they have a greater knowledge about Israel after the conclusion about the summer.
- 100% of participants recorded a five out of five when asked if they would consider becoming involved with Israel activism in their home communities and schools.
- 100% of participants said their personal connection to Israel grew during the trip.



Jerusalem Ambassadors

Stories/Memorable Moments:

The Words Still Hold True...

When the Ambassadors were in the north around Har Arbel, they stood at a view overlooking the Kineret into Syria. Tour guide par excellence Rabbi Ben Zion Goldfischer gave an “Unbelievable” speech how the Navi discusses that “you will be able to view Israel’s borders against its neighbours, and will see how Israel’s land will be flourishing.” He proceeded to point out how green Israel’s side was in comparison to Syria’s brown land. The Ambassadors left the view blown away by how true the words of the Navi were and how they hold true to this day.

Tisha Ba’av

Many of Ambassadors had not heard of Tisha Ba’av before the summer, which made for a very moving experience during their first time observing it. Their eyes were opened to our incredible history and the unfortunate tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people in our past and present. During the evening program all participants and advisors sat on the ground outside surrounded by candles reciting the book of Eicha with Advisors providing explanations before each section. During the day Advisors gave heartfelt explanations of the tragedies that our nation has gone through and of the accompanying prayers said. Each Ambassador walked away with a deeper connection to Israel, the Jewish People and its inseparable history.

Unity

On the last night of the program Ambassadors stayed up all night sitting at the Kotel. Each and every participant poured out their heart in front of everyone about their experiences. It was an incredible sight to see the unity and closeness of the group develop over the summer, and how comfortable everyone was with one another.



Jerusalem Ambassadors

After thoughts on the Project

Jerusalem Ambassadors was truly an eye opening learning experience for me as a Jewish educator and professional. Reflecting on the evaluations given to students I learned a lot programmatically on what makes for a successful program.

Through the evaluations and my many conversations with the participants and madrichim Jerusalem Ambassadors was proven to be a successful program. I believe that one of the key ingredients not mentioned about was the presence of “unique NCSY” programming on the trip.

During many conversations I had with all those involved, the topic of Shabbat always came up. No matter where the group spent Shabbat each one was in its own right a successful and inspirational part of the trip. Every Shabbat brought unique NCSY Shabbaton programming to the Ambassadors, leaving them inspired. Energetic Friday night prayer services with seemingly endless dancing, explanatory Shabbat morning prayers all gave the Ambassadors a taste of the inspiration that Judaism has to offer. Shabbat meals eaten together allowed for group bonding in an informal environment. In a situation such as a summer program where every minute is accounted for to get the most amount done in a small time, Shabbat was spent to fullest allowing for down time, and giving participants a chance to reflect , question, discuss and internalize all the aspects of what they encountered during the week. As Shabbat would come to a close, slower paced singing would take place, thought and emotion provoking speeches never ceased to inspire the group. The programming which NCSY is famous for was a major contributor to the program’s success.



Jerusalem Ambassadors

Project InCite

The Jerusalem Ambassadors trip as it played in its current iteration was due in a large part to inspiration from Project InCite. From the beginnings of the idea, working with the SIT tools, ideas for programs and sessions flowed from the breaking apart every aspect of an Israel trip trying to find “the next great idea.” Countless aspects of the program were founded on the ideas and techniques taught by Project InCite.

Clare Goldwater, my coach was also a great contributor the program’s success and my own development as a professional.

I gained much insight from Clare in terms of working on Jerusalem Ambassadors; she was instrumental in helping me to develop ideas and especially in creating and editing documentation to the program. Clare also held me accountable for many aspects of the program, and forced my own ability to answer difficult questions, ultimately always benefiting which ever point of the program we were working on.

The fellowship provided a great chance to network with those who I otherwise would seldom or not have come into contact with. It was a great learning experience to work with those from other organizations and see the messages and techniques they give to their participants. My own work in areas unrelated to the project has been positively affected by listening to great ideas from other Youth Professionals through networking with Project InCite.

I know that in my current and future career I will take the skills gained from the fellowship and apply them to future programs. It is my feeling that I am a more self aware and well rounded professional because of this experience.