



the Lerner School
Learning for Life

1935 W. Cornwallis Road
Durham, NC 27705
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www.lernerschool.org

Kohelet Prize for Differentiated Instruction

English Language Learning in a Jewish Elementary Day School

Submitted by Kersten Jacobson Biehn on behalf of the English Language Learning teaching team

At Lerner, we consider ourselves incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to work with students from countries throughout the world. Students who speak English as a second (or third or fourth) language face challenges adjusting socially, academically, and logistically to school, and we endeavor to make Lerner a welcoming, supportive environment for these children in all of these areas.

To address the specific needs of our students, we crafted a customized, individualized, differentiated ESL program based on the latest research regarding English language acquisition. We have distinct ESL programs for each elementary school grade level, as we align our lessons to our spiraled, dual curriculum. The ESL lessons are designed by teacher teams that meet regularly to discuss their assessments and programming with each other to ensure coherence. Initial assessments include simple vocabulary comprehension based on oral communication. Once the children begin reading, we use the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) to assess their reading level, and design individualized phonics and guided reading instruction based on their progress. The teachers who deliver the lessons are native English speakers, as current research indicates.¹ At the same time, since the vast majority of our English language learners are native Hebrew speakers, we have the opportunity to introduce elements of transitional or maintenance bilingual language instruction by incorporating accelerated or modified Hebrew language instruction, taught by our Hebrew teachers, into the programs for the ESL students.

In this application packet, there are examples of the customized programs that we offer. Major areas of focus for the children, regardless of age or background, are social integration coupled with carefully scaffolded English language immersion and instruction. All of the English Language Learners (ELLs) learn English vocabulary, how to read and write capably in English at their grade level, and participate with increasing degrees of independence in regular classroom activities and discussions. As a Jewish day school, our ESL program is designed with Hebrew speakers primarily in mind, but it is not exclusive to them. Our students whose native language is Hebrew receive ongoing instruction at their grade level in Hebrew, and our Spanish speaking students have the

¹ American Federation of Teachers. (2002) "Teaching English Language Learners: What Does the Research Say?" AFT Policy Brief Number 14.



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opportunity for after school enrichment in their native language through our Spanish program. The students who are native Hebrew speakers have ample opportunities to “shine” through our Judaic Studies programming as well, because they can complete their assignments and contribute to discussions in Hebrew.

We see our ESL program as an invitation to our international families: welcome to our community, where we embrace the opportunity to help you and your children acclimate to the United States!

Application Packet Contents

Initiating the Program: Why Focus on ESL?

Creating the Program: Core Components

Examples of English as a Second Language (ESL) Plans for students

Examples of ESL Lessons and Student Work

Parent Testimonials

Challenges and Goals



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Initiating the Program: Why Focus on ESL?

For many years, we at Lerner wrestled with the best way to approach teaching English to students who were not native speakers of the language. Most of our English language learners spoke Hebrew as their first language, which led to an improvised program that relied on our Hebrew teachers to help the students make it through each day. The children felt comfortable at school, but we felt that we could do more to understand the goals that each family had for their children. Some families are here for only one year for a medical fellowship. Did they want us to concentrate on teaching their children English or on maintaining their Hebrew? How could we balance both objectives for families who wanted a program that included Hebrew enrichment and English instruction? What about students whose families were not Hebrew speakers, but who came from a different linguistic background?



Creating the Program: Core Components

In concert with our “one child at a time” mission, we designed an ESL program that is individualized for each student.

The first step in our process of determining how to design a student’s program is for the Principal of Teaching and Learning, who oversees the ESL program, to meet with the child’s family. We want to understand the family’s hopes and expectations for the English Language program for their child, and the initial meeting mostly involves the principal listening and taking notes. After the conferences, we have a picture of the spectrum of interests and language learning needs for each child, as well as a clearer understanding of appropriate learning goals. In response to these initial discussions, we put together a team of teachers and a collection of curricular materials to support each individual English Language Learner.

The core components of our ESL program:

- For our preschool students, English Language Learning is primarily done through full immersion. Our preschool teachers already communicate using images to explain daily schedules, routines, and classroom materials, which helps children connect concepts, objects, and their environment to words and phrases. The children who speak English as a second or third language learn how to express themselves in similar manner to our native English speakers.
- For our Kindergarten English Language Learners, the students participate fully in English Language Arts class, as the emphasis is on phonics and decoding along with improving oral communication skills. These children also typically receive formal ESL instruction during their Hebrew class time.
- Our First Grade English Language Learners who speak Hebrew as a first language typically stay in their Hebrew class, as they learn how to read and write in their native language. These children go to Kindergarten for Language Arts to learn the basic structure of the English language, and they receive ESL instruction during that time. The ESL instructor supports the Kindergarten and First Grade children in the classroom during the Kindergarten Language Arts lessons, then does “pull out” lessons to supplement the instruction during the latter portion of the class period.

The learning goals for Kindergarten and First Grade ESL include reinforcing phonics and decoding from language arts, practicing conversations and social interactions, and role playing common scenarios that they will encounter in school and life.



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- For Second through Fifth Grade English Language Learners, ESL instruction is carefully tailored to meet their skill level, needs, and interests. After an initial assessment to determine vocabulary comprehension, letter and sight word recognition, and oral communication skills, the teachers design a curriculum that is unique to each child. Depending on learning needs, the students may be pulled from English Language Arts for one-on-one or small group ESL instruction. Instead of taking Hebrew, the students may have additional individualized ESL instruction during that class time that incorporates reading, writing, oral communication, and vocabulary in multiple contexts.
- Our elementary students have classroom environments that are saturated with Hebrew text. Our Hebrew teachers made signs in Hebrew for the classrooms so that the students (both English and Hebrew speakers) could benefit from seeing the schedules and classroom supplies written in both languages.
- To supplement the ESL learning for elementary students, we offer an after school ESL course that meets from 3-4pm twice a week (at no charge to our families).

ESL Plans and Reports

ESL Plan Examples

Ron: First Grade (2016-17)

Sapir: Fourth Grade (2015-16)

Hadar: Fifth Grade (2016-17)

ESL Progress Reports

Amit: Kindergarten (2016-17)

Mika: Second Grade (2016-17)

Yakir: Fifth Grade (2015-16)

Lerner School
ESL Plan

Student: Ron *****

School Year: 2016-17

Grade: First

Homeroom Teacher: Becca Newman

Goals:

1. Social integration with fellow students and participation in class activities to the fullest extent possible
2. English language proficiency at an age appropriate level through immersion and with support
3. Opportunities to progress through the learning goals for first grade core subjects at a pace that is appropriate for Ron's abilities in those areas

Plan:

1. The classroom teachers and specialists will support Ron by taking care to include him and by looking for opportunities to give him social cues when necessary.
2. Teachers will repeat instructions and will use hand gestures or props to help Ron understand English prompts, instructions, and activities.
3. During part of the First Grade Language Arts period, Ron may attend Kindergarten Language Arts lessons to help him with phonics, the English alphabet, and simple vocabulary.
4. During part of the First Grade Language Arts period several times per week, Ron will work with Laura Hancox on English as a Second Language lessons.
5. Ron will be paired or grouped with a buddy who is fluent in Hebrew during class activities when he seems to be in need of familiarity and a break from the intensity of English language immersion.
6. Ron may participate in an after school English as a Second Language class, led by Samantha Lazar, two days a week for one hour at a time, depending on his stamina during the day. The course materials will be individualized to address Ron's and his classmates' specific English learning needs.
7. To learn how to read and write in Hebrew, Ron will remain in First Grade Hebrew class.

Lerner School
ESL Plan

Student: Sapir *****

School Year: 2015-16

Grade: Fourth

Homeroom Teacher: Samantha Lazar

Goals:

1. Social integration with fellow students and participation in class activities to the fullest extent possible
2. English language proficiency at an age appropriate level through immersion and with support, including the acquisition of specific academic vocabulary
3. Demonstration of reading comprehension at a level that will enable Sapir to participate in discussions and to begin to read independently in English
4. Opportunities to progress through the learning goals for fourth grade core subjects at a pace that is appropriate for Sapir's abilities in those areas

Plan:

1. The classroom teachers and specialists will support Sapir by taking care to include her and by looking for opportunities to give him social cues when necessary.
2. Teachers will repeat instructions and will use hand gestures or props to help Sapir understand English prompts, instructions, and activities.
3. During Fourth Grade Hebrew class at least twice a week, Sapir will participate in all activities that Gisel Baler plans for the Hebrew lessons, but she will do everything entirely in English as directed by Samantha Lazar, our English as a Second Language support teacher for Fourth Grade. This plan will allow Sapir to feel included and to learn English in the same manner that her classmates are learning Hebrew.
4. During Fourth Grade Hebrew at least two days a week, Sapir will catch up on core subject classwork or homework with the support and assistance of Samantha Lazar.
5. Sapir will be paired or grouped with a buddy who is fluent in Hebrew during class activities when she seems to be in need of familiarity and a break from the intensity of English language immersion.
6. Sapir will participate in an after school English as a Second Language class, led by Samantha Lazar, three days a week for one hour at a time. The course materials will be individualized to address Sapir's and her classmates' specific English learning needs.

Lerner School
ESL Plan

Student: Hadar *****

School Year: 2016-17

Grade: Fifth

Homeroom Teacher: Carlyn Piasecki

Goals:

1. Social integration with fellow students and participation in class activities to the fullest extent possible
2. English language proficiency at an age appropriate level through immersion and with support, including the acquisition of specific academic vocabulary
3. Demonstration of reading comprehension at a level that will enable Hadar to participate in discussions and to begin to read independently in English
4. Opportunities to progress through the learning goals for fifth grade core subjects at a pace that is appropriate for Hadar's abilities in those areas

Plan:

1. The classroom teachers and specialists will support Hadar by taking care to include him and by looking for opportunities to give him social cues when necessary.
2. Teachers will repeat instructions and will use hand gestures or props to help Hadar understand English prompts, instructions, and activities.
3. During Fifth Grade Hebrew class, Hadar will participate in the class and will complete enrichment work that is appropriate to his grade level in Israel. We have requested that the family supply materials to aid in this enrichment program.
4. If the teachers determine that Hadar needs additional English as a Second Language support during the day, he will work with Samantha Lazar during some of his Hebrew class times.
5. Hadar will be paired or grouped with a buddy who is fluent in Hebrew during class activities when he seems to be in need of familiarity and a break from the intensity of English language immersion.
6. Hadar will participate in an after school English as a Second Language class, led by Samantha Lazar, two days a week for one hour at a time. The course materials will be individualized to address Hadar's and his classmates' specific English learning needs.

Amit *** (Kindergarten)**
ESL Report, First Trimester
2016-2017

Instructor: Laura Hancox

Objectives

Amit will:

1. develop English language skills to express her social/emotional wants and needs, and to support her relationships with her teachers and classmates.
2. receive additional language arts instruction to support her progress in reading and writing in English.
3. receive instruction to build target vocabulary in areas that are traditionally challenging for an ESL student, e.g. social studies, science, American holidays, etc.

Program components

1. During individual instruction, Amit engages in conversational English practice through role playing activities, read aloud stories, games, hands-on projects, and songs. In class, I encourage Amit to "take risks" in her English skills by prompting her to verbalize her wants and needs in English. I also support her as she applies new vocabulary in speaking with her teachers and classmates.
2. I reinforce language arts skills that Amit is learning in class. For example, Amit has the opportunity to complete a task that was unfinished during class time. Amit also reads her "take home reader" with me in addition to reading practice that I include in our daily work.
3. The Kindergarten team stays in daily communication regarding Amit's progress and understanding in the classroom. When a new unit is introduced that contains unfamiliar and/or abstract vocabulary, I implement additional activities to develop Amit's awareness of the subject.

Evaluation

1. The main focus this trimester for Amit was to build her confidence and language skills in order to navigate the classroom on her own. During one on one instruction, Amit takes more risks in speaking English with me. She is self driven to learn new vocabulary that I introduce and practices sentence structures that I model for her. In a whole class format, Amit has been less comfortable to share her thoughts in

English or to use complete sentences. This is an expected behavior for an ESL student at this point in the year. In the past month, the Kindergarten team has observed Amit taking more risks with her classmates and in whole group activities! She is communicating her wants and needs on her own with her classmates during class work and during playtime. She raises her hand to give answers during whole group lessons. She still quietly and softly when she feels shy or nervous, but we are so proud of the growth in her confidence as a whole! Speaking with "Amit's voice" will be a goal for the next trimester as she builds on her success thus far.

2. Amit is very bright and intuitive in both reading and writing! Sight words can be a challenge for ESL students, since they must understand the meaning of the word in order to learn it "by sight". Amit is exceeding expectations in the development of her English vocabulary, and has been able to take on this challenge! Similar to her speaking skills, Amit requires support when her confidence is low. When she feels confident, she is able to take risks in order to read words and write down her thoughts. She will continue to get extra practice in both reading and writing during our one on one time. Overall, she is meeting expectations in language arts.
3. Because the Kindergarten curriculum is well matched to an English language learner of Kindergarten age, Amit is able to access and understand most of what is going on in the classroom. We discuss subjects being taught in class to reinforce understanding, such as the pumpkin unit in science. If she seems confused about something that was taught in class, I communicate with the teachers so that they are aware of her need for more support. We also have been learning about Thanksgiving and incorporating the theme of thankfulness and food vocabulary into our language arts work. Amit also loves to share work that she has done in free choice. This is a great opportunity to practice speaking, and to expose her to new vocabulary based on her interests.

It has been a privilege to learn with Amit! She comes to every ESL class with a smile and a great attitude. Thank you for your support both in school and at home.

Mika *** (Second Grade)**
ESL Report, First Trimester
2016-2017

Instructor: Laura Hancox

Mika will:

Objectives

1. develop English language skills to express her social/emotional wants and needs, and to support her relationships with her teachers and classmates.
2. receive additional language arts instruction to support her progress in reading and writing in English.
3. receive instruction to build target vocabulary in areas that are traditionally challenging for an ESL student, e.g. social studies, science, American holidays, etc.

Program components

1. Mika engages in roleplaying, games, and daily conversation to learn and apply social/emotional vocabulary. Classroom expectations are modeled and discussed to build understanding and prepare her for success in the classroom. For example, we practice how to share in Morning Meeting, how to ask someone to stop doing something that "bugs" you, etc.
2. Mika completes daily handwriting and phonics work both during ESL and in the classroom through the use of workbooks. She gets weekly reading and writing practice that are appropriate for a developing English speaker. Language arts work is often connected with her personal interests as well as with units of study taking place in the 2nd grade classroom.
3. Mika builds target vocabulary through conversation, songs, and hands on activities.

Evaluation

1. Very early in the trimester when Mika was not yet ready to speak in English, she was already listening to my directions and interpreting them into Hebrew for another ESL student! This is a great example of Mika's ability to focus and try her best, especially in the one on one setting. The beginning of the trimester was focused on basic wants and needs vocabulary, but as she mastered the "survival English", we began focusing on roleplaying social interactions with peers. During Morning Meeting, Tori often presents ways to handle social interactions and gives the students a chance to model appropriate behavior. I incorporate that lesson into ESL class, so that they can build their social vocabulary. For example, we did a lot of

roleplaying using “bugs and wishes” statements: “It bugs me when you...I wish you would...” I will continue to support Mika with vocabulary related to self expression and social relationships. Mika does not exhibit frustration in the one on one setting, so it is a great opportunity to practice carrying out Tori’s classroom expectations. Mika has begun to express her wants and needs in full sentences! Next trimester, I will work with Mika on expressing her feelings when she is frustrated. This vocabulary practice along with the behavior chart will help support her in the classroom.

2. At the beginning of the trimester, Mika did work in her phonics workbook, handwriting workbook, and additional worksheets during language arts. As we reach the end of this trimester, Mika is completing this work after she completes her work with Tori! She is moving more slowly in the workbooks now, but she is participating more in language arts. She is almost finished with the Kindergarten handwriting workbook. Mika has completed books A and B in her phonics workbooks. She was able to skip book C and is now on level 1! We can spend more ESL class time on the workbooks to maintain her progress. Mika is already learning sight words, which are challenging for ESL students. During ESL class, Mika reads leveled books alone with me and in a group format. She can read short a and short i stories as well as Kindergarten level sight word stories. At the end of the trimester, we began doing writing assignments! Mika’s greatest challenge in writing is a lack of confidence and a desire to spell each word correctly. With support, she is able to express her thoughts using the vocabulary and letters that she knows. Next trimester, we will have frequent writing practice to build her confidence and develop her grammar skills.
3. Mika has the opportunity to receive extra support in Math, Science and Social Studies so that she understands the content and can get extra practice. This trimester we worked on learning number vocabulary, even and odd numbers, money, and 2nd grade level addition. We have started reinforcing clock and time vocabulary. We also worked on vocabulary related to the 2nd grade science curriculum. In Social Studies, we studied vocabulary related to elections. Mika enjoyed participating in our “popcorn v. chips” election, which incorporated social skills as well. We also review expectations during these more challenging subjects as needed. If Mika joins the group, listens, and tries her best, her English skills will grow. We also learned about Thanksgiving this trimester. We focused on fall foods and being thankful.

It has been a privilege learning with Mika! She comes to ESL class every day with a great attitude and a desire to learn new words in English.

Yakir *** (Fifth Grade)**
ESL Report, Second Trimester
2015-2016

Instructor: Samantha Lazar

Objectives:

Yakir will:

- understand oral academic directions
- understand basic written academic directions
- share his wants, needs, ideas, and understanding orally
- increase his English vocabulary, comprehension, and usage
- begin English grammar components
- begin to write compositions in English

Program Components:

Yakir

1. Finished "Keyboarding Without Tears", our web-based typing program.
2. Used IXL for Language Arts grammar practice.
3. Participated in 60% of our Language Arts curriculum.
4. Focused on increasing vocabulary through reading, writing, listening, and oral expression.
5. Listened to a book on tape to increase his understanding of the novel. We then worked on summarizing the characters, setting, and plot.

Evaluation:

It is an understatement to say I am proud of Yakir's effort this trimester. He has grown tremendously in his fluency in English. He speaks clearly, understands almost everything that is spoken, and he has begun to write in English. He wrote a paragraph in response to the novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* about the importance of the land to the Logan family. He also began a research-based persuasive essay in favor of allowing chocolate milk in schools. Yakir is quick to learn. He grasps basic English grammar concepts rapidly and then transfers them to his own understanding in both Hebrew and English. I am so excited to see what he does through the end of Fifth Grade.

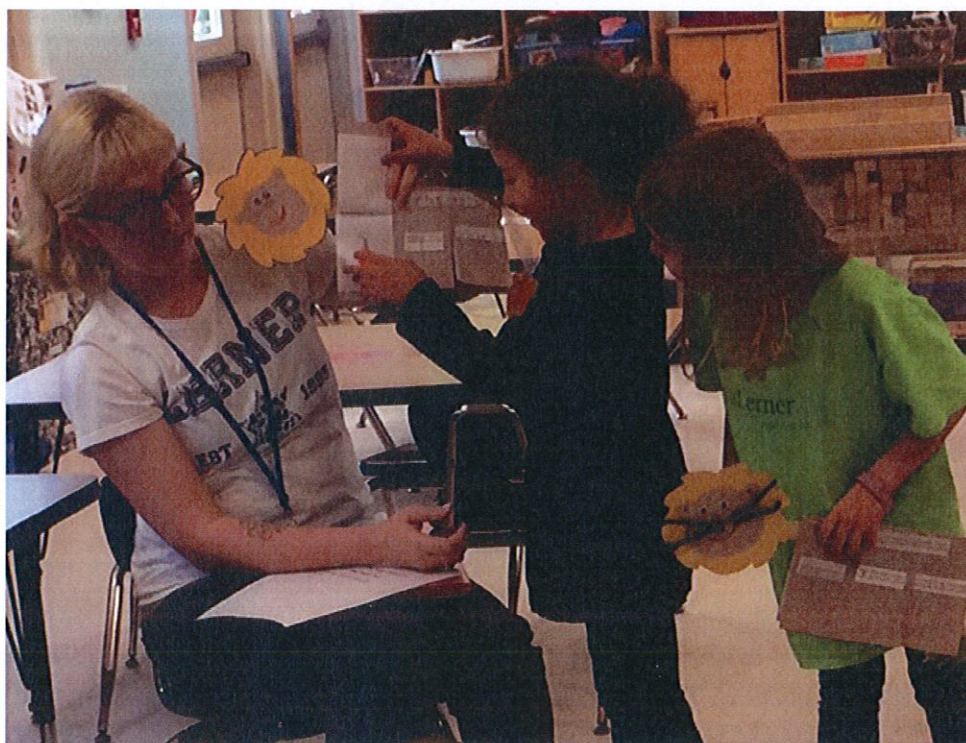


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Lesson Examples and Pictures of ESL Student Projects

By the spring of the 2015-2016 school year, our Kindergarten ESL students were fluently speaking English. They were also able to read and write in English. The picture below is of the students with books that they wrote and illustrated. The book was comprised entirely of similes, which they had been learning using the mentor text *The Lion and the Little Red Bird* by Elisa Kleven. The students presented the books to their classmates by speaking in front of the entire Kindergarten in English.

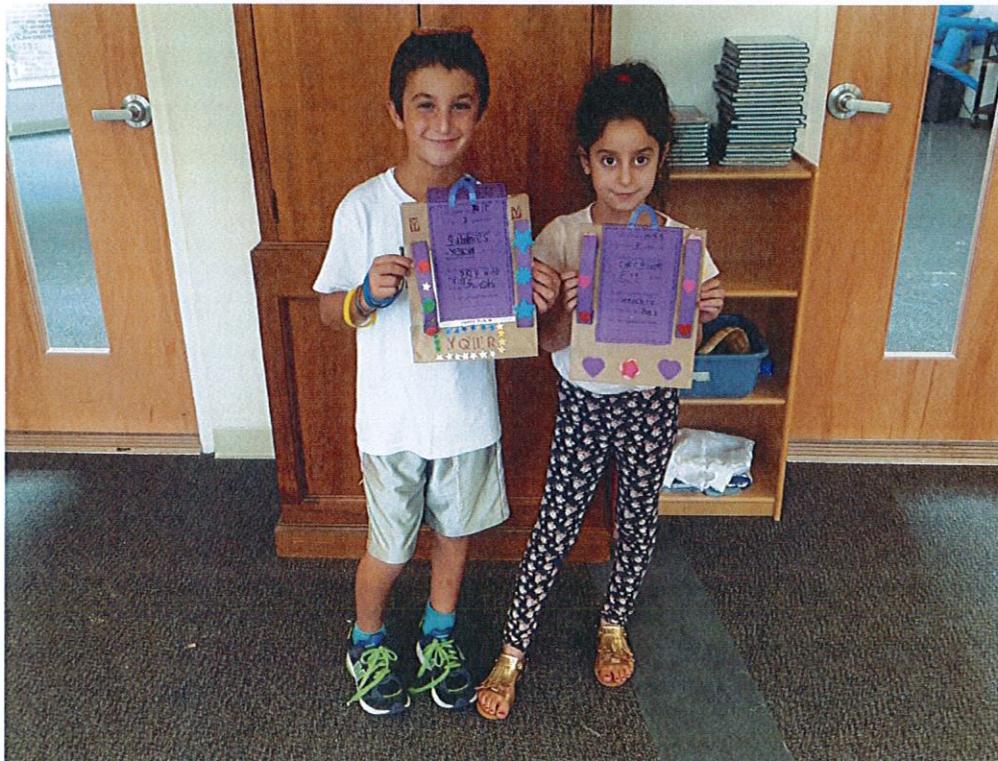




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At the start of the 2016-17 school year, our Second Grade ESL students completed a project called their "All About Me" backpack. They learned and practiced vocabulary related to the start of school, including school materials and supplies, subjects, and spaces in the school building. At the same time, they practiced descriptive words that they could use to introduce themselves to their classmates. The students spent several weeks on their project, which they did alongside other ESL work. When they completed their project, they presented their backpacks to their Second Grade classmates and said a full sentence in English to explain what they had done!

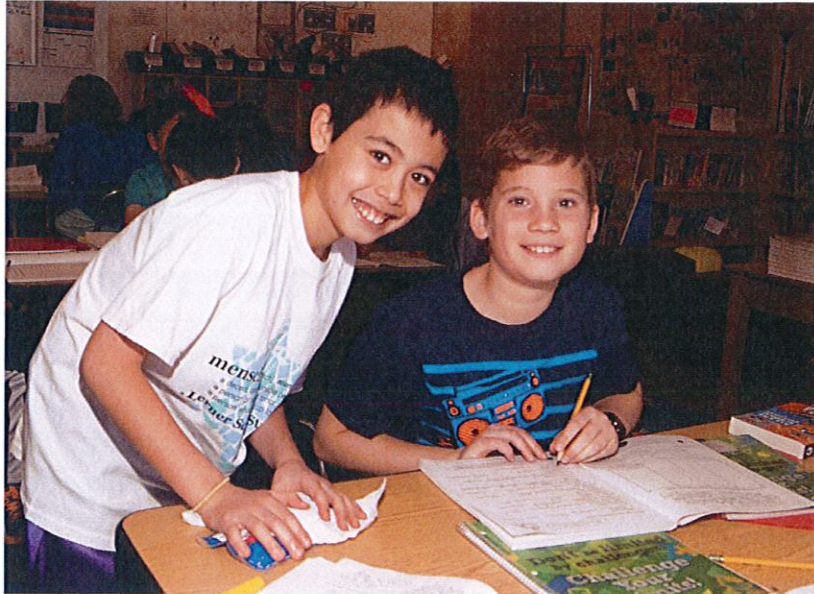




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By midway through the 2015-16 school year, the Fifth Grade student pictured below (on the right) was completing grade level work in English independently. He began the school year knowing only a few English phrases and without knowing how to read in English.





Testimonials from Parents

Parent of Fifth Grade and Second Grade ESL students (2015-16)

I would like to thank you and the Lerner faculty for a wonderful, fruitful and supporting year. My children Yakir (5th grade) and Noa (2nd grade) started school with minimal knowledge of the English language. Despite that, I can say that several months later they were both able to well communicate with their English speaking friends and moreover, they could participate in the classes, talk, read and write English.

I think this was much due to the great ESL program that was given to them. It was on a daily basis and very personal. Noa needed much more help than Yakir and indeed got it – from several teachers who well connected and coordinated the teaching; one teacher emphasized the reading and writing, one was working with Noa on speaking and presenting her thoughts. Noa could be a “tough cookie” however the persistence of the staff and their positive personal attitude contributed to her progress.

For Yakir the ESL was somehow easier. And indeed with the daily support of the ESL program he achieved a lot and by the end of the year he could freely express himself in English, he could read fluently and even write an essay.

A well designed program was introduced to me every few weeks. The staff was open to changes as needed, which enabled the ESL program to be dynamic, “flowing” with the achievements of Yakir and Noa.

Currently we are back in Israel. Both Yakir and Noa joined the “English speakers class” at their local school. Most of the children in this class know English as their mother tongue (not like us, we talk Hebrew at home). Nevertheless both Yakir and Noa keep up with their English talking reading and writing tasks, even better than some of their class mates. This fact is not for granted.

I believe the knowledge of English is one of the best accomplishments during the past year and will stay with them for life, enabling better communication with the world around them.

Overall, the ESL program gave us much more than I expected and I truly thank all the teachers who participated in the not easy task of teaching a new language in such a short time.

I will always recommend other Israeli families who come to the “Triangle” to send their children to Lerner.



Parent of a Fourth Grade ESL student (2015-16)

Sapir started last school year with a minimal knowledge in English and participated in Samantha's class three times a week. Samantha has provided the students with a very structured, supporting and fun learning environment, which enabled Sapir to reach an average learner's level within a year of studies.

This program is highly important in order to enable students to fully integrate into the American English speaking environment and be able to feel successful.

Parents of Fifth Grade and Second Grade ESL students (2016-17)

This is a great opportunity to thank you, Tori, Sam and Laura for all that you have been doing for us, for the kids, helping them, thinking of them and trying to find the right approach for each

Laura and Mika have very good bonding, mainly thanks to Laura and her patience, her ability to understand what Mika is going through, mentally, socially, and in terms of having to cope with ESL...and then efforts that she has to put in ...in order to stand in front of a class and speak English.

Tori – as the leader is aware of the difficulties and accepts them with love and understandingeven the misunderstanding during the day, which are becoming less and less frequent as time passes by.

Her effort to make Mika socially involved with her classmates is always accompanied by a smile ...this is something we appreciate deeply.

The Laura and Tori team (which we often address as Lori :) work in full synchronization and give Mika all the support she needs!!!

It is important to stress that they work with the parents as well and are always open to hear what we think in numerous issues.

Hadar, as Mika, has been treated by Carlyn and Sam in an admirable way...they have great expectations out of him and at the same time they give him a slack when needed.

Hadar feels more frustrated than Mika regarding his ability to express himself, he is knowledgeable in math and science and he is disappointed that he cannot express himself, therefore after consulting Carlyn and Sam we have decided that he will take his chromebook to class which will help him translate as needed.

Carlyn and Sam always have time for us, for him, anytime and always with a smile.

His meetings with Sam are very important to him and they make him stronger, and enable him to make progress, and thanks to Carlyn he is socially better.



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Parents of a Kindergarten ESL student (2016-17)

We are extremely happy with the ESL program. We see a constant improvement in Amit's English and consequently in all other aspects of her school experience (confidence, communication, etc.). As we've only yesterday wrote to Samantha and Emily, Amit really enjoys going to school, learning and interacting with her new friends. And that, we believe, is in large part due to all the efforts made by Amit's teachers and ESL teachers to help her develop her English and build her confidence (and in general, letting her feel "at home"). One activity that we thought was great is when Amit wrote a book with Laura and then showed/shared it with her classmates (and us of course). She was so happy and excited.



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Challenges with the Program

As we continue to build and develop our ESL program, we have discovered the following challenges:

- Ensuring that we have the necessary personnel and materials to implement our programming
- Differentiating instruction both within the regular classroom and in pull-out ESL classes
- Finding and funding professional development opportunities and learning resources for our teachers

Goals for Continuing Innovation

Our goals are to overcome the challenges and to continue to create an innovative program by marshalling resources to support our existing staff, as they have developed an outstanding program by working as a team to respond to the individual needs of our students. As we learn more about the students, we are able to find additional opportunities to enhance their learning experiences.

One area of tremendous opportunity for the future of the program that we have started to explore utilizes technology to facilitate greater independence for the students. As a Google School for Education, we avail ourselves of opportunities to use Google Voice and Google Translate to help the children express themselves to their classmates when they are not yet able to write in English. We also use Epic to help students “read” books in English independently. Our hope is to research more of these tools and utilize them with increasing effectiveness across grade levels.

Another opportunity for the future is for us to turn our program into a professional development community that we can share with other Jewish day schools. The Kohelet Prize application process offers a superb entry point for this type of interaction. We believe that our model could be beneficial to Jewish day schools throughout the country and at multiple grade levels, and we would love to collaborate with other schools that are facing similar challenges and seeking related opportunities.