



URJ Heller High School in Israel  
1 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10012

Rabbi Loren Sykes, Principal  
David Solomon, Assistant Principal  
Robin Kulwin, Director of Admissions

Phone: (212) 650-4073

[hellerhigh.org](http://hellerhigh.org)

## SCHOOL PROFILE 2019 - 2020

### SCHOOL BACKGROUND

The URJ Heller High: Isaac and Helaine Heller EIE High School in Israel, formerly NFTY-EIE High School in Israel is named in honor of extraordinary benefactors, Isaac z'l and Helaine Heller, whose generous endowment will provide significant annual scholarship funding for greater program participation for many years to come. The gift celebrates the program's 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary and honors the family connection with EIE, which began with their daughter's transformation experience as a participant. The initial program was established in 1961 by the youth arm of the Reform movement, the North American Federation of Temple Youth.

### DESCRIPTION

Heller High is for Jewish young people in grades 10 through 12. Since its inception in 1961, over two thousand high school students from the United States and Canada have participated in the program. Their high schools warmly endorsed the program and welcomed the opportunity to have their students participate in this international educational project.

Heller High is an intensive academic program and is fully accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. All instruction is conducted in English except for the Hebrew Ulpan (language instruction) and other foreign language instruction. The educational structure of Heller High includes small classes and small group tutorials ensuring that students fulfill the requirements of their home high schools while immersed in the study of the history, culture and land of Israel. After the program, students receive an official transcript. Heller High staff work closely with parents and schools to plan a special curriculum that fits into every participant's academic schedule of required courses. Students can arrange to take Advanced Placement, PSAT, SAT, SAT Subject, and ACT examinations while in Israel. SAT, ACT, and PSAT prep courses are available.

Students interested in Heller High may choose to participate in either the Fall Semester (late August thru December) or the Spring Semester (late January thru May). During each semester, students are housed on Kibbutz Tzuba, near Jerusalem.

### PROGRAM GOALS

The purpose of Heller High is to provide an opportunity for outstanding high school students to spend a semester in Israel under the sponsorship of the Reform Movement. This experience is intended to develop young leaders and to increase Jewish knowledge and commitment to Jewish life and learning. The goals of the Heller High for our students are:

- to complete rigorous general studies, college prep courses designed to set students up for success when they return to their home schools;
- to prepare students for standardized testing such as the PSAT, SAT, SAT Subject, ACT, AP, and Regents;
- to develop a love of Jewish learning, to teach and strengthen feelings towards Judaism, Jewish History and the Jewish people;
- to build their Jewish self-esteem and to enhance their personal identities as Reform Jews;
- to give them a better understanding of and appreciation for Israel, Zionism, and Progressive Judaism in Israel;
- to assist them in developing Hebrew language skills;
- to sharpen their awareness of international issues;
- to foster independence and maturity while living away from their home environment;
- to immerse them in Israeli society by living with and meeting Israelis involved in the Reform Movement in Israel; and
- to enable them to develop leadership skills that will serve them as they become role models for their temples, youth groups, URJ camps and the Jewish community in general.

### ENROLLMENT

Total enrollment in grades 10-12 for this academic year is approximately 150 students. The student body is: Sophomores – 30%, Juniors – 65%, Seniors – 5%, Female – 65%, Male – 35% and come from all over North America.

The selection of students is made by the Admissions Committee which seeks the following qualities in selecting candidates:

- Bright, capable Jewish young people who have achieved a high level of academic success at school and who are highly motivated to learn
- Personal qualities of leadership that have earned them the respect of both peers and adults
- Self-confidence, self-reliance, emotional maturity and an ability to establish warm, friendly relationships with diverse kinds of people in new surroundings
- Active involvement in Reform congregations, religious schools, youth groups and Jewish camps
- Good physical and emotional health
- A desire to be a part of Israeli society, to travel the country, to speak Hebrew and to be a part of the Jewish people in our ancient homeland

## **CURRICULUM**

Students at Heller High take advanced college level Jewish History (Israel; Land, Cultures and People) and Hebrew Ulpan courses. Additionally, students maintain their general studies college preparatory curriculum. Regular, Honors and Advanced Placement courses are offered in every discipline. Students may pursue music lessons as an independent tutorial under the guidance of the Assistant Principal.

Israel: Land, Cultures and People - Throughout the semester, the goal is to thoroughly acquaint the students with the history of the Jewish people, its culture, and its land. Israel is the birthplace and the center of that history throughout the ages is the ideal place to teach and demonstrate the development of the people, culture, and land. By combining classroom and field study, students witness in a "hands on" manner the flow of Jewish history. The method employed for this course is an interdisciplinary core curriculum where students study history during 70 class days, 25 of which are spent at sites which reflect the period of history under investigation. All classes and field trips are based on the reading of primary source material from the appropriate period and group discussions. Students are expected to take notes during hikes and are examined on the presented material. A core curriculum teacher is appointed to guide students through all Jewish history. Classes are small, never exceeding 15 students, thus allowing for the maximum participation of all students. The content of the class draws upon the following disciplines: Archeology, World Literature, Comparative Literature, English Composition, History, Sociology, Geography, Comparative Religion, Western Civilization, Political Science and Physical Education. As Israel: Land, Cultures and People covers many disciplines a student's transcript may reflect the grades and credits earned in these subjects under either a reciprocal or specific course heading.

Hebrew Ulpan - The study of Hebrew is a crucial tool in understanding both ancient and modern Israeli History and culture. Students study Biblical phrases in their original Hebrew as well as learn to converse with their Israeli peers. Students are tested and placed in Hebrew classes based on their prior level of Hebrew knowledge. Students need not have previous knowledge of Hebrew. Students are encouraged to utilize their Hebrew skills as they meet Israelis and travel throughout Israel. Up to five different levels of Hebrew language instruction are offered. A formal textbook including workbooks and readers are used in the Beginner and Intermediate levels. The advanced level(s) employ various resources such as Hebrew newspapers. An anthology of contemporary Hebrew literature containing songs, poetry and short stories is integrated into the course instruction. Emphasis is placed on the acquisition of language skills that will facilitate students' ability to communicate within contemporary Israeli society. Taped radio broadcasts and television programs with supplementary printed materials specifically designed for the teaching of oral and reading comprehension development are employed. Hebrew Instruction is 170 hours per semester. It is comprised of 100 classroom hours.

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

Kibbutz Experience – Students are based at Kibbutz Tzuba located outside of Jerusalem. Students become an integral part of kibbutz life and have ongoing contact with Tzuba families. Students learn about kibbutz egalitarian values and culture while volunteering on the Reform Kibbutzim Yahel and Lotan in the Negev. In conjunction with these visits, students participate in a four-day desert camping adventure which includes hiking, camel riding, snorkeling in the Red Sea and Bedouin hospitality.

Poland Pilgrimage – In addition to the Israel Core Course, Heller High students experience a Jewish learning and identity building experience. Following the study of the Jewish experience in Europe during the Middle Ages and the Modern Period, students travel together on a special Heller High Pilgrimage to Krakow, Lublin and Warsaw, Poland including a moving and meaningful visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps. The near week-long excursion is designed to acquaint the student with the rich, though precarious, life of the Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages. In Krakow, they delve into the Jewish experience in Poland in the late Middle Ages and the Modern Period leading up to the tragedy of the Holocaust. Students visit the Ghetto area of Krakow and the concentration and death camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek. Prior to returning to Israel, participants visit Warsaw, Poland and see the remnants of the Warsaw Ghetto.

Gadna – The IDF (Israel Defense Force), the army of Israel, has defended the people and land of Israel since its inception. All Israeli teens prepare for service to their country in a special program called Gadna. This is a great opportunity for Heller High participants to join with their Israeli peers to gain insight into an essential element of Israeli life. While living on an Israeli army base, students meet military commanders, learn about the history and culture of the IDF and join in army exercises, working, hiking and training.

The Negev - Eilat Desert Adventure – The Negev-Eilat Desert adventure is four days exploring the Negev desert and Eilat. This includes hikes through the ravines and mountains of the Negev desert. While visiting Eilat, students snorkel the clear blue waters of the Red Sea, they have a Bedouin experience, and visit either Kibbutz Yahel or Kibbutz Lotan, Reform kibbutzim located in the Arava.

Yam L'Yam (Sea to Sea) Expedition - The Galilee is one of Israel's most beautiful natural landscapes. To its west lies the Mediterranean Sea and to its east the Sea of Galilee. Students participate in an exciting and challenging hike from one sea to the other. They camp under the stars, swim in the various natural streams and waterways and bike the terrain - all while getting to know the land of Israel.

## **STAFF SUPERVISION**

Heller High participants are thoughtfully supervised and compassionately cared for by our experienced and highly qualified staff. Our professional staff includes the Heller High Principal, Assistant Principal, Academic Coordinator, Director of Student Services, Hebrew Ulpan Coordinator, Director of Jewish Studies, dormitory counselors, full time and part time faculty members.

## **FACULTY**

Heller High currently has 46 faculty members. 30% have a bachelor's degree, 65% have a master's degree, 5% have a PhD.

**GRADING SCALE:** A+ 98-100, A 93-97, A- 90-92, B+ 88-89, B 83-87, B- 80-82, C+ 78-79, C 73-77, C- 70-72, D 65-69, F 64 and below.  
High Honor Roll - Grades of 93 – 100; Honor Roll - Grades of 88 – 92