

Ein Gedi, an Oasis for Special Students

Ein Gedi, a classroom at Charlotte Jewish Day School, has met the many needs of over twenty children with social, behavioral, or emotional needs. In fact, it is one of the few schools providing students with this type of service. This class was named for Ein Gedi, an oasis in the Negev desert, which is a sanctuary to animals and vegetation, and the source of much needed water that brings life to the agriculture in Israel. Charlotte Jewish Day School, beyond providing an exemplary secular and Judaic education, is a sanctuary for children with learning challenges. The Ein Gedi program has truly evolved into a philosophy that permeates the school and is an oasis for these children who need extra time and attention so they, too, can experience a childhood filled with hopes and dreams.

As we started our seventh year, the Ein Gedi classroom has evolved into an Ein Gedi philosophy that promotes a more fully integrated program, where these students spend most of their time in our regular classrooms. This

brings us closer to achieving our goal of complete differentiated instruction, allowing all students to work together side-by-side while learning on different tracks.

Through this program, students are either shadowed and supported in the classroom, or leave class when necessary to receive special tutoring in math, reading, or comprehension. By making special accommodations within the classroom setting, we are able to educate the whole child by providing much needed socialization and peer-to-peer interactions. In the next few months, we will have a true sensory room, donated by Toni Schulken from Pathways for Learning for students who need a place to "regroup" or relieve the tensions that they carry. This room will be open to the other Jewish organizations wishing to use this resource.

Although there are other programs in the general community to serve these families, our Ein Gedi program has enabled our community to meet the full-time educational and developmental needs of these children within a warm, nur-

turing Jewish environment. The children within Ein Gedi receive the specialized attention they require to learn, grow and to thrive. It is essential that we provide this type of support to Jewish families in Charlotte. Oftentimes, it is hard to know who gains the most from this program - the Ein Gedi students, the rest of our students, or the faculty who see them each day.

Ein Gedi will continue to devel-



op and adjust to the ever changing needs of students with varying and special needs. At times a self-contained class will be essential for the children enrolled, and at times inclusion in the mainstream class-

es will be the recommended route. The beauty of this program is our ability to adjust according to the child.

Many people in our community have been instrumental in creating a legacy of caring and generosity that enables the Charlotte Jewish Day School to meet the needs of all Jewish children through the Ein Gedi program. CJDS is forever grateful for their continued support in making this dream happen for our children. ♣

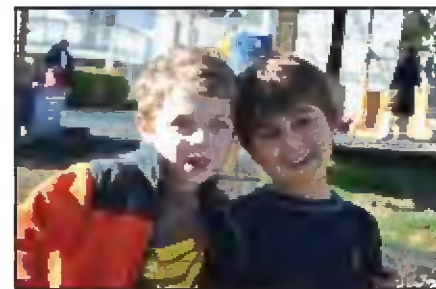
Three Families Tell Why They Picked JPS

By Dedee Goldsmith, director, Jewish Preschool on Sardis

One of the beautiful things about life is choice. We choose where we live, where we shop, and often where we send our children to school. Sometimes choice is easy, other times choice is difficult. When it comes to pre-school choices in Charlotte, there are so many schools to look at. Religious based programs, full day or part day programs, the list goes on and on.

As the Director of The Jewish

Preschool on Sardis, I have the wonderful opportunity to meet and give tours to families who relocate from places all over the country, move from other programs in the area, and parents just beginning the preschool process. It is heartwarming to hear the stories about why families choose JPS. Allow me to share with you, stories of three families who joined us mid-year and their reasons that the Jewish Preschool on Sardis is the



Jacob and a new friend, Levi.

right school for their children and their family.

How did you hear about The Jewish Preschool on Sardis?

Lisa, mom of five year old son who recently relocated: "Word of mouth. We heard about JPS from people whose children attended. Some are in elementary school; others have children who are now in college."

Julie, mom of three year old daughter: "I knew about the school from Shul, from the community. If you talk to any parent who knows JPS, it is all positive."

Sam, mom of two year old daughter and one year old son: "We met [a current parent] on the JCC tour who told us not to sign up at any other school until we see JPS."

What appealed to you about The Jewish Preschool on Sardis?

Lisa: "The flexibility with pre-care and extended day options, there is drop in if we need it. It reminds me of our school in Massachusetts. I also liked the smaller class sizes and lots of opportunity for after school enrichment classes. This is such a beloved place by anyone who knows the school; there is music, Judaica, outdoors, and great staff that has a wonderful reputation in the community."

Julie: "Everything! [I like] the size of the school, the credentials of the teachers, the Judaica program, the families, the administration. It was an instant fit."

Sam: "I like that it is intimate, the children are having fun in calm, soothing way, the ratios are low and the feeling is cozy."

When you were looking at schools, what are some of the things you looked for?

Lisa: "Other Jewish families, a warm environment, class size. I heard from other parents that the

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