

Schools

Right Dudes

By Stephen Debresen, Fifth Grade Teacher, Charlotte Jewish Day School

When someone is ten years old and a boy, the world, although large, may still seem conquerable. However, as he goes through life, he soon discovers there are several obstacles in his way. A fourth or fifth grader's view of the world is more complex than you would imagine. He sees the obvious, but at the same time he begins to look at the underlying causes of certain feelings inside. That feeling is emotion. This emotion can be in the form of compassion, kindness, joy, righteousness, and even anger or frustration. Right Dudes was formed so I could help boys searching to find answers and ways to deal with everyday obstacles that life brings to them. CJDS offered a program for the girls called Strong Girls and I kept hearing about the wonderful impact it was having. I wondered if I could bring the same kind of program for CJDS boys. Mariashi gave her full support and in the early part of 2013, I began weekly meetings with the fourth grade boys.

At first they were confused as

to why they had to meet with me. My goal was twofold. First, I wanted to provide an environment that would be a safe zone for them to express issues they were dealing with or pressures they felt, without the fear of getting in trouble. Second, I wanted to build a bond with the boys who would be in my fifth grade class the following year. The impact was immediate and the student response has been tremendous. Fifth grade boys cannot wait for Thursday so



The "Right Dudes" with Mr. Debresen in the far back, right.

that they can meet and discuss school life with me, and any social or emotional obstacles they want to overcome. The majority of our time is spent on dealing with and understanding each other. How can eight boys with such strong personalities coexist and compromise to keep the peace amongst themselves? It is not easy. I have

approached each situation by first stating the ground rules for our discussions and ensuring that at the end of each session everyone leaves understanding each other a little better. You might be thinking what kind of problems do fourth and fifth grade boys have? You would be surprised. I have been in awe when listening to some of the deep discussions and maturity demonstrated by each and every one. Not only do we look at problems but we try to delve into it further to examine why the problem exists.

Most of the time, group discussions are school-related, however, there have been times when a student has a general question about life and thanks to the safety net that Right Dudes offers, they are comfortable to talk about it without any fear of ridicule. Boys feel free to discuss a variety of topics important to their lives because they know they will not fall victim to taunting or teasing. I have spent many sessions debunking myths and clarifying misinterpretations. I am so pleased with the

growth in their maturity and the overall effectiveness of this program and that I have been able to create this opportunity for them and proud of the way each boy has

responded. This method of communication and fellowship is not the only answer to life's obstacles, but it is a good foundation for dealing with them. ✪



Learn how to run the Seder for your own family. Tips, ideas, supply lists and fun ways to engage your children.

Wednesday, March 19, 9:15-10:45 AM
at The Jewish Preschool on Sardis,
6619 Sardis Rd., Charlotte 28270

- OR -

Monday, March 24 7-8:30 PM
at The Ballantyne Jewish Center,
8632 Bryant Farms Rd., Charlotte 28277



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Saturday, March 22
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Temple Israel
"TORAH TOTS"
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