

## HACD Has Character!

This year Hebrew Academy implemented a new character education program based on the book “How Full is Your Bucket?” The main idea of the book is to fill another person’s imaginary bucket by doing simple acts of kindness. This is how the program works: First we read the story to each class. When a teacher observes a student performing an act of kindness, the teacher gives the student a ticket, with the kind act described on the back of the ticket. The child is then invited to deposit the ticket into an administrator’s bucket. At the end of each month the tickets are collected from the administrator’s buckets, read, and sorted by class. Next, a photo of the ticket holders is taken and the tickets are graphed by class. Finally, the photos and graph are displayed on the bulletin board by the office.

When the program began in September I noticed that the quality of the acts of kindness were pretty basic. Some examples included:

- Helped someone clean up
- Shared with a friend
- Talked quietly in the hall

While these are all very admirable acts of kindness they really didn’t seem to reach the potential of selflessness that I knew that our students were capable of reaching. I decided to give our students a chance to grow and stretch a bit more in their character development.

It is now December and I have collected tickets for three months. As time marched on the HACD students began to take their acts of kindness to the next level. Here are some examples from October and November:

- Sat next to a lonely kindergartner at lunch instead of sitting with his friends
- Went against the crowd and stood up for someone
- Cheered up classmate who was sick
- Gave up his chair for a visiting adult
- Supported a classmate who was having difficulty learning something
- Made sure to include everyone in a game
- Went out on a limb and declared that all his classmate’s drawings were pretty
- Went out her way to help someone who was feeling left out

Now that was more of what I had in mind! These acts required empathy, compassion and selflessness. These traits are the building blocks for good character. I am noticing that the acts of kindness are making a difference in the culture of our school too. It seems like the children look for opportunities to help others. Sure, at first, they were motivated by the tickets, the pictures and the graph, but now I feel like the children are developing into awesome characters because it is the right thing to do! We are very proud to say that HACD has Character!