

Bloom's Tzedek Culminating Event Speech

Welcome to our Tzedek Culminating Event. Today is a special day, a culmination of the Tzedek year, an integral part of the Bnai mitzvah year of our 7th grade students. The tzedek year exemplifies Brandeis' partnership with our families as their children take on increasing social responsibility, as part of their transition from childhood to young adulthood. Today's gathering is not a regular prayer service. Unlike other grade level tefillot, we do hold siddurim, nor do we sing the prayers from the siddur. Today's tefillah represents prayer of a different type, the kind of tefillah that Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel coined "Praying with our Feet". Today's tzedek tefillah celebrates the ways in which our students have applied the Jewish values and ethics which appear in our prayers, to their lives, their community, and the world around them.

I could not be more proud of your children and all they have accomplished this year. In the fall, I invited in a multitude of guest speakers from different non-profit organizations and at the end of each presentation your children were moved to ask, "How can we help? What can we as 7th graders do?" They feel very strongly that "When the community is in trouble, a person should not say 'I will go sit in my house and I will eat and drink and be at peace with myself'." They agree with Rav Assi that tzedakah is more important than all the other 613 mitzvot combined!

We volunteered with three organizations that truly rely on their volunteers. At the Raphael House, a family homeless shelter in San Francisco, we helped weed and plant in their rooftop garden, we organized toys and cleaned common areas. At the Jewish Home, we celebrated Shabbat and made paper flowers with our senior buddies. At Glide the students worked hard to serve 700 meals! We walked through the Tenderloin, met the homeless and learned of the different resources available to them. Your children are truly making a difference in the lives of so many.

I hope they continue to live and breathe social justice next year, in high school and beyond. I hope they continue their relationship with their chosen non-profit organization and keep changing the world one step at a time.