

## How “Religious School With Honors” Has Added to My Emanu-El Experience

A true story by a Wednesday Sixth Grade student

At the time I am writing this, it is already five months into the religious school year. K-7 students are busy learning about... well, I don't know really. I just know sixth graders are learning about Jewish history and Hebrew, and about planning our own *tefilah* service. Basically, everyone is doing something at Temple Emanu-El!

Aside from all the basic knowledge we all have to learn at Religious School, there is one new thing I want you to know about! One word: honors, otherwise known as “Religious School With Honors,” a system created by the Religious School staff to show that going to different events — from Thanksgiving dinners to Shabbat services or even student council — can actually be fun.

The way this works is that each student from K-Grade 6 — yes, no seventh grade, don't ask me why... I didn't invent this — gets a form. On that form are five slots to fill with five events you went to outside of Sunday, Monday or Wednesday Religious School. Next to the space where you write the event name is a space to write what you learned from that event, whether it was to be more charitable or that Shabbat services are fun. Once you complete those five slots, you can even get another sheet! You can go on to earn five more honors and then five more honors. Five honors is Level One; 10 honors: Level Two; 15 honors: Level Three. At each level there are different prizes, to make winning honors more fun.

Besides making you, readers, aware of this “Religious School With Honors,” I actually wanted to tell you about how that has affected me as well as my Religious School experience. I know that sounds boring, and I doubt that many other kids or teens truly care what I think, but it will be short — being a kid, I know other kids have really short attention spans — and I will try to make it relatable, so then you can say, “Wow, we are sooo alike!” Anyway, I just wanted to say that having this Religious School honors program has motivated me to go to more events at Temple Emanu-El and actually has made me realize that some are actually fun for kids and adults. At first, I never wanted to go to a Shabbat Kodesh service, but then when I went to one — and realized I could earn an honor — it became more fun. But, of course, I really like the prizes and earning honors is fun, so that makes the service a little more fun.

“Religious School With Honors” gives me a motivation, which is good for people like me who don't like to do stuff outside of Apple products. It makes me excited to know that going to services and charity events like Mitzvah Day are fun and that you can earn stuff from going to them, even though that shouldn't be the point, although it most likely is for everyone. Furthermore, Honors motivate students to go to these events so they can realize they are fun and want to go to more, honors or no honors.

That's it! I'm done. I hope you found this somewhat interesting and want to try out Honors this year or the next. But I hope you realize what I have realized: Religious School stuff, like special events, can be enjoyable, and you can learn from them. (And get prizes too.)