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Our class recently traveled to Israel with Schechter Hartford for a two week trip. When we first saw the kids from the other school most of us were wary about becoming friends with them. Right away, we got to know some of them through the 11 hour plane ride and realized they were more like us than we thought. Even so, we spent the first few days sitting by ourselves on the bus and rarely speaking to one another on tours or during meals. After a few days of sleeping in neighboring rooms we began to bond with one another and eventually became really good friends. We sat next to the Hartford kids during free time and on the bus, and we engaged in conversations with them. The Schechter Manhattan-Schechter Hartford Israel trip soon became the Schechter trip, because we unified into one community embarking on a life altering experience, that we call the 8th grade Israel trip.

One experience that really bonded us together, was the rafting trip. We spent the afternoon rafting down the Jordan river in rafts of 5 or 6 kids with one adult. During the rafting trip, we had the opportunity to be in rafts with the Schechter Hartford kids and really get to know them better. Because this was a relaxing and fun activity, we were able to get to know everyone in a different way. All the experiences we had together helped us become better friends and by the end of the trip we were sleeping in mixed rooms. All-in-all, we became really close with our new friends from the Hartford school and still communicate via phone. While we knew that the Israel trip was going to be a highlight of our year, it was a bonus for us to forge new and unexpected friendships at the same time.