



Case Study

Eisner Camp



"I believe in giving kids the chance to do things with their hands in a way that doesn't involve fingertips on a phone screen."

- James Gelsey, Director, URJ Eisner Camp

► Camp Vitals

Camp: URJ Eisner Camp offers fun, immersive Jewish experiences that empower children, teens and adults to better themselves, their communities and the world. Eisner is a traditional, residential camp in its 63rd summer of continuous operation and is one of 17 resident Union for Reform Judaism camps in North America.

Number of Campers: 800+ campers throughout the summer

Headquarters: Great Barrington, MA

Ages using the Maplewoodshop Program: 7-17

Counselors trained: 1 counselor, a retired rabbi, who had a background in woodworking

Use: Campers who choose woodworking for their art activity will be in the woodworking shed 4-5 times throughout the week during 50-minute periods.

► Why Maplewoodshop

URJ Eisner Camp aims to cultivate curious minds and the creative spirit of campers. To this end, the camp administration believes in letting kids work with their hands to see what they can create. The Maplewoodshop program was a perfect fit to help kids develop their creativity and curiosity.

The Camp renovated part of the arts area, creating space for fine arts, for drawing, painting. In 2019, the woodshop was added to this space. The Maplewoodshop Toolchest had everything the campers needed to begin creating.

The Camp administration wants summer camp to be a place for campers to try everything and discover hidden talents. They welcomed the opportunity to expose campers to hand tool woodworking.

"For us, adding this woodshop program was a no-brainer. And working with Mike has just made it seamless and really, really easy. So we couldn't be happier with how things debuted there."

-James Gelsey, Director, URJ Eisner Camp



► Educating With Maplewoodshop

Projects created: Jigsaw puzzle, keepsake box, tooltote, footstool, lamp, scrapetecture, napkin holder

Concepts reinforced: Following directions, Tool safety, Project planning

Life Skills learned/reinforced: Critical thinking and problem-solving, Creativity, Initiative and self-direction, Pride in work

The camp used woodworking as an opportunity to bridge people together and create community. In its first season, the woodworking shed was where generations go to know each other better - in this case, a retired rabbi and his campers. Woodworking also connected the kids, giving them space to collaborate and problem-solve together.

"We want to connect our kids, not just to each other and camp but see they're part of something larger. Woodworking gave us the opportunity to do this."

-James Gelsey, Director, URJ Eisner Camp

► What's Next?

During the first season, the Maplewoodshop program was so popular the administration bought 4 additional workstations (from 8 workstations to 12). Woodworking is now a proud tradition at URJ Eisner Camp.



Building confidence, creativity, and community in students through woodworking.