Kids Can Make a Difference

Table Talk: Family Conversations About Current Events

Topic Summary

In Spring 2015, two fourth grade students, Henry and Henriet James (boy/girl twins) who attend North Elementary in Somerset, MA, decided it was time to do something about their school’s lunch policy that required boys and girls to sit at separate tables on opposite sides of the school cafeteria.

Henry and Henriet wrote an article in their school's newspaper that questioned the policy and expressed their thoughts and feelings about separating boys and
girls. To write it, they spent several weeks conducting research and interviewing people.

In August 2015, their principal announced that the policy was reversed and now boys and girls will be able to sit together at lunch.

Age
7 and up

Questions to Start the Conversation
- How do you feel about what Henry and Henriet did?
- How would you feel if your school separated boys and girls at lunch or other times?
- What do you think made Henry and Henriet's efforts so successful?
- What message does it send to young people when boys and girls are required to sit in separate areas?
- Is there a school rule or policy you think is unfair and if so, why?

Questions to Dig Deeper
- Do you think boys and girls should be separated for any activities and if so, why?
- Have you seen or heard about other examples where kids made a difference in their school or community?
- What do you think is meant by "gender norms?" In what ways are they harmful?

(The "Related to this Resource" and Additional Resources section provide articles and information that address these questions.)
Ideas for Taking Action
Ask: What can we do to help? What actions might make a difference?

- Talk to other students about gender norms and gender bias and ask your teacher if you can discuss the topic in class or organize a school assembly about it.
- Identify an issue that is important to you and write a letter in your school or community newspaper about it.
- As a family, get involved in a social action cause that is important to you.

Additional Resources

- Boys and girls will not be separated at lunch at North Elementary (South Coast Today)
- Want to be an activist? Start with your toys - McKenna Pope (TedEd)