

Junior Great Books

Do you love working with children in small groups? Do you love to read and discuss a great story? Then Junior Great Books may be just the volunteer activity for you. Junior Great Books is a national classroom reading and discussion program that helps to build young minds, improve critical thinking and promote higher student achievement.

The program is set up so that a group of five students (from the same class) get together with a trained parent volunteer to read and discuss stories from the Junior Great Books library. The group of students meets once a week for four weeks. This is an excellent opportunity to introduce the students to great international literature. The curriculum provides guided exercises and questions that allow the group to explore the stories in new and unique ways.

Volunteers receive Junior Great Books training or training materials from Mrs. Weinstein, the Advanced Academics teacher. We have teacher and student volumes for all grade levels. This program is available to students at all reading levels.

As a volunteer, you are assigned to one teacher. The teacher assigns a group of five children and you will meet with that group of children for four weeks. During this time you will be reading and discussing two stories. Initial prep time may be 1-2 hours, but it is much shorter once you are familiar with the story. And you can reuse the story for different groups.

You will meet with the students once a week for 45-60 minutes sessions. During the four weeks, you will work on two stories, each for two weeks. There is great flexibility in which story you choose and how you structure the sessions. The most important features of Junior Great Books are to read, interpret and discuss great literature from around the world, to respect other's opinions and to understand that there can be multiple interpretations for each story.

Gina Womack, current co-leader for the Junior Great Books program describes her experience last year. "As a volunteer with Ms. Carter's second grade class last year, I was able to meet with every student by running four groups of six from about November until April. During each four-week session we read two very entertaining stories, *How the Elephant Became* by Ted Hughes and *The Other Side of the Hill* by Elizabeth Coatsworth. The children's insights were amazing and even after using the same story several times, new groups offered new interpretations that had not been mentioned previously."

We currently need volunteers at every grade level. Our goal is to provide the opportunity to participate in the Junior Great Books Program to as many Marshall Road students as possible. With your help, we can meet that goal! If you are interested in volunteering or would like more information please contact Gina Womack at gwarring@att.net.