

Junior Great Books

(Link to www.greatbooks.org)



The JGB program is a supplementary reading program in GATE and EXCEL classrooms. The program includes reading, writing and discussion components. The goal of Great Books is to instill in students the habits of mind that characterize a self-reliant thinker, reader, and learner. Great Books programs are predicated on the idea that everyone can read and understand excellent literature literature that has the capacity to engage the whole person, the imagination as well as the intellect.

Shared inquiry is often considered the anchor of the program and definitely the portion that intrigues students. A distinctive method of learning, shared inquiry requires students to search for answers to fundamental questions raised by a text. This search is inherently active; it involves taking what the author has given us and trying to grasp its full meaning, to interpret or reach an understanding of the text in light of our experience and using sound reasoning.

The success of shared inquiry depends on the group leader guiding participants in reaching their own interpretations, by posing thought-provoking questions and by following up purposefully on what students say. In doing so, students develop both the flexibility of mind to consider problems from many angles, and the discipline to analyze ideas critically.

In shared inquiry, participants learn to give full consideration to the ideas of others, to weigh the merits of opposing arguments, and to modify their initial opinions as the evidence demands. They gain experience in communicating complex ideas and in supporting, testing, and expanding their own thoughts. In this way, the shared inquiry method promotes thoughtful dialogue and open debate, preparing students to become able, responsible citizens, as well as enthusiastic, lifelong readers.