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ABSTRACT

In a few urban elementary schools, in-depth, literature-based discussions are taking place under the Junior Great Books Program. For years, Junior Great Books has been a program available to limited numbers of students in special settings. Beginning in 1993, funding from the Ameritech Foundation allowed the Great Books Foundation to support the program as part of the regular curriculum in five urban school districts. Five years later, the Program has substantial evidence that its approach of engaging students in "shared inquiry" about literature's most abiding themes can thrive in high-poverty schools. Program staff have also learned that the implementation of Junior Great Books varies from school to school, classroom to classroom, and teacher to teacher depending on a variety of factors. This report provides a snapshot of three schools using the Junior Great Books Program. Information from the report was derived from site visits, participation in the Junior Great Books leader training, and participation in focus groups about the program. The report lists 10 specific lessons learned about the use of this program in urban schools. Taken together, the 10 lessons show that the poorest students in the United States can benefit from a high quality curriculum that provides all students with opportunities to engage with literature through reading and discussion. (SLD)

The Junior Great Books Program: Reading for Understanding in High-Poverty Urban Elementary Schools

A report prepared for the Junior Great Books Program

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The Junior Great Books Program: Reading for Understanding in High-Poverty Urban Elementary Schools

by Anne Wheelock

On the South Side of Chicago, 28 five-year olds sit clustered on the square of carpet gazing up at their teacher's face as she reads aloud from Beatrix Potter's "The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse." For the children, this is a "second reading" of the story, one of the selections in the "Dragon Series" of the Junior Great Books Program. The kindergartners listen intently, and they shoot their hands in the air to respond when Barbara Mather,[1] their teacher, pauses in the story to question them: "Why doesn't Johnny Town-Mouse understand that Timmy Willie is miserable in the city?" and "Why do you say that?" "Do you think that Johnny Town-Mouse was kind to Timmy Willie?" and "How do you know?" "What made Timmy Willie happy at the end?" As the story winds to a close, and after every child has had a chance to speak, Mrs. Mather puts her book down. "You need to listen to what I'm saying," she says. "Can you think of a place where both Timmy Willie with his short tail and Johnny Town Mouse with his long tail would be happy together? Close your eyes, think about it.... You have to think, boys and girls. I want you to think.... What do you think?" She listens as the children respond: "A mouse bookstore? A mouse library? A mouse church? The zoo? Riding a bike? Swimming? Skating? At the show?" As the students answer, Mather sends each back to the work tables, and the children settle into their assignment to draw - "in detail, I'm looking for detail" - their own illustration of Johnny Town-Mouse and Timmy Willie together.

Up the hall, Helen Drummond's 24 fifth graders sit with their desks in a square around their classroom discussing their reading of "Mr. Toad," a selection from Kenneth Grahame's The

[1] The names of educators and students described and quoted in this report have been changed to preserve their anonymity. Staff of the Junior Great Books Program are cited by their real names.

Wind in the Willows. The class has already read the story twice and as a group has taken notes on the reading. Mrs. Drummond has set the discussion in motion by asking students to consider the question, "Does Mr. Toad know 'right' from 'wrong'?" Once the ball gets rolling, students need little more than her quiet acknowledgment of who will speak in what order. As Abdul reads from the text to support his response, then summarizes his point, others are ready with a counter interpretation or point of partial agreement: "I have something to add to that. Look here, on page 117, the third paragraph, it says...." says one, pointing to another passage in the story; "I agree with Tabitha," says another. Abdul comes back with, "I have a question for Jeremy....," and following Jeremy's response, a classmate pipes up, "I have another answer to Abdul's question. See, on page 119.... " And so goes the class, with Drummond occasionally moving the discussion along, asking "Who has more information about what Bernie has just said?" or prodding the quieter students, "You seem to have ideas...." After 50 minutes, by the time Drummond returns to her original question, every student has participated, and all seem satisfied that their shared inquiry has illuminated Mr. Toad's character and predicament, although not all are happy about what the discussion has revealed. As the discussion comes to a close, Abdul reflects, "What I don't like is when a story ends with a sad ending. This story is different because Mr. Toad went to jail. He made too many mistakes."

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Across the city, on the near North Side, Marla Johanson's class is wrestling with a problem posed by the story "How the Tortoise Became." "What is it that Torto wants?," she asks. As half the students read trade books or work on assignments at their seats, the remaining students circle together beside Mrs. Johanson as she helps them develop better understanding of the text through interpretive questions: "Why does Torto decide that winning races is more important

than getting along with the other animals?" and "Why do the animals grow to dislike Torto?" and "Did Torto get the respect he was looking for?" These questions readily spark student's thinking, and each student defends his answer carefully: "They hated him more and more. They thought he was hurting their feelings. I have proof on page 117...." says Ian. "I disagree with Ian, but I agree with Misha and Eric," says LaToya, reading from page 118, "'....I shall teach them not to be snobs by making them respect me....;" "No," says Charles, "I have evidence they didn't like him at all. Look on page 116, 'The more he bragged....'" Finally Johanson queries them all, "So, is he looking for revenge or respect? Why can't he have both?" As the conversation ends, the students sit silent, but still attentive, chins resting on their hands, heads cocked, brows furrowed.

Later that day, in another classroom, Alice Valentine's fifth graders are preparing a dramatization based on their reading of "Beauty and the Beast." Under the theatrical direction of artist-in-residence James Ellison, they set up the scene. As Ellison calls on different students to play the various roles from the fairy tale, he asks each to think about what he knows about the character from the story. "We're going to break down the elements of the story, so you need to be thinking about the characters, where they are, what the problem is, and how the problem is solved," Ellison explains. He reminds his students, "Remember, we're not doing the Disney movie. We're working with the text. The text is your Bible." And as the class goes about developing the scene, Ellison does, indeed, require the students assigned to different roles to refer constantly to the text of the story: "All right, give us a physical description of this character - from the text!" and "What are the children like? Selfish? How do you know? Find it in the text! Support your answer!" As the students go back to the text, one reads a pertinent paragraph on page 94 supporting his characterization of Beauty's siblings as selfish. "Anyone have another piece of evidence to read?" asks Ellison. "Okay, good," he says, as another student reads aloud

from page 109. Mrs. Valentine reinforces Ellison's efforts with the children: "Why had the father gone away? Find that part.... Yes.... What page?"

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In another classroom in a school south of the Loop, fifth grade teacher Sandra Sakofsky is leading a "Directed Notes" exercise, an activity that coincides with their second reading of the story of "Prot and Kroc" from the Junior Great Books Series 4. With their books open to the story, students respond to Ms. Sakofsky's questions as she guides them in the retelling of the story, asking them to summarize what they have read: "What happened when.....?," she asks, adding, "Let's refer to the book. Make sure it's in the book?" Students offer extended answers as Sakofsky jots down notes on the easel. Her questions then turn toward pressing students to relate to the characters in a more personal way: "Was there anything the soldier did that you would like to do?," she probes. "What are some of the things the soldier did that you just would not do?" And as students respond - "I wouldn't have let the demon go," says one; "I wouldn't drink wine," offers another - Sakofsky asks, "All right. Who agrees? Who disagrees?" Building on students' replies to her questions, Sakofsky takes the opportunity to check to see if students have understood some of the allusions in the story: "Oh, you wouldn't wish for "pie in the sky?" What *is* 'pie in the sky'?" She also tries out a couple of interpretive questions she may pursue in subsequent discussions: "What kind of person do you think the soldier is?" and "Why do you think he was happy at the end of the story?" And finally, Sakofsky winds up the lesson with the request that students write out their thoughts in response to the question: "Why do you think at the end of the story the soldier would sit and look for Prot and Kroc?"

In the school's upper grades, teacher Charles Odden has already led his 26 eighth grader through their second reading and "directed notes" exercise on Gish Jen's story "The White

Umbrella." Now they plunge into discussion, with Mr. Odden posing a series of "Why....? questions" for his students: "Why does the narrator long to have the umbrella?" "Why does Mrs. Grossman give her the white umbrella in the first place?" "Why does the narrator insist on waiting outside as opposed to inside?" "Why do you think Mrs. Grossman admired Eugenie?" "Why does the narrator tell Mrs. Grossman the obvious fabrication about her mother's being a concert pianist?" Like his colleagues, Odden is a stickler for asking students for evidence: "Where in the story do you find that the narrator felt ashamed?," he asks. Although the discussion lasts only 40 minutes, these eighth graders, who list Stephen King, Anthony Baker, and R.L. Stein among their favorite authors, could continue another half-hour, both for the pleasure of talking about their ideas and for the story itself. "I love the Great Books stories," reports one student as others nod in agreement. "They're different. In our old reading books, we used to read a chapter and answer questions. It was boring. Now we get to read a whole story."

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In a handful of urban elementary schools, in-depth, literature-based discussions like these have increasingly become the norm, sparked by a partnership between schools in five districts and the Junior Great Books Program, a program designed to engage children with literature through close reading of high quality poetry and fiction, taking notes, critical thinking, and exploring questions of enduring interest to readers of all ages. Since 1993, forward-looking educators in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Indianapolis, and Milwaukee have worked to make the Program part of the mainstream of their schools. These educators responded to the Program's invitation to tap into a five-year funding commitment from the Ameritech Foundation to incorporate the Junior Great Books Program - with its focus on inquiry-oriented conversations about rich literature - into a school wide approach to developing students' literacy skills.

From the start, this effort was a departure from standard operating procedure for both the Junior Great Books Program and the schools. For many years, the Program had been a mainstay of "gifted classes" and a popular way of involving suburban parents as trained discussion leaders in their children's schools. Relatively few urban schools made use of the Program, and then often in magnet schools or "special" settings where teachers and parents considered it appropriate only for high-scoring students. Ameritech funding allowed the Program, for the first time, to embark on a focused effort to find out if the Program that was so welcome in suburban settings could take root in urban schools that enrolled a majority of low-income children.

Five years later, the Program has substantial evidence that its approach of engaging students in "shared inquiry" about literature's most abiding themes can thrive in high-poverty schools that some would argue should stick with "basic skills," basal readers, and scripted instruction. Program staff have also learned that implementation of Junior Great Books varies from school to school, classroom to classroom, and teacher to teacher, depending on a variety of factors inherent in the parameters of urban education. Thus, while educators in the participating schools have learned from the Program, the Program has also learned from them about what it takes to get Junior Great Books to "stick" in their schools. The "lessons learned" in both the schools and the Program support the underlying premise of the Ameritech venture: All children have a hunger to read, think, and discuss ideas in literature as a way of understanding the world around them. These lessons also highlight the sorts of dilemmas urban schools encounter as they employ the Program to improve student literacy school wide.

Introduction

The Junior Great Books Program has long been recognized as a compelling approach to developing skills in reading, listening, writing, analysis, interpretation, and communication. Grounded in literature that raises questions of persistent interest to all readers, the Program is, however, more than a set of curriculum materials. Fully implemented, it combines the reading of literature from many cultures with multiple avenues for probing that literature's meaning. These avenues include "shared inquiry," a discussion process through which students and teachers together explore questions arising from the text. These discussions follow close reading of the selections, vocabulary study, and a process of directed note-taking. Shared inquiry focuses on questions that encourage interpretation based on evidence from the stories themselves; opinions about how to interpret a story may change as discussion proceeds. Students also pursue themes that emanate from shared inquiry discussions through writing assignments and other studies in the arts and humanities.

For years, Junior Great Books has been a program available to limited numbers of students in special settings. However, beginning in 1993, funding from the Ameritech Foundation allowed the Great Books Foundation to support the Program as part of the regular curriculum in five urban districts. The Ameritech Project sought to realize five objectives: (1) to increase students' reading and thinking skills and improve attitudes toward reading; (2) to increase teachers' use of inquiry-based instruction for all students, including the least proficient readers; (3) to increase the use of excellent literature as the basis of elementary and middle grades reading and language arts instruction; (4) to increase teachers' abilities as interpretive readers; and (5) to increase teachers' professional collaboration.

The Project proposed to achieve these objectives through several means. First, the Project would offer teachers in 15-20 participating urban schools intensive professional development, including summer institutes, follow-up coaching provided to teachers leading shared inquiry discussions at each school, opportunities for participating teachers to interact with one another both within and across schools, and a Project newsletter. Second, the Project would provide high quality materials for teachers to be used in shared-inquiry discussions and would subsidize students' books and teacher materials over three years on a decreasing scale. Third, the Project would support "enhancement grants" of $3,000 to each school for a related activity that would extend, support, or supplement the Great Books concept and additional small grants to teachers for conference presentation and newsletter articles.

Over five years, the Ameritech project has reached some 6,000 to 9,000 urban children enrolled in 15-20 schools in the five cities. These school have joined with the Great Books Foundation in the common belief that all children can benefit from opportunities to engage with high quality literature through shared inquiry about intriguing questions. The challenges have been great as the Junior Great Books staff have applied what they know about the Program and modified their work to fit the ever-changing context of urban schools. This report describes this work and the ways in which educators working with students in kindergarten through eighth grade have accommodated the Program to the broader culture of their schools.

A "Snapshot" of Three Urban Elementary Schools Using Junior Great Books

This report identifies the three schools visited as School 1, School 2, and School 3.[2] School 1, located on Chicago's near North Side, enrolls 410 children from grades K-8. The school is racially diverse: 43.7 percent are African American, 29.3 percent are Hispanic, 15.1

[2] Data reported here are from Chicago Public Schools for the school year ending in 1997.

percent are White, and 11.5 percent are Asian; 10.7 per cent are considered "Limited English Proficient." School 2 currently enrolls 241 students in grades K-6, but will add grades 7 and 8 over the next two years. African American students make up 99.2 per cent of the student body; the remaining students are Hispanic. School 3 includes 313 students enrolled in grades K-8, all of whom are African American.

The schools visited all enroll large numbers of students from low-income families: 80.7 per cent in School 1, 73.9 per cent in School 2, and 95.5 per cent in School 3. However, "at risk" enrollments are different in respect to student mobility. Schools 1 and 2 have relatively low mobility rates (10.1 and 10.9 respectively). In contrast, because the adjacent housing development where most students live is undergoing renovations, 42.7 per cent of the students enrolling in School 3 at the beginning of the year are no longer enrolled at the end of the year. Despite this, parents of children at the school fought to keep the school open when its under-enrollment made it vulnerable to being closed.

All three schools also enroll many students who struggle with reading. For example, of the schools' sixth graders, 56 per cent in School 1, 23 per cent in School 2, and 89 per cent in School 3 do not meet the state goals for reading, as measured by the Illinois Goals Assessment Program (IGAP). At the same time, all schools have made gains in reading scores over the past several years. For instance, between 1995 and 1997, the percentage of students reading at or above national norms in reading comprehension on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) rose from 33.8 to 43.8 in School 1, from 60.0 to 74.5 in School 2, and from 8.6 to 14.2 in School 3. (In 1990, only 33 per cent of School 2's students scored at this level.)

The three schools share another salient characteristic. All have set the goal of ensuring that all their students read at national norms, and they have embraced Junior Great Books as a

means of accomplishing this objective. Prior to the Ameritech Project, educators at each school were familiar with the Program, and educators' understanding of and belief in the value of the Junior Great Books Program made possible the Program's adoption in these schools. For example, in one school, the principal reported, "I was familiar enough with the Program that I knew it didn't have a downside." In another, some teachers had experience using the Program for students labeled "Talented and Gifted" or were using the Program during the lunch period on a voluntary basis. In a third, the principal had begun to explore the use of the Program when "the Ameritech grant came along." In these schools, the process of applying to the Foundation to participate in the Project stimulated conversations about the value of the Program to all students and thought about how each school would introduce the Program to the whole school. The application process also required each school to assign a teacher to coordinate Project activities, a step that further deepened the schools' commitment to the Program.

Methodology of this report

The information in this report draws on a variety of sources. The author prepared for this report by participating in a two-day training in leading Junior Great Books discussions held in Cambridge, Massachusetts in July 1997. In February 1998, the author visited three Chicago elementary schools that are using Junior Great Books school wide. Over five days, she interviewed school principals and other relevant administrators and resource teachers. Accompanied for part of the time by two of the Program's trainers, she also observed classes in the schools and informally interviewed teachers and students in those classes. In relation to the Program's operation in one school, she also visited a local art gallery and observed students at work in that setting. In addition, she obtained further information about the Program in Chicago

Public Schools through in a meeting with the Officer of School Leadership Development of the Chicago Board of Education.

Information about the Program's operation in practice outside of Chicago derives from observations, informal interviews, and participation in two focus groups at an all-day conference sponsored by the Program in February 1998. This conference, one of several the Program has convened during the life of the Ameritech grant, brought together educators from each participating school and district to refamiliarize them with the Program and explore the Program's strengths and weaknesses. Finally, the author reviewed data from Chicago schools and background materials, including newsletters and grant proposals, describing the Ameritech project overall.

Although the sketchy school "profiles" will seem familiar to anyone who has examined data from urban schools, the schools participating in the Ameritech Project are complex communities of children and adults, each responding in unique ways to the rules, resources, and demands of the larger school district. Taken together, school data and brief observations can only begin to highlight the various experiences these schools have had as they implemented Junior Great Books school wide. However, the stories these schools tell provide a rough guide to the route the Program has taken as it traveled from "idea" to "practice."

Lessons learned

To the extent that many urban schools face conditions that are similar to the three schools visited, the observations presented in this report should help school leaders anticipate the real-world dilemmas they could encounter as they introduce Junior Great Books school wide in their own schools. Schools' experiences in implementing the Program suggest "lessons learned" that may guide educators considering the Program for their own schools. These include:

- The Junior Great Books Program adds unique value to a literature-based reading program for elementary and middle grades students in urban schools.
- Implemented school wide, Junior Great Books provides a consistent and coherent instructional focus across all classrooms in a school.
- School wide implementation of the Junior Great Books Program means that more students have regular opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills in classrooms that meet standards of "good teaching."
- With few exceptions, urban teachers and students find the literature selected for Junior Great Books discussions to be highly appealing and engaging.
- Principals working in collaboration with teacher-leaders must act assertively to communicate that Junior Great Books is a valued program that offers school wide benefits.
- Professional development, including classroom-based coaching and follow-up, for every teacher in participating schools is indispensable in implementing Junior Great Books school wide.
- The Junior Great Books Program can "prime the pump" for other changes in teaching, curriculum, and professional relationships.
- As teachers implement Junior Great Books school wide, they adapt the Program's materials and pedagogy to conditions within their schools, rather than adopt them unchanged.
- Educators using Junior Great Books school wide encounter difficult challenges as they work to fit the Program into exiting school cultures.
- In a policy context that emphasizes test-based accountability, educators using Junior Great Books struggle to meet the demands of the accountability system while remaining faithful to the Program.

The following pages describe these "lessons learned" in greater detail.

1. The Junior Great Books Program adds unique value to a literature-based reading program for elementary and middle grades students in urban schools.

In each of the three schools visited, teachers articulate ways in which they have used the Program as a unique component in their larger strategy for literacy development. While each of the schools visited uses multiple approaches to reading, including intensive extra help for struggling students, literature circles, and reading incentive programs like Accelerated Reader and

"Book It," teachers see Junior Great Books and its use of shared inquiry as adding irreplaceable value to their overall reading program.

"Junior Great Books sets the stage for being involved with other kinds of literature," explains Janine Doubletree, the Program's on-site coordinator at School 2, where the overall reading program schedules reading instruction, including Junior Great Books, for a minimum of one and a half hours every morning in every one of the school's classrooms. The strategy for literacy development at this school includes Reading Recovery, an extra-help, intensive pullout program for first graders who score at the lowest percentiles, and a literature-based basal reading series used in every grade. Teachers at School 2 also encourage students to read literature selected from classroom collections of trade books, and they lead students in "literature circles" that focus on the books students choose to read and discuss.

Within this overall focus on literature, the Junior Great Books Program serves different purposes in different grades. In kindergarten, teachers use the read-aloud selections to help students develop listening and thinking skills in relation to literature. As kindergarten teacher Barbara Mather reported:

> It's great for my children. Junior Great Books gets them to listen, and they really develop their attention span. They also know I'm going to question them on the story, and they're more likely to give you an answer now they know I'm going to probe.

In the later grades, the Program is the centerpiece for whole-class discussions about a variety of literature selections including Hindu and Arabian folk tales, poetry by Shakespeare, Carl Sandberg, Federico Garcia Lorca, and Langston Hughes, and Brothers Grimm fairy tales "Rumpelstiltskin" and "Hansel and Gretel." From the beginning, as Edwina Paquin, School 2's principal observed, "[The Program] fosters a love of reading. By third grade, [students] are really reading a lot."

With the Program's consistent emphasis on reading for understanding through discussion of questions that emerge from each story, students increasingly develop skills in shared inquiry. As one fourth grade teacher explained, "By the time they are in the upper grades, the kids are used to reading stories with meaning. They don't find it difficult to read literature and discuss it." Along with the selections in Junior Great Books, her students now read whole novels like A Wrinkle in Time as part of their exploration of more contemporary literature. In the school's sixth grade, students explore connections between questions raised in their Junior Great Book discussions and similar themes rendered in the visual arts.

At the schools visited, Junior Great Books has been a building block for constructing a stronger literacy curriculum school wide. As Dr. Paquin explained, "It isn't just the Junior Great Books program [that works]. It's the total program." At School 2, the introduction of a coherent reading program was the first step in a five-year curriculum reform process that created this "total program." Curriculum improvements, introduced every year, one subject at a time, have finally circled around to integrating the humanities, including the visual arts, music, and drama, into the curriculum, with Junior Great Books a basic element in this integrated approach.

Across the schools, educators articulated the ways in which Junior Great Books enriches other approaches to reading, including use of a literature-based basal reading series. As School 3's principal, Gloria Robinson, explained:

> Three or four years ago, we looked at the new basal, and the reading program overall. The basal has a lot of materials teachers want, but kids learn to read by reading. The stories in the basal are there for different purposes. There wasn't a place where students were reading and discussing for meaning. This is where Junior Great Books comes in.

In the Chicago schools visited, Junior Great Books has contributed elements to students' reading that might otherwise be absent from a program based solely on a basal series. As School 1's assistant principal, Sally Terry, noted:

> Junior Great Books helps teachers learn to ask open-ended questions. The basal programs don't do this.... It's always good to have a strong reading program to supplement the basal.

Further, several classroom teachers pointed out that Junior Great Books can co-exist with a literature-based basal series. As a sixth grade teacher at School 2 reported:

> The basal series has more contemporary literature [than Junior Great Books]. Also one thing the basals pick up on are the predicting skills, so we use them for that. Yet, my kids will still say, "I agree...." or "I disagree...."

An eighth grade teacher at School 3 added:

> Junior Great Books exposes students to an author's work.... It gives them perspectives on characters, a doorway to empathy, through discussion. And with the basal we have now, you read, you discuss too. They've joined together.

In fact, teachers and Program staff alike view Junior Great Books as having a distinct place in a comprehensive approach to reading. As Bill Siegel, one of the Program's trainers and coaches, explained:

> We run into a spread of reading options in our schools. What seems to make sense is that rather than ask yourself where you fit Junior Great Books in, you ask *why* you fit it in. I've always felt that Junior Great Books should be part of a reading program, the part that emphasizes critical thinking, reading the white stuff on the page as opposed to just the words. Remember, Junior Great Books does not teach decoding skills. That's not what it's meant for.

The range of options available may include a K-8 basal reading series, a computer-based program like Accelerated Reader or other reading incentive program, intensive one-on-one tutoring like Reading Recovery, literature circles, and classroom libraries. The three Chicago schools combine these in different ways. Yet, regardless of the mix of approaches used in each

school, the Program's use of discussion and shared inquiry to deepen students' thinking about ideas in literature sets it apart from any other approach.

What is common to the Chicago schools is that educators use Junior Great Books neither as a stand-alone program, nor as one of many "ornaments" on a "Christmas tree" of programs. Rather, educators employ the Program to enhance a larger strategy of literacy development that pushes students in all grades to read critically and develop a love of literature. As School 2's Edwina Paquin insisted, "You have to have a reading program that the Program fits into." She added, "If you start off with a literature-based basal that encourages discussion, then it's easier to incorporate Junior Great Books.... If you were using it with a skills-based program, it would be an add-on."

2. Implemented school wide, Junior Great Books provides a consistent and coherent instructional focus across all classrooms in the school.

In the Chicago schools visited, Junior Great Books provides an approach to instruction that is consistent for students as they move from grade to grade year after year, with enormous benefits to the school as a whole. Although the Program's literature selections change as students move on to the next grade, the methodology does not, so that what teachers in the early grades communicate to students about approaching literature and shared inquiry reinforces what teachers are doing in subsequent grades. As School 2's Paquin noted:

> Everyone had to agree that we were going to do it. I wanted it school wide so that everyone would be accustomed to the approach and have the same expectations.

To this end, at School 2, as at School 3, all teachers, including special education and arts teachers, participated in the initial Summer Institute. "We all got into it; we all did it as a group," reported a teacher at School 3. With teachers all "on the same page," teachers have increasingly

communicated common expectations for the "habits of mind" students will develop regardless of their grade or placement.

With school wide implementation, Junior Great Books also became the focus of discussions among teachers about shared goals for student literacy. At School 1, for example, teacher Alice Valentine, the Program's on-site coordinator, related how Junior Great Books offered teachers a common approach to teaching that was otherwise lacking across the grades: "We were all doing our own thing. We wanted something that would bring us all together," she recalled. School 1's Dr. Rivers also remarked:

> Teachers were much more isolated before [Junior Great Books]. Everyone was doing their own thing. With Junior Great Books, we have a focus.

As the one program teachers use across all grades, Junior Great Books has thus provided common ground for professional discussions about learning. For example, at School 1, Junior Great Books became the springboard for curricular discussions about reading, at first among the kindergarten, first-, and second-grade teachers who explored how they approached literacy. As the school's assistant principal Sally Terry related, these discussions led to a "mapping" of the various reading strategies teachers were using in the early grades, revealing that the time teachers were spending on Junior Great Books varied from one and a half hours to four hours each week. In turn, this "mapping" stimulated professional discussions about equity. And because the school "did not want to see students missing out because one teacher uses the Program less often than another teacher," teachers have begun conversations about how they will employ Junior Great Books more consistently so that all students are sure to benefit.

The corollary to more consistent teaching is a more consistent learning experience for students. As a result, school wide implementation of Junior Great Books has meant that students

have become increasingly at home with the norms and expectations of the Program as they move through the grades, and teachers "receiving" students who have used Junior Great Books in earlier grades perceive students as becoming stronger learners. As one teacher commented, "It all depends on the teacher beforehand. If they've followed the approach, the students are more aggressive with the Program." A teacher in another school elaborated:

> The students are different now. This year with the ones who've had it before, I didn't have to explain over and over what an interpretive question is. At this point in the year, I'm getting interpretive questions from them. Their writing is a lot better too, more on target. And their discussions over all... they get it! They are much better!

Not surprisingly, teachers report the Program becomes "easier to teach" as students become accustomed to the expectations associated with reading entire selections of literature and discussing that literature with their teacher and classmates. The benefits to students also accumulate over time. As one teacher reported:

> By the second year, students will sit and listen. They've matured in terms of listening, waiting for the other person to finish the comment. They sit, listen, think before making a comment. And they come up with new slants to the stories.

In School 3, a teacher working with a combined third/fourth-grade class agreed that teachers' persistence in every grade pays off as children increasingly anticipate the expectations of the Program. By the third year, she reports, "When I got the children, they had been exposed to the process. It was easier."

School leaders also place a high value on the consistency that Junior Great Books provides their schools. As School 1's Assistant Principal Sally Terry commented, "The approach and technique add quality. That's what's consistent across all classrooms." She added:

> If you have a good quality program, you're going to have an impact.... Students are going to learn.... You're not going to have discipline problems. I don't believe in teaching to the test or teaching test-taking skills. If you teach consistently to a strong program, you're going to have strong results.

As the public and policy-makers pressure schools to "do more" to improve student achievement, educators are often overwhelmed by the multitude of demands from different constituencies. Attempting to meet these demands, many add so many different programs to the school day that they risk losing the instructional coherence and focus that is essential for improved student achievement (Bryk, et al, 1993). School wide implementation of Junior Great Books offers schools such a focus.

3. School wide implementation of the Junior Great Books Program means that more students have regular opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills in classrooms that meet standards of "good teaching."

Although many teachers first knew of Junior Great Books as an add-on enrichment program for particular groups of students, the educators in the Ameritech schools visited increasingly understand it as a program that can help all students develop thinking skills. As School 2's Edwina Paquin explained:

> We knew about Junior Great Books as a program for "gifted" students, and as a teacher, I had used the Program in the remedial level. I knew it stimulated students' interest, and I knew that the discussion method worked for every student.

Indeed, prior to the offer of Ameritech funding, two of the three principals had explored other ways to introduce the Program school wide. However, when Paquin broached this possibility with the district's Central Office, she learned that because Junior Great Books was considered a program for "gifted" students, funds were available for books for only five percent of her students. Offered involvement through Ameritech's funding, principals at both School 2 and School 3 grabbed what they saw as a perfect opportunity to advance their schools' goals. As on-site coordinator Janine Doubletree explained, "We saw the Ameritech grant as an opportunity to extend Junior Great Books to our whole school as part of a larger Language Arts and thinking skills curriculum."

A significant benefit of using Junior Great Books in all classrooms is that it establishes common opportunities to learn for students of diverse abilities. At first, however, not all educators were persuaded that the Program would work for all students. As one teacher noted, "Initially we were concerned about whether our kids could be successful using the Program because of the fact that children were below grade level." Yet over time, as more teachers have seen how a wide range of students benefit from the Program, Junior Great Books has become part of nearly every classroom, providing more students with regular opportunities to develop thinking skills.

Many teachers interviewed explicitly appreciated how Junior Great Books pushes all students to think critically about literature through the Program's emphasis on reasoning, balancing points of view, synthesizing, and problem-solving. Asked how they defined the benefits of school wide use of Junior Great Books, educators reported, "Students develop analytical skills, and they can dialogue at a higher level of thinking," and "Students develop their own opinions through the reading and discussion, not by looking to someone in authority." One explicitly noted, "There is a higher level of participation in Junior Great Books classes," adding that the range of activities in the Program encouraged participation among a wide range of students. As another teacher commented:

> What's good is that this is not a pencil-and-paper program. We read a story and we talk about it.... Children who are not reading well are good thinkers. Kids who are getting F's can shine.

With every teacher using Junior Great Books, every student, including students reading below grade level and those with learning disabilities, can experience challenging opportunities to think about literature. For example, special education teacher Jerelyn Brooks, whose self-contained classroom includes students from third- to sixth-grades, explained:

> We use Series 2 and Series 3 for Junior Great Books. I even have children with serious learning disabilities who gobble it up. One of my sixth graders will select a Junior Great Books story, and she will read a page, and the aide will read a page.

Brooks insists that Junior Great Books stories and suggested discussion questions "work fine" in multiage classrooms like hers, and that special education students can excel, particularly in discussions about the stories. As she elaborated:

> When we do shared inquiry, I have children who'd like to take over. Many of the children with visual or auditory problems, who have problems with decoding or memory problems, really participate and get a lot out of the discussion.... They are beginning to be able to go back into the story and look for evidence and find meaning. After we discussed "Cinderella," one student came up to me and said, "Cinderella should have filed abuse charges." She's a thinker! I never thought of that.

In another school, a "regular" teacher also reported how using Junior Great Books in her heterogeneously grouped class of third- and fourth-grader relieved her fears that the Program was only for "other" children:

> At first I thought our children wouldn't be receptive to [the Program], but they were. They didn't mind the questioning at all. And they like the dramatizations. They can visually see the stories in action. I went back to the beginning of the series, and I had them act it out this time. It was an EMH child who really excelled.

Sometimes to their surprise, educators using the Junior Great Books Program school wide have learned that reading challenging stories and discussing that reading is a strategy that "works" for not only the most agile readers but also for "average" and "below grade-level" students. As one teacher concluded, "I used to think that Junior Great Books was restricted to the 'gifted.' But the kids who most need to be stimulated need this program."

Not all of the Ameritech schools have succeeded in offering every single student the opportunity to be involved in heterogeneous discussion groups about literature through Junior Great Books. Those that have, however, find the Program replaces the features of a "pedagogy of poverty" with "good teaching" -- instruction that involves students in discussing ideals, "big

ideas,"and issues of vital concern, and that engages students in thinking about ideas in ways that question commonly held assumptions (Haberman, 1991). In this respect, implementing Junior Great Books school wide brings opportunities for critical thinking to every student and helps schools put "good teaching" into practice in all classrooms.

4. With few exceptions, urban teachers and students find the literature selected for Junior Great Books discussions to be highly appealing and engaging.

In the minds of some, Junior Great Books is associated with literature written by "dead white males," deemed to have little relevance to the concerns of today's media-saturated children. However, contrary to this reputation, all but a few teachers and students in the schools visited were enthusiastic about the stories in the Junior Great Books series. In fact, Junior Great Books is a curriculum founded on poetry and stories that have enduring interest to readers of all ages and backgrounds.

Observations in the Chicago schools highlighted the responses that students have to the selections. Shared inquiry about the literature evokes laughter and puzzlement as students contend with "big issues" of the "niceness" and "meanness" of various animal and human characters, ponder why different creatures like or dislike one another, and discuss concerns of fairness and justice, cleverness and greed, love and friendship, respect and revenge, and good and evil. Mulling the underlying emotions and passions that motivate characters and drive events, students may discuss the dilemmas of a story for up to an hour without showing signs of boredom. This level of enthusiasm does not escape teachers' notice. As one teacher explained, "There are programs that aren't very good. This is not one of them. The interest level is high. The fiction really opens doors to them." A second teacher added, "The stories have feelings. Some are happy; some are sad." A third elaborated:

> These are stories about ethics, morality, human life.... It's the stories themselves and what they bring to the table that hook kids. You have to give kids stories that have some meaning.

In general, most teachers and students interviewed applauded the ways in which the Program's selections stimulated imagination and curiosity. Teachers reported that students "find the stories interesting," while students confirmed that the stories are "fun to read." Asked to comment on the connection between selections and students' own cultural backgrounds, most saw the stories as relevant to the lives of all their students. As one principal stated:

> We have a multicultural population, and the stories are quite good because they validate students and their background.... Students see there is more to their fellow students. It really helps in a global society.

Although most teachers like the selections and noted that students enjoy the stories, some educators in the schools articulated a wish for more contemporary materials. As one first grade teacher reported, "I don't like the selections myself. They are too traditional for me. The children do, though." Another teacher wished the selections were more thematically organized, asserting, "I'd like theme-centered materials, other related books." Others raised concerns about the limited number of illustrations in the Junior Great Books materials: "Without pictures to give them clues, it's very difficult for a class of 22 or 23 to follow along," worried one teacher.

Junior Great Books Program staff find these concerns reasonable. As one coach noted:

> So much in society has been drawn for kids, with television, with videos. It's understandable that teachers feel the need to supplement the texts with visual stimulation or clues. I don't see a problem with that.

And while Program staff view the stories as sufficiently rich and complex that most readers will find a point of connection, they also encourage teachers to pick and choose among stories when they find some less inviting than others. To this end coaches advise teachers, "Look

at the stories, look at the themes. Ask yourself if *you* are going to be interested in the themes and use those stories."

Teachers use of Junior Great Books, then, can be as flexible as teachers wish. Whether shared inquiry "works" with other texts, however, is still a matter for discussion. Clearly, many teachers would like to apply the Program's methodology to other kinds of literature or in other areas of the curriculum. As one administrator noted, "I like that the teachers transfer the teaching approach to other practices... It goes beyond the story; it's the approach." Program staff are sympathetic to this aspiration, but they caution teachers that not every text lends itself to shared inquiry. As Denise Ahlquist, Training Director for the Great Books Foundation, noted in a letter to graduates of the Program's summer institutes:

> While the shared inquiry method can be used with other works of literature, we have discovered that many texts are not rich enough to yield satisfying discussions. This is especially true of children's literature, where many stories cannot support the in-depth questioning of shared inquiry. The stories in Junior Great Books have been demonstrated to provoke sustained, rigorous discussion again and again. They are also stories students enjoy and want to discuss.

Despite this caution, it is likely that many teachers who wish to promote thinking skills among their urban students will continue to seek ways to apply the experience of shared inquiry discussions to literature that is not included in the Junior Great Books series. In fact, the pull to use other materials may be increasing as state departments of education tie state standards and testing to lists of "recommended" reading that have with little or no overlap with Junior Great Books. For a variety of reasons, then, the Program needs to continue to mine all possible literature for selections that meet the Program's standards for generating rich discussion and that also accommodate current political realities of state-suggested for reading.

5 Principals working in collaboration with teacher-leaders must act assertively to communicate that Junior Great Books is a valued program to be implemented school wide.

Many school reformers have reflected on the necessity of effective school-based leadership for introducing change in schools. This lesson also applies to school wide implementation of Junior Great Books. In the Chicago schools visited, principals communicated their support for the Program in different ways, facilitating the "buy-in" of teachers according to the history and needs of their schools. In addition, teacher leadership for the Program emerged at the schools primarily through the assignment of one teacher to serve as "on-site coordinator" for the Program, a strategy that enhanced teacher commitment.

As advocates for the Program, principals in the Ameritech schools faced a number of decisions regarding its implementation. They had to negotiate with teachers regarding whether their participation in Program would be required or voluntary. They had to maneuver school schedules and resources to support teachers as they implemented the Program. They had to build develop teacher "buy in" and acceptance of Junior Great Books as a valued program in the school's repertoire of programs. As one of the Chicago principals argued:

> You get them to try to reach consensus on the Program. The smart way is to get them to buy into it, come to them with reports from other schools from the same region.

Different principals met these challenges in different ways. For example, in two of the schools visited, principals pursued a traditional leadership role, researching the Program and presenting it to their teachers for discussion. As a teacher in one of these schools recalled, "We all sat down together and talked about how this would fit into our reading Program. We decided this was what we wanted." In the third school, it was the teachers rather than the principal who took the initial steps toward involvement. There a cluster of teachers piloted the Program, then opened their classrooms for observations so that others could consider how they might use the

Program themselves. In this school, the principal worked behind the scenes, listened for teachers' reactions, then made sure that those teachers who were "sold" on the Program had the resources necessary to carry it forward.

Regardless of the source of initial interest, all principals described concrete actions they had taken to advance the Program in their schools. Two of the principals communicated commitment by attending the entire summer institute with their teachers, and at School 3, the principal inaugurated the Program in her school by leading Junior Great Books discussions in every classroom and by reading a story aloud over the school's public address system. As her school's coach noted:

> Dr. Robinson understands what the obstacles are and that it's her job to knock them down, her responsibility for making it happen. She puts money in the budget for buying books, plans how things will work.

Principals also described steps they took to free teachers up to discuss the Program with other teachers, strengthen their skills, and observe in colleagues classrooms. For example, at School 3, Principal Robinson engineered the scheduling of substitutes so that five teachers could leave their classes at one time to attend a demonstration lesson facilitated by the school's coach. A Detroit principal also explained that she had provided coverage to team of teachers to discuss the Program with her and reported, "The next day, a few more teachers came to me and said they would like to talk about Junior Great Books too." Indeed, at different times, all made substitutes available to promote and improve the Program school wide.

Whether "out front" or "behind the scenes," principals' decision to make the Program a priority in their schools made a difference to implementation. As Janice Cody, Assistant Director for Ameritech's Junior Great Books Project noted, "We've depended on the principals' having a clear enough vision of the program to make it work." Indeed, without visible leadership for the

Program, whether from the principal's office or shared with teachers, the Program can languish. For example, several newly-appointed principals from Ameritech Project schools outside of Chicago reported they had "inherited" the Program when they assumed their post midway through the life of the Project; a few reported that few teachers in their schools were using the Program, and that it had been abandoned largely for lack of leadership.

Further, when the Program has the support of teacher-leaders to back up the principal's leadership, it can take off. For example, in Chicago's School 1, Principal Rivers intentionally cultivated teacher leadership in her school by supporting teachers who volunteered to use the Program, believing that if these teachers found the Program compelling, others would follow. As a result, Dr. Rivers explained:

> We saw the leadership for the program develop among people who were willing participants, teachers who volunteered to pilot the program. It was people who were closest to the problem [of how to improve student reading] coming up with the solution to the problem.

She added:

> Buy-in in this school happened because I butted out..... I knew that if I pushed for it, no one would do it. I sat back and waited for people who were enrolled to convince the others..... I was giving them support but being non-directive, doing everything I could to make it easy, not to make it hard.

In her school, Rivers could "butt out" and still implement the Program effectively in part because of the Project's insistence that every school assign one teacher to serve as the Program's on-site coordinator. Making this a condition of Project participation ensured that someone from the teacher ranks would serve as an advocate for the Program. As Bill Siegel explained, "The Program needs some coordination at the school level. Principals are not the right people to do this. But the principal *is* the right person to find the right person."

On-site coordinators are primarily responsible for overall communications about Junior Great Books within the school. For example, Alice Valentine, School 1's on-site coordinator, schedules peer observations so that teachers can view Junior Great Books instruction in their colleagues' classrooms. She also arranges for Junior Great Books presentations at the school's parent open house, updates the school-site council on the Program, articulates the Program's connection to other literacy programs like "Links to Literacy," a district reading incentive program, orders the Junior Great Books reading series, and prepares proposals for the Program's enhancement grants. As Valentine explained, her willingness to assume responsibility for the Program is based in her commitment to seeing the Program succeed at her school:

> Somebody has to be in charge. There has to be one person who takes responsibility for sharing the information about the Program. I'm invested in doing it because I'm using the Program. It's extra, but as long as I see it as productive, it's not a chore. For a little bit, it's extra, but it's not every day.

In addition to in-school responsibilities, on-site coordinators are liaisons to the Program and have a special relationship with the professional development staff who visit schools regularly. In this role, on-site coordinators may arrange for coaches to meet with the entire faculty or schedule times for coaches to visit individual classrooms. Coordinators also attend regular conferences sponsored by the Program.

In School 1, where the principal took the stance that participation would be voluntary, Valentine has played an especially important role in motivating colleagues to join with others to expand the Program to all the school's classrooms. She detailed how this happened at her school:

> You need the teachers to buy into the Program. A few of us had taken Junior Great Books training on our own, and Dr. Rivers had us give a presentation to the whole staff. We asked for volunteers to go to the training, and we were lucky we had one person at every grade. Then teachers saw how it was working, and they saw the books. The other teachers decided they wanted to do it.

The presence of trusted teachers in the role of on-site coordinator has clearly helped the Program thrive. As one seventh grade teacher pointed out:

> If you have teachers you trust, people will buy in. The group that went [to the summer training] first had a great time, and they came back and sold the Program to the rest of us.

Assistant Principal Sally Terry added, "It's helpful to have teacher advocates for the program. Teachers can resent top-down mandates."

The range of experiences in launching Junior Great Books school wide points out that leadership decisions regarding curriculum change must ultimately reflect different conditions in different schools. Like School 1's Rivers, some principals will exercise caution in achieving the school wide vision. Other principals will sense less need for restraint. At School 3, for example, one teacher reported:

> The teachers [here] bought in. The administration was not imposing anything on us. It has been a collaborative venture. We're all doing it together. Not one person is isolated.

Regardless of the conditions however, leadership benefits from involving teachers in an explicit way. As one of the Foundation's staff members emphasized, "It's the teachers who really do the work to make the Program stick." A shared leadership model allows principals to take responsibility for pushing the Program forward while honoring the views of those who must make the program work in their classrooms.

6 Professional development, including classroom-based coaching and follow-up, for every teacher in participating schools, is an indispensable ingredient for implementing Junior Great Books school wide.

Across the country, teachers routinely enroll in professional development courses and workshops to learn about new content in the disciplines and explore new pedagogical approaches. However, few professional development programs offer teachers the personalized follow-up

support that ensures that teachers will actually use what they learn in their classrooms. Moreover, individual teachers may return to schools where the overall climate does little to encourage the regular application of new knowledge or extend new skills to all teachers school wide.

Junior Great Books's Ameritech project successfully avoided these pitfalls in several ways. First, the Program offered meaningful professional development to every single teacher from each school, including music, art, and special education teachers. This ensured that each teacher would have colleagues committed to the same goals and available to solve problems, exchange ideas, and serve as a "reality check" as they implemented the Program. The timing of most training during the summer months allowed for entire faculties to train together in a way that might not have been possible if training had been offered only during the school year. It also won the support of principals. "I don't send teachers away during school," said one principal. "I need my teachers here. That's why I like summer training." What's more, summer training allowed for principals themselves to attend alongside their teachers, something that would have been virtually impossible during the school year.

The Ameritech Project staff also offered school year professional development opportunities to replacement teachers, so that new teachers coming into the schools midyear or after the summer professional development sessions would have a chance to catch up with their colleagues. This proved to be a fortuitous decision since over the course of the Project, many new teachers and principals with little knowledge of Junior Great Books or their school's prior commitment to participating in the Program joined participating schools. As one of the Program's staff pointed out, "Teachers do leave schools for different reasons. If we hadn't made available free training for replacement teachers, we would have lost the Program in the first year." In addition, the Program offered periodic conferences during the school year, specifically for

principals and their on-site coordinators. Principals and site-coordinators alike endorsed these one-day meetings as a way to learn how other schools were implementing the Program and gather ideas that might be applied in their own schools.

Rounding out these opportunities, each Ameritech Project school also received three days of follow-up visits from the Program's professional development staff who offered "real world" suggestions that touched on everything from classroom setup to Socratic questioning. This coaching was an essential element in the Project's overall approach to professional development and contributed in striking ways to schools' success in using the Program. As one principal noted:

> The training is not really enough. You're training with other adults; it doesn't simulate the real classroom. When you get into an actual classroom setting, you're never really ready.

Recognizing the fragile link between off-site summer learning and classroom application, coaching offers in-school assistance with an eye to making teachers' transitions toward becoming practicing Junior Great Books discussion leaders as smooth as possible despite the hurdles that inevitably come up. This classroom-based technical assistance supplemented the more formal two-day training and provided whatever help teachers needed to begin and continue to use the Program.

In practice, as Janice Cody notes, "People leave training saying they can't wait to get started, but the first time it's not so easy." Even when teachers are enthusiastic, sometimes so much time goes by before teachers have the opportunity to apply what they learn that they lose confidence in their ability to carry out the Program. For example, one teacher admitted:

> I went through the two-day training when I was teaching kindergarten, but I never used it. When I moved to this grade, I didn't know how to make the transition.... I'm not really comfortable with the questioning techniques.... I like it. I really do. I'm sold. I'm just not sure how to proceed.

On-the-spot coaching of teachers is a complex task in itself. Considering that schools are using the Program from kindergarten to eighth grade and given wide variations in experience among teachers using the Program, coaches follow no pat formula in helping teachers bridge what they learn in the training institutes and how they apply that learning to classroom practice. Instead, like personal trainers, coaches shape their assistance to individual teachers' styles, skills, and confidence levels based, in part, on teachers' own strengths and goals for improving their skills as Junior Great Books discussion leaders.

"There is no ironclad way of becoming expert in leading inquiry-based discussions," notes coach Bill Siegel. So as Siegel and his colleagues observe teachers at work in their classrooms, they offer suggestions that are tailor-made to what will push each teacher forward to the next level of expertise. Not surprisingly, the range of recommendations matches the equally wide range of teachers' needs.

During their first follow-up visits to schools, coaches often teach "demonstration lessons" in teachers' own classrooms so that teachers' can begin to envision a role that may be totally new to them. As one principal from outside of Chicago reported:

> Mike [our coach] came out and modeled a lesson for us. It helped. It's hard to break away from the way you've been teaching for a long time. It's hard to trust something new. The demonstration helped us see what we were aiming for.

Demonstrations aid both novice and experienced teachers by freeing them up to reflect on their practice, by providing them opportunities to see how shared inquiry can work with students of any age, and by reassuring them that they will encounter ongoing challenges in their discussions. As Siegel explained:

> I usually do a demonstration during my first visit rather than an observation. There's a value for teachers who've been doing the Program for a while to see someone else do it. When you're new at this, it's calming to realize, "Oh, that's what *I'm* doing!" There's a lot

of confusion about what success looks like, and a demonstration gives teachers a chance to see that they *are* on the right track.

Demonstrations also help coaches build alliances with teachers and overcome the perception that they are "outsiders." As coach Janice Cody noted:

> It's important to offer demonstrations of discussions so teachers can see that I struggle with the same things they do, especially in the urban schools. It's improved my credibility with the teachers. It builds rapport.

Later, as teachers become familiar with the Program, coaching becomes more responsive to teachers' individual styles in their own classrooms. As Cody explained:

> I can't review the whole Program with every teacher. I have to analyze each situation, then figure out what one piece I can reinforce, and what one bit of advice I can give them that might help them try something new. If I can just plant a small suggestion, I can see progress.

In this vein, coaches may offer teachers direct suggestions for "next steps," often observing, then jotting down a page or two of notes for teachers to consider in their time alone, or raising comments in conversation after class. Suggestions range from the concrete and technical to the philosophical. For example:

- If teachers are unsure of how to engage every student in discussion, coaches may recommend splitting up a large class into small discussion groups, with one half of the class involved in inquiry-based discussions while the second half pursues related seat work. Or they may suggest taking some time at the beginning of the shared inquiry discussion to ask students to think about the discussion question and writing down their response as a reference point to see if they have changed their minds.

- In classrooms where teachers may unwittingly foreclose rich discussion by too readily acknowledging students' "right" answers, coaches may make specific recommendations for keeping the discussion open: "Remember to focus on asking questions and hold back your agreement. It's hard for students to come up with a different thought if the teacher has already praised one response," they may remind some teachers.

- For teachers who fall back into questioning that calls for recall of facts from the text or who find themselves getting stuck on vocabulary definitions, coaches may review the difference between questions that have factual answers and those that invite

deeper reasoning and offer specific examples of each so that teachers can see the difference; or they may suggest ways in which teachers can work on vocabulary development without interfering with the purpose of reading for meaning.

- When teachers' adherence to their own carefully-prepared questions threatens to straitjacket shared inquiry discussion, coaches may ask, "Have you ever considered using students' own questions for discussion?" or "Did you notice that your discussion lost steam when you moved to your second question while the kids still had ideas about the first one you asked?"

- When teachers have clearly mastered the mechanics of interpretive questioning, coaches may push them to "loosen up" as a way of interjecting more spontaneity into their classrooms. To this end, coaches may query teachers, "What are the questions *you* are most genuinely curious about in the story?" or "What would you think about trying to help students to talk more with each other rather than through you?"

Coaches serve as fresh eyes and ears in teachers' classrooms, catching details that teachers involved in the immediate pressures of executing their lessons for 25 or 30 youngsters may miss. Free from the immediate responsibilities of the classroom, coaches can attend to how students react to the discussion, assess students' "readiness" for pursuing more ambiguous questions, and reflect their observations back to teachers. Thus, Bill Siegel may suggest to one teacher, "Your students seem to follow the facts of the story just fine. I have the feeling they're ready to explore their ideas about the text." In the class next door, he may ask another teacher, "Did you notice how the kids reacted to that last question? Did you see their puzzled looks? When I see that, I know that's when the work's getting done. You hooked them!"

Teachers need a variety of strategies for pushing students to ponder issues raised in literature. While coaches individualize feedback to teachers, they often gear their comments toward expanding such strategies. As Siegel explained:

> I see my job as identifying moments where teachers can ask interpretive questions. It's tempting for teachers to ask factual questions because when the kids give the "right answers," it makes them feel they're successful, that it's working. It's hard to ask more ambiguous questions where the answers are not so obvious.

To push teachers in this direction, coaches may point out where students themselves are asking questions with more than one possible direction for discussion, or they may suggest that teachers use students' own questions to sustain motivation for continued thinking about a story, even after formal discussion has ended.

Although teachers unaccustomed to visitors might understandably feel intimidated in the presence of outside observers, comments of teachers involved in the Ameritech Project suggest that they welcome the Junior Great Books coaches as colleagues. Whether teachers are novices or experts, they value the personalized and practical support the coaches offer. As a beginning teacher reflected, "Watching [Janice] was a really worthwhile experience for me. It was what I needed to get me going." A mid-career teacher related, "I'm still learning. Bill is kind with his gentle criticism. I feel better after his visits." And a veteran teacher explained, "As an experienced teacher, you know what you're doing, but there are things you don't realize that you're *not* doing." Offered immediate suggestions, even the most skilled teachers gain from conversations about their work on Junior Great Books. Coaches help those who are already leading "good" discussions become even better through such strategies as co-leading shared inquiry discussions with teachers. In this way, they model ways of pushing students deeper into the text and provide teachers with a "safe" situation in which they can take risks.

Coaching is also the key to helping teachers sustain their effort and push beyond difficulties that might tempt them to abandon the Program. As one on-site coordinator noted, coaching made all the difference in her persisting with shared inquiry discussions despite early difficulties. She reported:

> It took half a year, maybe a little longer, before I felt like I got it.... Without follow-up, I might have been discouraged... If I'd been left isolated without visitations, I don't know if I would have continued... Any change is hard. You need a support.

Coaching also helps reduce teachers' sense of professional isolation. "It's nice to have an opportunity to download, to get an outside opinion on what you're doing. And the way this has worked, you feel connected to Junior Great Books," reported one teacher. And because coaches do not evaluate teachers, teachers can try out new approaches and learn from mistakes without fear of high stakes appraisals. As one administrator pointed out:

> It's really good for teachers to have someone from the outside giving them feedback. It's not so stressful. It's friendlier when it's not tied to a rating.

In fact, a number of educators expressed a wish for more, not less, observation and coaching from the Program staff throughout the school year. One teacher noted, "I wish our liaison were there every month," although some considered one visit each grading period or semester to be ideal. Timing of technical assistance may be as critical as the number of visits, however, and several teachers urged more coaching at the beginning of the year in particular. As one remarked:

> You need technical assistance right away. It's really important at the beginning when all the teachers are using [the Program] for the first time.

Although the coaching component of the Program was meant primarily for individual teachers, coaches have also been helpful to administrators who want to strengthen the Program school wide. As one principal reflected, "Janice's visits make us refocus. If it's in the top of your mind that Ms. Cody is coming, you make sure you're working through the stories with your students." Program consultants have also offered support tailored to the needs of the whole school. For example, in one school "on probation" because of low scores on state and district standardized tests, teachers must present samples of student work to external evaluators. In recognition of this requirement, their coach has offered a day-long workshop to help teachers

think through ways in which they can turn writing related to Junior Great Books into portfolios of essays, stories, poetry, or art that teachers can present to the district's visitation team during their school accountability review. "Before Janice suggested it, I'd never thought of keeping students' things [from activities related to Junior Great Books] for a portfolio," reported one teacher. Likewise, the principal in a second school saw coaching as helping to push her entire school toward more coherent practice: "If we didn't have this kind of follow-up, we wouldn't be at the stage we are today," she insisted.

Coaching is critical for the simple reason that the Junior Great Books Program is challenging both for teachers and their students, and for many teachers, the greatest challenge is leading a give-and-take discussion based on a close reading of the text. Because these conversations emphasize interpreting and discussing ideas, teachers and students must listen very carefully to one another. This, in turn, implies new relationships between teachers and students and among students. As one teacher reflected:

> What's really hard is getting discussion to remain around a focused area. You have to really listen to what the students are saying. You have to follow what each one says and make the connections.... I'm still working on it. It's a continuing challenge.

Another added:

> You have to teach students to listen to one another. They are fighting to answer the questions, sometimes without thinking. You have to say, "Please think before you answer the question." It's very important just to get them to do that.

A third agreed:

> You're doing more than getting a one-word answer. The kids are bouncing ideas off each other, saying 'I agree...' and 'I disagree....' You have to listen... The Program makes us be more professional.

Coaching that is non-evaluative, classroom-based, and individualized helps teachers feel their way toward greater competence as they practice these new skills. This support makes the

professional development offered through the Ameritech Project distinctly different from many other initiatives. As one on-site coordinator reported:

> Many times you're left hanging when you deal with outside programs. They tell us we're supposed to do certain things, but you have to know there's someone there to help who will follow up.

Only someone who has seen teachers interact with real students in real classrooms can provide such personalized and immediate follow-up. Yet teachers are not the only ones who gain from such observations. The Program's professional development staff readily point out that they too have learned from their collaboration with the schools and from opportunities to observe how teachers apply the Program in real classrooms. As Janice Cody related:

> As a trainer, you begin to feel anonymous. There's a sense of conducting the course in a void. Going back to the schools, you build relationships, see how people are using the program. We really know more now about the different kinds of discussions people are having. It's helped us as a Foundation to have our beliefs tested.

In recent years, calls for professional development in general have become commonplace, so much so that federal legislation now requires states to set aside Title 1 funds for professional development. This provision acknowledges that teachers isolated from support may be tempted to neglect core reforms in teaching, especially those they find most challenging or "different" from prior practice. Yet, teachers respond to some kinds of professional development more positively that to others. For example, a recent study of reforming schools found that teachers complain about professional development that is fragmented, theoretical, or "cheerleader stuff," and they reject training that does not provide them with tangible resources or concrete ideas to use in their classrooms (Smith, et al, 1998). The professional development strategy pursued by Junior Great Books in the Ameritech schools stands out for the practical, on-the-spot support it offers teachers who might easily abandon the Program in the context of teaching urban students.

7. The Junior Great Books Program can "prime the pump" for other changes in teaching, curriculum, and professional relationships.

Part of the original intent of the Ameritech Project was to help schools "extend, support, or supplement" the Program in other parts of the school curriculum. Enhancement grants to schools have provided an impetus for such curriculum enrichment activities in participating schools. In some schools, the Program has also stimulated changes to strengthen the professional life of teachers.

- Stimulating changes in teaching and learning

Sometimes schools use Junior Great Books to stimulate new assignments in simple but important ways. All schools, for example, noted that Junior Great Books had stimulated more student writing. As School 3's on-site coordinator reported, Junior Great Books built in more writing and encouraged assignments in other areas of the curriculum: "Children are writing all the time now," she reported.

Schools also used Junior Great Books to link students' reading and discussion activities to the arts. For example, at School 2, sixth grade teacher Ellen O'Neill, working twice weekly over eight weeks with photographer Mary Lee, connected William Saroyan's story "Gaston" to a study of photography through student discussion, with students focused not on the text of a story but on the "text" of related photographs. As students viewed the photographs, they delved into the questions of family loyalties and relationships that had emerged through their discussion of "Gaston." Responding to interpretive questions "How are the characters in the photograph related to one another?" and "How are they separated?," students pointed to evidence in the slides to support their views, just as they had searched Saroyan's prose for evidence to back up their opinions about the story. Then the discussion began to roll as students reacted to one another,

remarking "In a way, I agree with her..." and "They way I see it...." To ensure that students' study of the visual arts would build on their work on "Gaston," Lee had listened to a tape recording of the students' shared inquiry discussion on the story so she could build her discussion on questions students had probed earlier. As students offered their perspectives on what they were seeing, Lee pointed out to them, "It starts to make a little sense, doesn't it? The photograph is a story with a background and a foreground."

Making connections between stories students read and the arts is another way of deepening students' understanding of the Junior Great Books literature selections. School 1's students, for example, used Junior Great Books stories as a basis for the ceramic sculptures created at a local art gallery. Students ultimately acted as docents for their exhibit, which also involved preparing and revising written descriptions about their creative process, and using camera and video technology to document their experience. School 1 also engaged an artist-in-residence, a local actor and director, who supplements readings from Junior Great Books with drama projects. Working with one class at a time, actor James Ellison urges students to engage with the stories through multiple avenues. As he tells his students, "As an actor, you deal with five senses, plus your body, plus your voice, plus your emotions, your imagination." Thus, students "connect" with selected stories with their full personalities to develop stage presentations that are ultimately viewed by the whole school audience.

In its design, the Junior Great Books Program builds experiences in the expressive arts into every story as a way of promoting deeper understanding of the stories' themes. For example, kindergartners' own drawings of the "terrible Moma" from the African folk tale "Buya Marries the Tortoise" lead to interpretive questions like "What was it about Moma that made him scary?" Whether through acting out a poem from the read-aloud series, drawing illustrations for a

short story, or staging a fairy tale in dramatic form, the Program has encouraged schools to use multiple routes to connecting the arts with literature for deeper understanding of the stories' themes. As School 1's Principal Rivers explained:

> The idea of collaboration with arts-related organizations expands teachers into using all the learning styles. Some students learn best by repeating the story, some by drawing the story, some by acting out the story dramatically.

Steve Craig, Director of the Ameritech Project for Junior Great Books, summarized the value of Junior Great Books for bridging literacy and the arts:

> The arts activities take shared inquiry to another level. They're another vehicle to use to approach the text, an outstanding way to make arts more integral to the Junior Great Books. When you use the arts, the literature makes more sense. Kids see that you can make art from art, from literature. Kids can start to understand more about where art comes from.

The arts projects provide the most obvious illustrations of how Junior Great Books has helped expand teaching to encompass multiple routes to learning in the Ameritech schools. By involving students as artists and actors, such projects allow teachers to depart from traditional practice and pursue what Haberman (1991) defines as "good teaching." In this sense, Junior Great Books introduces many teachers and students to alternatives to the rituals of schooling that characterize a "pedagogy of poverty," and primes the pump for better teaching overall.

- Stimulating changes in professional relationships

In addition to creating more varied "entry points" students can take into learning, Junior Great Books has also "primed the pump" for more focused collegial discussions among teachers within schools. For example, because Junior Great Books was the only program that involved almost all teachers in School 1, teachers there used it to launch new opportunities for peer observation that both strengthened shared inquiry and stimulated teachers to discuss their practice among themselves. As School 1's principal explained:

> When we first thought up the idea [of peer observations], some were enthusiastic, some were anxious. We can do it with Junior Great Books because there's a focus that's not so threatening. The focus is not on if I'm doing it well, but how the program is working. At this point it's no big deal.

In this and other schools, Junior Great Books on-site coordinators schedule observations to match teachers' particular interests, and principals supply substitute teachers so that teachers can visit the classrooms of their peers to observe how colleagues approach particular lessons. When School 1's on-site coordinator surveyed teachers who had exchanged visits with their colleagues, all surveyed reported they had learned from the experience and believed they would benefit from additional observation days. One teacher reported she had picked up pointers on questioning and responding; another compared shared inquiry in the class she observed with the approach she used for exploring the same story in her own classroom; a third realized she "needed to be more comfortable with Junior Great Books myself so that the students will feel more comfortable." A fourth even brought a student with her to her observation and reported, "He was able to compare our two classes, and he saw how to behave appropriately during discussion."

From the perspective of administrators, peer observations of Junior Great Books will allow teachers to continue to develop their skills even after Ameritech support is no longer available. As principal Rivers pointed out:

> If [our coach] leaves, we'll use the resource staff, assistant principal, and substitutes to facilitate peer coaching. It's less threatening. They don't feel they're being evaluated by the principal. And hopefully, when you have peers observe one another, you can create the same quality program for each grade. Teachers develop their own quality control. The quality control is going to come out of the teachers staying afterward and talking.

Peer observations are especially useful in urban schools in which teacher turnover is high. As new teachers attend training and begin using the curriculum, they benefit from observing how more experienced teachers implement the Program in their classrooms. As Valentine explained:

> Now that we have teachers doing this more than one year, we know we are getting better. New teachers can see the Program in practice, and we can say to our first-year teachers, "Keep doing it. It will get better."

Principal Rivers added that just as the Program strengthened the school's instructional focus, peer observations have improved classroom practice. She reflected:

> Junior Great Books is addressing a very large issue of become a more professional school. We're saying, "Let's look in each other's classroom, let's partner with each other, let's find an external partner..." and this in turn is having an impact on Junior Great Books and improving the Program.

Junior Great Books staff readily acknowledge that the ways in which schools are extending the Program into other aspects of school life has contributed to their own professional practice. As coach Bill Siegel applauded, "Teachers are taking [the Program] far beyond the training. We are learning a lot from them."

8. As teachers implement Junior Great Books school wide, they adapt the Program's materials and pedagogy to conditions within their schools, rather than adopt them unchanged.

Junior Great Books is not meant to be a teacher-proof curriculum, and schools do not implement it as such. While teachers in the Chicago schools visited have embraced Junior Great Books, they have also altered the Program to accommodate the realities of life in their own schools and classrooms. "I'm learning more and more about what it takes to make a program your own," reported coach Bill Siegel. So as schools "make the Program their own," Junior Great Books takes on different nuances in different schools as different teachers adapt the Program according to other demands on their time and attention.

Many of the changes teachers make in the Program reflect simple shifts in emphasis that teachers see as necessary to keep all students involved and engaged. In the kindergarten classes, for example, teachers may put less emphasis on interpretive questioning than the Program intends

but, as the Program's coaches noted, "They are still leading a great read-aloud program." Teachers in the youngest grades may ask more factual questions than recommended to help students learn to listen and follow the story from beginning to end. Teachers in the later grades may adapt the stories to lessons in study skills, using the literature to teach students skills in "story mapping."

Program adaptations sometimes reflect the dilemmas teachers face in their day to day lives, the existing culture and goals of the schools and their classrooms, and teachers beliefs about learning. For example, in a number of classrooms observed, teachers use materials that are below the recommended grade level, a decision that may reflect teachers' assessment of how well materials match their students' skills, or their own fears about pushing their students in new ways. "We had to go one level down," explained the on-site coordinator at one school. "Some of the vocabulary is so difficult, and teachers have to find their own comfort zone." she added. In this context, some teachers who worry that Junior Great Books stories contain words that are unfamiliar to students add lessons specific to vocabulary development or preview the story for students. As one teacher detailed, "Sometimes I will go through the story first and define some of the vocabulary words for the children. Or I might tell them what's going to go on in the story."

In practice, teachers also adapt the Program to mesh with the numerous demands on their time. Even when the Program is well integrated with other reading methodologies, teachers still feel pressed to "fit" it into school and classroom schedules, varying the amount of time they devote to the Program accordingly. In one school where the principal described the Program as being in use every day, not all teachers actually found the time to meet this expectation. As one admitted, "I do it once or twice a week at most -- when I can fit it in." Sometimes the Program seems to play second fiddle to more traditional routines of schooling. For example, one

Cleveland principal reported, "Competition for time and resources is a problem. We're bombarded with proficiency testing," while a Chicago teacher lamented:

> Adding [Junior Great Books] to the basal, it can seem overwhelming. It's hard to fit it in. You *want* to fit it in, so you make time. There's not enough time in the day to cover everything.

Educators noted that time pressures could also result in their short-circuiting the full Program as they hurried through shared inquiry discussions or scaled back on some of the activities recommended for engaging students with the literature. As one principal explained:

> Time is a big factor. We have to set aside enough time to think and deliberate in Junior Great Books. But sometimes we have to go a little too fast. There are mandates on our time, and we have to do other things.

In similar fashion, one of the Chicago on-site coordinators related, "The time element is a problem. We have so much to do. Sometimes we can only do the three-session approach." Another on-site coordinator added that her teachers were not pursuing as many of the Junior Great Books writing assignments as they would like, in part because of competing demands on learning time. As she explained, "We're doing so much other writing; it's not always feasible to do the Junior Great Books writing too." And a coach, admiring how well several schools integrate the arts with the Junior Great Books readings, reported, "Teachers want more of this kind of thing to happen, but they don't have the time to make it happen."

Teachers may also adapt the Program to different assumptions that teachers hold for what different students need or can do. For instance, one teacher working in a separate classroom of "gifted" students in a school outside of Chicago reported that a second reading was "not necessary" for his students; and a seventh grade teacher from another school reported that while all her students generated detailed questions about the stories, "I have just my higher level students participate in discussion."

In some districts, pressures of external testing affect how teachers decide which students will have access to the full curriculum. One Cleveland principal explained that because teachers feel under the gun to ensure that their students pass state proficiency tests, some concentrate on fixing students' "deficiencies" as identified in the school's profile, leaving little time for activities that do not directly address basic skills. Thus, only teachers whose students have "met standards" feel at liberty to use Junior Great Books. She reported:

> In our school, we have many kids we're servicing. Junior Great Books is part of the gifted and talented curriculum. We have regular ed teachers who would like to associate themselves with the Program, but the proficiency test dictates every element in the school. Regular teachers want to deal with the deficiencies. They want to concentrate on those things.

Sometimes normal school routines also undermine the goal of involving all students in the Program. For example, in some schools, special education teachers pull students with disabilities out of their grade-level class for small group or individualized instruction. In such cases, these students may miss all or part of the first or second reading of a story, the directed notes activity, or the shared inquiry discussion.

Inevitably, teachers make compromises with recommended practices as they execute the Program in various schools and classrooms. Different expectations for different students, scheduling routines, and the ways in which teachers balance the anticipated process of the Program against other demands that must be met all influence how teachers actually implement the Program in their schools. In a variety of ways, then, teachers adapt Junior Great Books to the conditions of their schools and their perceptions of their students. "You have to customize it to the children," says one teacher. "You have to think, 'Does it work?' If it doesn't work, I'm in trouble."

9 Educators using Junior Great Books school wide encounter difficult challenges as they work to fit the Program into exiting school cultures.

The adaptations teachers make in the Junior Great Books Program reflect challenges that are greater than simply those of learning about a new curriculum, practicing new skills, and fitting the Program into the schedule. Challenges also arise as educators embrace Junior Great Books as one means for realizing their visions for a more powerful learning culture. At School 1, for example, Dr. Rivers explained, "We're looking at changing the culture of the school to a higher quality school." Likewise, at School 3, Dr. Robinson noted, "We are trying to create a culture of reading in the school."

Junior Great Books can work to shift a school toward a stronger learning culture. At the same time, because school cultures are notoriously resistant to change, the culture of a school inevitably influences the Program. Beliefs and assumptions about learning, traditional expectations about teachers' roles, and routines that define "the way we do things around here" all shape the Program's implementation in different schools. Tensions between old and new norms present new challenges to educators working to make Junior Great Books "stick" in their schools.

- The challenge of low expectations for student learning

School leaders in the schools using Junior Great Books clearly see the Program as advancing their agenda for improved student learning. They hold high expectations for their students, and as one said clearly, "We believe that our students can function at national norms." Yet, some educators using Junior Great Books also raised concerns that teachers' actions did not always match these expectations. For example, one newly appointed principal reported her frustration on finding that the Program was "in non-use now because of low expectations" of the teachers. She reported further that many teachers complained that they could not "do the

Program" because, as they contended, "These children can't read." Others reported that some teachers did not allow children to take books home because of the perception that books would be lost.

Junior Great Books can run aground in such circumstances. As one principal acknowledged, "If you have a teacher who's saying, 'These children can't read,' that's a red flag. You've got a problem." Such attitudes work against teachers' moving toward new practice. As one teacher reported, "What you hear is that teachers say, 'I tried it; it doesn't work with my kids.' Then the temptation is to go back and teach in the same old way."

Yet when teachers do persist in using the materials and methods of Junior Great Books, some begin to see different students respond in unexpected ways. These visible changes can alter expectations and attitudes. For example, in the Chicago schools visited, teachers reported that Junior Great Books was a catalyst for shifting their beliefs about what their students could learn and do. Some teachers began using the Program with the simple expectation that students would learn to sit quietly or develop listening skills, but as students reacted with enthusiasm to the stories and discussion, and learned to answer interpretive questions with their own opinions supported with evidence from the text, they expanded their notions of students' capacities for learning. As one teacher noted:

> I was really surprised that it would work this well with this socio-economic area. It went over! I was amazed! I didn't think it would come across as good as it did. I thought it would be much more difficult. My friends from Hyde Park told me it wouldn't work..... I think it's working though.... I have been surprised by students' answers. I've had EMH children who give interesting, intuitive, thoughtful answers.

Another teacher also credited Junior Great Books with shaking up her beliefs about how much her students could accomplish:

> [The Program] has given me a chance to see students in a different light. I've been impressed with some of the students. They thought up a lot of things I didn't think of. I could see a positive effect on some students who already had a lot of potential, especially with shared inquiry where they could form their own opinion.

A second grade teacher from Detroit likewise reported on how her views of students changed over time as they participated in shared inquiry. She recollected:

> [At first] some of my best readers would not participate intelligently. And some of my second graders were so locked in and couldn't seem to bring themselves to speak. Now they talk. They've learned that nothing is stupid.

Likewise, an Indianapolis teacher said:

> I was amazed with the answers of the lower-ability students. It made me ask what we are missing. After I did Junior Great Books, I had a little round-robin group reading a chapter book, and I heard these kids say, "I agree..." and "I disagree..."

In turn, as teachers see their students execute unexpected skills, some have also started to push students even further and challenge students on a more regular basis. As a Chicago teacher reported, "I'm starting to ask them to write their own interpretive questions." The on-site coordinator in another school added, "It's getting better.... I've been putting kids together in groups and they are now *way* into discussion. They're saying, "I have a question," I have to say, 'Hold it!'"

School leaders are constantly on the lookout for programs that will push teachers' toward asking more of their students. As one principal reported:

> I would like to be able to give the teachers the confidence that they can work with the children who they perceive have handicaps that make them different.

Junior Great Books can help modify the low expectations that often justify teachers' lack of confidence in working with struggling students. When teachers persist with the Program, many find that their students surprise them, including those students who might not "shine" in traditional settings. The challenge for the Program is to work with schools long enough to develop "home

grown" examples of success that can help reverse the tendency toward low expectations and begin a cycle of heightened expectations, so that as new teaching produces visible learning gains, those gains, in turn, encourage more teachers to make further commitments to the Program.

- The challenge of risking loss of control

As yet, not all teachers are entirely comfortable with the Junior Great Books Program, in part because the immediate perceived costs still seem to outweigh anticipated benefits. For some teachers, one of these costs is the risk of losing control over their students. As one of the Program's coaches noted:

> There's a tension. [Teachers] want to keep control, keep things from getting out of hand. It's hard to know what the appropriate interaction is. Teachers worry that it's hard to be a disciplinarian and at the same time be a curious, active discussion leader.

Agreeing with this assessment, one principal noted that simply reconfiguring students' desks from rows into a "U" for shared inquiry threatened some 25-year veteran teachers with the prospect of losing control of their students.

Recognizing that Junior Great Books calls for a different kind of teaching and learning from what they are used to, many teachers worry that they will not be able to manage a classroom of students unaccustomed to the give-and-take of conversation directed only minimally by the teacher. As one teacher recalled, "At first my colleagues found the discussions were falling apart. The kids fell into fighting instead of discussion." Still another noted, "It's difficult, still difficult, to get the kids to listen to one another, not because of the books, but because they want attention. They all want to talk." A third summed up the dilemma of many teachers: "[Junior Great Books] is just so much the opposite of what we do. We say so much, 'Don't talk.' Now we say, 'Do talk!'"

Junior Great Books Program staff understand this tension well. As one staff member noted:

> Sometimes kids who don't have a strong internalized sense of self-discipline get excited when they have the chance to respond freely to discussion questions. Then they risk getting out of control. Teachers aren't quite sure that they can motivate kids to get involved in discussions and stay well-behaved at the same time.

A second challenge for teachers leading shared inquiry discussion about Junior Great Books, then, is to abandon traditional ways of being "in charge" in favor of teaching students self-control and responsibility, a shift that may require teachers to adopt a new role of teaching discussion skills directly to students. As one on-site coordinator explained:

> Junior Great Books is different. There are different rules. In most of our classes, kids raise their hands to ask questions or when they want to say something. But when I use Junior Great books, I want them to learn you can have politeness in conversations, and we don't have to raise our hands for that.

Without direct instruction in conversational skills, students may indeed "take over" the class. However, as one teacher who explicitly instructs students to listen and wait their turn in discussions, pronounced, "With shared inquiry, it can look like you're not in control, but you are."

- The challenge of teaching for understanding, not just skills

Teachers implementing Junior Great Books may also experience dilemmas arising from conflicting norms and assumptions related to how students learn. Many educators work from a belief that if they focus students on mastering of "pieces" of subject areas - facts from a discipline, parts of speech, or vocabulary definitions, for example - students will be able to assemble those pieces into a broader knowledge base. Junior Great Books does not work from this assumption; instead it assumes students need opportunities to think about important questions regardless of their mastery of "basic skills."

The thrust of the Junior Great Books Program toward teaching for meaning and understanding through discussion of literature often puts teachers in the position of figuring out how to balance "new" goals for teaching thinking skills with traditional learning objectives. As

one Chicago teacher asserted, "We're trying to make their minds work. We're trying to work toward the higher order thinking skills." At the same time, this teacher worried, "They don't understand some of the vocabulary. 'Lodge' or 'kettle' might be new to them." For many teachers, then, the challenge of Junior Great Books is to find the "right" balance between communicating facts, teaching skills, and promoting understanding.

Using Junior Great Books, teachers work in different ways to teach for understanding and monitor students' knowledge of facts. Some use the stories as both a springboard for discussion and a way to help students become familiar with new vocabulary, facts, and concepts that may be outside their lived experience. Thus, teachers may slow discussion to check that students understand a concept like Chanukah, review the names of the earth's continents, or call on students to identify the location of a specific country on the globe. Others will move ahead through the reading of the story, without stopping to check that students can provide three synonyms for words like "nonplused" or "astonishing." In support of this approach, one administrator remarked, "A lot of people think [the language in] Junior Great Books is too hard. But what do the students have to know every vocabulary word for?"

Teachers' search for the right balance often emerges as teachers struggle with formulating questions for discussion, and as teachers draft their interpretive questions, they may slip into a tendency to pursue factual questions at the expense of exploring meaning. As one principal from outside Chicago observed:

> In some cases, I'm concerned about the quality of the questions. [Teachers] aren't asking [students] so many higher order or interpretive questions. A lot of the questions they ask call for literal answers.

On the other hand, some factual questions can have value, as coach Bill Siegel explained:

> Some teachers may focus less on interpretation in a read-aloud, but that you can still see students responding enthusiastically to literature. At the K-2 level, it's about being engaged. [Teachers] develop their own style. Sometimes [teachers] ask a lot of factual questions, but that's how [they] keep them all involved.

In short, teachers using Junior Great Books often try to "do it all," even as they themselves learn new skills. As one first grade teacher summarized the challenge of simultaneously teaching discrete vocabulary, nurturing listening and social skills, and developing thinking skills:

> It's very different from what we usually do in first grade. It's more difficult than I thought. It's like a foreign country. If they understand the words and they're listening, that's good. Listening helps them focus their attention span. And we want them to ask questions. It gets them thinking.

Yet, the pull teachers feel toward using the Program to teach "pieces" of learning by monitoring students' grasp of discrete facts or skills remains strong. For one thing, seeking and getting correct answers to factual questions provides teachers with a sense of reassurance that students are learning. Moreover, much standardized testing continues to equate reading comprehension with the ability to answer "Who....?," "When....?," "What...?" questions after reading several paragraphs of text. As one of the Program's coaches observed:

> Teachers feel they have to work with vocabulary, since that's what they think will help their kids on the tests. It's hard to get away from that. And when kids can answer factual questions, it gives teachers confidence.

Recent research on effective reading strategies in urban elementary schools clearly points to the need for curriculum that fosters understanding and helps students develop their own sense of the meaning of literature (Knapp and Turnbull, 1990). But schools' own cultural norms combined with the defining pressures of many standardized tests remain a force to be reckoned with in implementing such a curriculum. Given these conditions, although Junior Great Books

represents a vehicle for teaching and learning for understanding and thoughtfulness, many teachers in the Ameritech schools still find themselves driving that vehicle over rough terrain.

- The challenge of teaching without "right answers"

Related to the challenge of teaching for understanding is the challenge of teaching without "right answers." When the learning of discrete facts or skills is the focus of teaching, teachers by extension must use questions that seek the "right answers" from students. However, as they use the Junior Great Books Program, teachers may find that the process of interpretive questioning and shared inquiry yields neither "right" or "quick" answers to teachers' questions.

"The discussion leader comes to the shared inquiry discussion in a posture of doubt," notes Junior Great Books's Training Instructor Bob Vitas. Yet this Program ideal puts Junior Great Books at odds with normal presumptions that teachers must "know the answers" as a condition of their role. Caught in this tension between the traditional teacher role and the role of discussion leader, many teachers find that putting aside the notion of "correct answers" in order to open themselves and their students to multiple perspectives on a question or theme is a real challenge. Teachers who put themselves in a "posture of doubt" also entertain the possibility that students' unexpected answers may contain interesting ideas worthy of probing, that discussion of a story may yield conflicting ideas, or that a story may contain more than one "lesson" or "moral."

This shift in mind-set does not necessarily come easy. As one coach mused:

> It's hard for teachers to understand that it's not about getting kids to see what *you* want them to see. It's not about what you want to hear. It's about getting them to engage with the literature to find meaning in the story.

However, teachers who are able to abandon the notion that either they or their students must have all the "correct" answers appreciate how the Program can put them in the position of

being learners themselves. As one teacher reported, "I really like the Program's higher order questions. They're not minor questions. It makes *me* think."

Founded on the premise that all students can learn to develop critical thinking skills through shared inquiry about rich literature, Junior Great Books challenges and can begin to change low expectations for students in urban schools. However, the Program can not change outmoded beliefs about teaching and learning overnight, so as teachers put the Program into practice, they make compromises that accommodate the Program to the culture of their schools. Educators using the Program thus face the challenge of realizing core aspects of Junior Great Books in the face of school cultures that may run counter to the Program's own suppositions and goals.

10. In a policy context that emphasizes test-based accountability, educators seek evidence that Junior Great Books will result in test score gains while also asserting the Program's value for meeting broader learning goals.

In many urban districts, state and local test-based accountability systems have put teachers under intense pressure to improve students' academic performance. In this context, educators in schools often feel they must justify their use of Junior Great Books in terms of test scores gains. At the same time, educators assert that the Program meets important goals of learning that are not easily assessed. Given conflicting demands of schooling, they wonder how to provide accurate reports about student performance and communicate the value of Junior Great Books to their constituents.

Teachers operating under increasing scrutiny understandably put a high premium on strategies that will help them improve students' test scores. As one Indianapolis educator reported, "If teachers don't see a direct relationship between the program and testing, they are

less likely to jump in." In addition, as districts and states target "low-performing" schools for intervention, educators seek to align curriculum with content that will appear on standardized tests. As one Cleveland administrator explained:

> Each school receives a profile that breaks deficiencies down by test item. The state can then pretend to identify weaknesses. Because of this, teachers are reluctant to take on any program this is not tested in the accountability system.

In theory, Junior Great Books's emphasis on critical thinking should result in test score improvements, especially on more recently developed performance-based tests. As Program coach Bill Siegel pointed out:

> Open-ended questions are the heart of Junior Great Books. IGAP is about more open-ended testing. The higher-order thinking in Junior Great Books should transfer to problem-solving.

And in fact, a number of educators asserted that Junior Great Books has made a difference to their schools' test scores. For example, because Junior Great Books was the only new program common to all grades in her school, a Chicago principal attributed test score gains to the Program. She noted:

> We've seen the proof. IGAP scores have gone up. Once teacher saw that standardized test scores had gone up, special ed teachers wanted to be trained in grades 1-6.

Likewise another Chicago principal related, "We did find that those who were working with [Junior Great Books] saw increases in IGAP. It's the proving it to the teachers that's hard."

Educators noted that Junior Great Books seemed to boost students' overall attitude toward the testing situation itself. For example, in Chicago, where students take state IGAP tests as well as the nationally normed Iowa Test of Basic Skills, several educators were convinced that the Program had at the very least prepared their students for reading the longer reading passages required by IGAP. As School 1's Sally Terry pointed out, "Students are not accustomed to

reading a long passage; the basals don't cover that." Likewise, the school's principal, Dr. Rivers, pointed out, "I see that Junior Great Books has a direct impact on test scores. Children have to read for 40 minutes." At School 3, Dr. Robinson further elaborated on the connection between score gains and time spent on the longer stories in the Junior Great Books series:

> We were looking at our Language Arts program, and we knew we had to get the scores up, get kids higher order thinking skills, and we knew the kids looked at IGAP reading passages as too long. We decided to look at Junior Great Books. After we started using it, we didn't hear one complaint that the test was too long.

Even when educators are convinced that Junior Great Books contributes to test score improvements, many are wary of making the case for the Program based solely on those results. As Rivers noted, "The test scores are a natural fallout from a good program. But I want people to see that it's not the test scores that are important, it's the learning." In this vein, educators asserted that they value Junior Great Books because of its impact on aspects of learning not so easily measured by large-scale standardized tests, especially on critical thinking. For example, as School 1's Rivers argued:

> We want to move our students from recall to comprehension, to use higher order thinking.... It's a very different approach from saying, 'What color dress was she wearing?" to asking, 'Why do you think she decided to wear a red dress?' Junior Great Books helps us do that.

Others noted that the Program helped students develop other skills and dispositions that go beyond what test scores along can measure. As one Chicago principal explained, "Our kids are vocal. They like to argue. Junior Great Books helps them focus their arguments." Another Chicago principal reported, "[Our faculty] agreed kids needed more critical thinking skills. We saw it as a way to get children more adjusted to life problems. Period." A third reported, "Our teachers say students are more thoughtful about their answers."

In addition, educators in the Ameritech schools maintained that the Program had positive effects on students' motivation to read good literature, on stimulating more careful reading of text, and on overall enjoyment of reading. As Detroit principal related:

> Teachers are now using the series to enhance children's enjoyment of literature. We want to develop critical thinking skills, expose children to good literature, not really for testing

Convinced that Junior Great Books meets important learning goals, educators are often unsure of how to document the outcomes they value, and this leaves some of the Ameritech principals with only limited evidence to use as they advocate for the Program with their own faculty or district supervisors. As a result, schools sometimes find themselves vulnerable to district efforts that run counter to the goals of the Program. For example, one Indianapolis teacher reported that all faculty in her school had been trained to use Junior Great Books, but, she said, "Then the school got a new basal provided by the district, and doing Junior Great Books became incidental." In one Chicago school on probation because of low test scores, educators negotiating a school improvement plan with a team of educators overseeing school progress found they had to defend their commitment to Junior Great Books against pressures from the monitoring team to select a reading program that more closely matched the ITBS.

Educators do not necessarily agree that they need to assess student achievement in relation to Junior Great Books. On one hand, some view their work with the Program as a welcome relief from their school's focus on testing. As one teacher pointed out:

> Our kids see [Junior Great Books] as a breather. We're not going to be tested on this. This is our time to play.

Others believe that grading communicates to students that the work they do in Junior Great Books is as important as their work in other areas. As one Indianapolis teacher asserted, "Kids read us. They read how valuable the program is depending on how we assess it."

Among educators who seek appropriate ways of reporting student progress, including those who struggle with the "weight" to give participation in Junior Great Books when they assign students a grade for reading or language arts, not all were sure about the standards against which to measure student performance. Some are comfortable grading written work, but as one Indianapolis principal reported, "Assessment is a problem. Some of our teachers are not sure how to assess when there are no right or wrong answers." Others decide to grade for participation in shared inquiry, and some have found rubrics to guide them in assessing students in that area. For example, an Indianapolis site coordinator reported , "I have a rubric and assign points. It's an alternative classroom assessment." Another from Detroit explained:

> One of my concerns was how do we justify a grade. I got some rubrics in the mail... Having a rubric really helps. I introduce it [to students] right at the beginning. We look at initiating discussion, using evidence....

Regardless of the tools used for assessment, perhaps only students themselves can communicate the extent to which the Program has fostered some of the least assessable but most valuable features of learning, including an enthusiasm for learning. For example, asked how the Program helped them learn, one noted, "It's like a real hard challenge." Students also appreciated the opportunity to present thoughtful answers to questions, rather than quick, single-word answers. Said one, "I like when I *don't* get called on because it gives me time to think about the question, and I might want to add something to what someone else has said."

Students' comments also suggested the value students place on opportunities to form opinions through shared inquiry, to have those opinions taken seriously, and to engage in open discourse about issues of importance. Said one, "I like that instead of just reading, we can discuss, we can have our own feelings." Another added:

> You get to hear all the other ideas. At first, I might have one idea, but then a person may have a better idea, and you change your mind.

Nor do students see discussions as a purely academic exercise without application outside of school. As one student put it, "It's getting us ready for the world. It teaches us that not everyone has the same opinion."

As expectations of the public and the current "standards movement" put increasing pressure on all schools to boost student performance, urban schools in particular must justify their practice in terms of outcomes as measured by test score gains. Many of the educators from Ameritech schools believe that Junior Great Books can make a substantial contribution to reading improvements, but many also struggle to document this connection. At the same time, the danger of focusing only on quantifiable results is that schools may miss the opportunity to document the ways in which Junior Great Books expands opportunity to learn, moves toward "good teaching," or enhances students' dispositions for further learning. Urban educators could benefit from assistance in reporting changes in both "outcomes" and classroom practice that accompany their school wide use of Junior Great Books.

Ongoing dilemmas for Junior Great Books in urban schools

The "lessons learned" from implementing the Junior Great Books Program school wide in Ameritech schools reflect enormous accomplishments. The Project has clearly contributed in significant ways to expanding opportunities for more students in more urban schools to read and discuss literature for meaning. It has also contributed significantly to focusing instruction across all grades in participating schools and to strengthening teachers' skills as they implement this challenging curriculum. Many point to evidence that it has also contributed to improvements in students' reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, and enthusiasm for learning.

The Project's "lessons learned" raise a number of dilemmas related to how the Program negotiates conditions within schools and responds to outside factors affecting schools from the surrounding policy environment. These dilemmas are ongoing, unlikely to disappear as the Program introduces other urban schools to Junior Great Books. The ways in which the Program addresses these dilemmas may help the poorest of urban schools implement Junior Great Books effectively school wide.

- Issues within schools

As this report notes, existing conditions within schools have a powerful impact on school wide implementation of Junior Great Books. These conditions include competing demands on teachers' time, established school norms and routines, teachers' beliefs about students and learning, and high teacher turnover. These conditions affect teachers' commitment to the Program and consistency of implementation across all classrooms in the schools.

In this context, the leadership of principal is critical to for developing teacher support for the kinds of changes in curriculum and instruction required by Junior Great Books. In some of the Ameritech schools, principals determined that faculty participation in the Program would be voluntary. In the best of circumstances, as at School 1, the enthusiasm of the first wave of teacher participants caught the attention of others, and over several years, most embraced the Program. However, this did not always happen, and principals adopting this strategy risked falling short of the goal of whole-school involvement. In other schools, principals took the initiative for introducing Junior Great Books to their entire faculty, and made teachers aware of their expectation that all would participate. In these cases, principals risked losing the genuine teacher "buy in" so critical to fuel change in classroom practice. At the same time, some felt that equity concerns pushed them to take this risk. As one Chicago principal stated:

> If you see scores go up, and if we have a program that's beginning to work, you can't just leave it up to people who want to do it. The volunteering has left some kids out of some very valuable programs.

Depending on existing conditions in different schools, principals will make different judgments on how to develop consensus for the Program. With no clear "right" strategy, the Program may not be able to direct principals toward one course over another. However, the Program could raise this dilemma in the course of professional development, perhaps in seminars specifically for principals and on-site coordinators that would address leadership strategies and other in-school "management" issues associated with school wide use of Junior Great Books. Such seminars or on-site consultations might link principals who can relate their personal "success stories" in implementing the Program school wide in urban schools to those new to the Program.

Because the need for adequate time also emerged as an implementation issue in Ameritech schools, the Program might also consider addressing this concern in leadership seminars designed especially for principals and on-site coordinators. In this way, principals and teacher leaders would have the opportunity to compare alternative strategies for implementing Junior Great Books in the real world of competing demands on teaching time. For example, as Cody explained:

> Junior Great Books offers people a true literary experience, so that students and teachers experience literature as literature. You can have a good language arts balance if you plan it right.... You could do Junior Great Books for eight weeks in the fall, then take a break. Then do it from mid-January to mid-March.... You would still have a real program. You could do that and still prepare kids for testing or do other things.

In fact, one of the Chicago Ameritech schools, a Paddies school, has adopted such a schedule to accommodate Junior Great Books. As the principal outlined, "In terms of finding the time, we say [teachers] have to block out a certain amount of time a week. So, first graders do [Junior Great Books] four days a week for three months.... three months on, one month off." As

the Program identifies more schools that have programmed their time to implement the curriculum well, principals in such schools might become partners or mentors for new principals or others struggling with how to make time for Junior Great Books in relation to the school calendar.

Junior Great Books staff may also want to consider integrating other concerns into professional development offerings for teachers engaged in school wide implementation. These concerns might include aspects of school culture that inhibit teachers from utilizing the Program fully, the pull toward teaching "pieces" of knowledge at some expense to "the whole," and approaches to the direct teaching students in discussion skills. To some extent, schools may deal with some of these issues over time as more and more teachers observe for themselves students' responses to the literature and opportunities for discussion. However, schools may be able to make stronger progress more quickly in this area if these concerns are raised explicitly during the summer institutes or in leadership seminars.

Developing "buy in," making scheduling for in-depth learning, and addressing school norms are three in-school challenges common to many urban schools as they implement new curriculum to their faculty. Whenever urban schools implement Junior Great Books school wide, these issues are likely to surface. To the extent that the Program can openly prepare schools to face these questions, even in the absence of precise answers, the Program will increase the chances that school wide implementation will succeed.

- Out-of-school pressures

A variety of pressures from outside schools affected school wide implementation of Junior Great Books. These included requirements of state testing programs and pressures to "show progress" as measured by test scores. These pressures affect all schools, but are often stronger in

urban schools, pushing schools to "teach to the test" and cover "the basics" before taking time for critical thinking programs like Junior Great Books.

Such realities put schools in the position of seeking curricula that "aligns" to the test, and to this end, some schools may turn toward scripted reading curricula like Direct Instruction (see, for example, Troy, 1998). Other schools may limit their reading to selections from lists recommended by their state department of education. For example, New York State's new English curriculum guidelines include a set of "very, very strong suggestions" for reading at different grade levels (Karlin, 1998). Among the works of recommended fiction, nonfiction, folklore, and drama, the only selections common to the lists for grades K-8 and the Program's series are "The Ugly Ducking" and "Winnie the Pooh." With students required to read 25 books a year from the lists, teachers may be hard pressed to justify spending time on Junior Great Books as well, no matter how captivating the Program's selections are to students or how well those selections foster rich discussion.

These developments suggest that the Junior Great Books Program may need to help schools negotiate these pressures so that teachers can use Junior Great Books in ways that are compatible with testing and accountability requirements. For example, while many tests still focuses on multiple-choice items, some now include more open-ended questions that require written responses. If the Program can develop writing activities that complement these requirements, for example, in the areas of expository and persuasive writing, teachers may find it easier to understand the Program's benefits in terms of state tests.

Because educators are increasingly under pressure to improve test scores, schools will be able to make a stronger case for Junior Great Books to the extent that they can show how the Program contributes to test score gains. But because the life of schools is so complex, direct

correlation between a single program and learning outcomes are extremely difficult to document. Moreover, generic evaluations of the Program are of some, but limited, use to schools that often struggle with conditions unique to their student population. For this reason, the Program may find that helping schools themselves document learning progress that is not measured by standardized tests yields more compelling evidence for the Program in individual schools. Student surveys or drawings describing their perceptions of Junior Great Books discussions could be especially effective in gathering evidence for the ways in which the Program is shifting schools away from the "pedagogy of poverty" and toward good teaching. These can also be powerful tools for helping teachers reflect on their own practice (Tovey, 1996).

- Issues for the Program

The work of Junior Great Books with the Ameritech schools has already gone through extensive rethinking and refining in response to the in-school and out-of-school pressures on the Program. As the Program extends its work with urban schools, this review is likely to be ongoing. School wide implementation of Junior Great Books in high-poverty schools raises challenges that are distinctly different from those the Program has encountered in suburban schools. The Program is not alone in addressing these challenges. In fact, urban schools that implement curriculum that focuses on understanding in any of the core subject areas encounter similar problems.

Given the in-school and out-of-school factors affecting efforts to implement Junior Great Books school wide in high poverty schools, the Program is left to wrestle with a range of ongoing questions. Some of these questions weave together philosophical and programmatic concerns. For example, given the variety of ways in which schools adapt Junior Great Books to their own circumstances, Program staff must constantly assess which of the Program's features are so

essential to its identity that they can not be compromised without diluting the purpose of the Program.

One such question has to do with how the Program assesses the importance of keeping use of literature selections within the targeted age-grade range. In the Ameritech schools, some teachers have found the selections to be "above grade level" or "too hard" for their students. As a result, some third graders may be reading and discussing "Anansi's Fishing Expedition" from Series 2, while second graders may be reading and discussing Isaac Bashevis Singer's "Zlateh the Goat" from the most advanced of the read-aloud selections meant for first-graders. In some classrooms, the difference between the recommended and actual grade level use may expand to two or three grades. Special education teachers may also take Junior Grade Books selections from a series below the age-matched grade level of their students.

Is this kind of re-matching necessary? To what extent does this practice reflect teachers' views that students unfamiliar with *parts* of a story can not engage with the story as a whole? Are the benefits of re-matching greater than the costs, the gains greater than the losses? On one hand, as one Program staff member pointed out:

> The critical thing is that teachers are asking interpretive questions. The texts are rich enough that anyone at any age can struggle with those kinds of questions. You can lead [Tolstoy's story] "Two Brothers" with adults and fifth graders.... The stories are all challenging.

Moreover, in practice, this dilemmas may resolve itself over time, and as schools stabilize to the point where all teachers are using the Program more frequently, and as teachers become more familiar with the materials and gain confidence that their students can "handle" the readings, some may become willing to push for a pace that keeps up with students' grade level. As one

teacher reported, "The class I had the second year was really with the Program.... We covered the material much better, faster."

However, in schools where staff turnover may delay establishing such stability, or where teachers' beliefs stand in the way of accelerating the Program toward grade-level use, Program staff may need to address this concern openly with school leaders. In turn, principals and on-site coordinators may need to raise this issue at staff meetings or in the context of professional development so that the Program can contribute to sustaining a "press for achievement" that can result in reading gains and ensure that all students have access to rich literature.

Other questions are also related to Program implementation. Of these, perhaps the most pressing have to do with how to structure professional development to meet strengthen teaching in individual classrooms and to foster the strongest possible school wide program. Clearly, teachers benefit from two-day summer institutes. That whole faculties, including principals, could experience this training together contributed enormously to creating momentum and support for the Program within each school. Yet, when the goal is school wide implementation, as distinct from training individual discussion leaders, teachers may benefit from more time together. As Janice Cody described:

> We require only two days of training, but in that time, we can only talk about writing interpretive questions and leading discussion. When you're talking about teachers acquiring a whole new set of skills, you have to focus on questioning, but there's more to the Program than that. In the four-day training, what I did there was to structure the sessions so they got a sense of the activities and see how they would fit together.

Some teachers who attended a four-day summer institute indicated they believed that such training was even more helpful in making them stronger discussion leaders from the beginning. Yet the relationship between more initial training and greater skill is not clear. As Cody also noted:

> I thought I noticed after restructuring the training, that the second-round schools did better. But there was a teacher who had only the two-day training who led a wonderful discussion. Some people get it in two days. They will do a marvelous job with no more than the two-day training. But I also had teachers in the Institutes who had been using the Program, and they said they got more out of it the second time.

Likewise, while school-based consultations are clearly crucial to putting the Program into motion following the summer institutes, it remains unclear how much or what kind of follow-up, among the various alternatives, is adequate or optimal. This dilemma in part stems from the dual purpose of assistance to schools, that is to support individual teachers and strengthen school capacity to use the Program at the same time. Again, as Janice Cody explained:

> I would offer to observe and give feedback to individual teachers. The problem is that it's hard to do more than three in a day; and if you're doing demonstration discussions, you can't really see how the program as a whole is working.

Cody added:

> When we started with our consultation visits, we were ambitious about what we could do.... As a practical matter, we couldn't watch all the teachers do the program.... It might be a lot better if I could be there a whole week to see how teachers fit the whole thing together. The three days [allotted through the Ameritech grant] really become helping them become better at discussion.

Coaches and teachers agree that early follow-up is essential. In the view of one staff person, "If teachers can get one follow-up session after the training, it can make or break a program.... The first time is the most critical." Likewise, one teacher stated, "In the beginning, I would pull our coach in more often. We need her sooner than two or three months after training. You need the input more quickly, and we can't wait." However, in the best of circumstances, follow-up assistance would happen not only early, but also often and on a regular schedule throughout the school year. Concerns about the amount of training are compounded by questions about how best to reach teachers and principals who enter schools once the Program is launched. All this suggests that schools need more not less time for school-based consultations. As Cody

explained, "If I'm going to be effective, visiting three times a year is barely a beginning." Faced with teachers who say, "I would like a refresher course" along with those new to the Program's concept, and working in partnership with diverse principals, some highly committed, others new to their position, Junior Great Books will continue to struggle with the question of how to structure professional development so as to reach a heterogeneous group of individual educators and also to have an impact on whole schools.

The Ameritech Project experience also raises questions about what to include in the content of training to maximize the Program's effectiveness school wide. As currently structured, the Program's professional development focuses on the skills that connect students to literature through in-depth discussion. But if anything holds schools back, it may have less to do with teachers' *skills* than with common *assumptions* about the teaching and learning process itself, and about how their low-income students fit into that process. This suggests that professional development for school wide implementation is different from training for individual discussion leaders. In this respect, the Program might consider including time for principals and teachers to reflect on their own beliefs about learning and explicit information related to learning theory and critical thinking.

Conclusion

The experience of the Junior Great Books partnership with the Ameritech schools has much to teach others who seek improved learning in urban schools. This experience shows that the country's poorest students can benefit from a high quality curriculum that provides all students with opportunities to engage with literature through reading and discussion. It also demonstrates that urban schools can benefit from focused professional development that supports teachers as they employ such a curriculum in challenging settings.

The experience also reveals that this effort is not without challenges. Indeed, the Junior Great Books Program has already engaged in extensive rethinking and refining of the Program in response to those challenges. At the close of the Ameritech Project, just as at the beginning, this work is fueled primarily by a belief that all students deserve equal opportunities to learn through high quality curriculum and instruction. As Junior Great Books extends its partnership with urban schools, it is developing a set of strategies and tools powerful enough to realize this vision. In this way, it should serve as a resource for others who share the Program's commitment to enrich the schooling of children in poverty.

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