



URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

A Books@Work Case Study

Books@Work brings professors into workplaces and communities to foster critical thinking, nurture interpersonal connection and strengthen a culture of trust, respect and inclusion through the discussion of great literature.

The Program

With funding from the St. Luke's Foundation and individual donors, Books@Work has brought professor-led literature seminars to urban parents and caregivers of an urban charter school in Cleveland, Ohio for the past two years. The first, 6-month program concluded in May 2015. The second, 7-month program concluded in May 2016. The group, which also includes the school principal, meets for an hour each week to discuss novels and narrative nonfiction with faculty from local colleges.

Program Outcomes & Participant Reflections

In interviews, participants reflected on the Books@Work experience, appreciating the way the program:

- fostered a sense of community within the the school.

"There were . . . moments of pure community. When we talked about it later, we all left feeling uplifted. You rarely feel that way outside of a temple or place of faith. We felt that way over a book and over our group."

"It's hard to really get focused and engaged in other people . . . But getting to know them, then you feel you're more apt to say, 'How are you doing?' . . . That just helps people build those relationships."

- enabled participants to find common ground on tough issues.

"[We thought] their [views] would be different from ours, just because of their race. But it wasn't. . . They had the same views as we did. They might not understand [racism] as much, but they were able to speak to that."

- helped participants reflect on parenting and mentoring children.

"We talked about racism, and a lot of different things that happened in the characters' lives related to what was going on. . . I think a lot of that just hit home, especially with raising your kids and trying to get them to understand these things are going on, how to react to it, and still talk about it with them without scaring them."

- enhanced the participants' ability to communicate with and support one another.

"We were all giving very personal insights into things, and everyone was very willing to listen and be supportive."

"The mentors did a fair bit of nurturing of the parents in ways that they typically don't get to, because we're not in the classroom."

Selected Seminar Readings

James McBride, *The Color of Water*

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Anthony Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*

Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

Daniel Woodrell, *The Maid's Version*

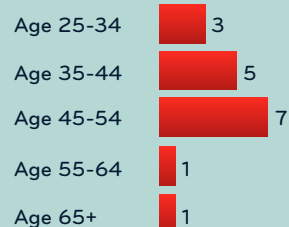
Jeanette Walls, *The Glass Castle*

James Baldwin, *Go Tell it On the Mountain*

Demographic Information

Over the course of the two programs, all but one of the participants were women, and all but one were parents of children of various ages.

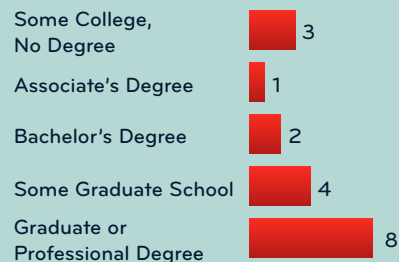
Age Ranges



Race



Education



n=17

Program Feedback

n=14

- 100% found Books@Work worthwhile.
- 100% would recommend Books@Work to a friend.
- 100% found that Books@Work helped them reflect on life experiences.
- 100% would participate in the program again.

That Can Be Me, Inc.

www.booksatwork.org