The School for Young Children

The School for Young Children at the University of Saint Joseph is a nationally accredited preschool program offering part- and full-day programs during the school year and a part- and full-day camp program during the summer. Founded in 1936, The School was one of the first preschools in the state and one of the first student laboratory programs in the nation. The School continues a proud tradition of serving as a training program for college students pursuing careers in early childhood education.

Interested In Volunteering?

We would love for you to become a part of our S.P.E.C.I.A.L. program. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Kimberly Perrotta, Assistant Director of The School for Young Children, at 860.231.5569 or kperrotta@usj.edu.

S.P.E.C.I.A.L.

Seniors and Preschoolers Engaging Collaboratively in All Learning

An Intergenerational Literacy Program

The School for Young Children at the University of Saint Joseph

The School for Young Children at the University of Saint Joseph
238 Steele Road
West Hartford, CT 06117

Phone: 860.231.5560
S.P.E.C.I.A.L. Seniors and Preschoolers Engaging Collaboratively in All Learning

S.P.E.C.I.A.L. is an intergenerational literacy volunteer program at The School for Young Children at the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford. The program first began in 1999 with a start-up grant from the Fisher Foundation. It has since become a model for other preschools and has been presented at national, state, and community conferences and workshops.

Every week, senior citizens enter The School for Young Children, sign in as volunteers, and proceed to a classroom where they are warmly greeted like a part of the family. Seniors volunteer for one hour each week and are always in the same classroom, which allows special relationships to develop. Here are some activities that S.P.E.C.I.A.L. volunteers regularly engage in during their hour at The School for Young Children:

- Reading to individual children or small groups of children
- Reading to the whole class
- Taking students in small groups to The School's lending library to take out books
- Engaging in poems, nursery rhymes, fingerplays, and songs
- Playing games
- Building with blocks
- Cooking activities
- Pretend play
- Art activities
- Simply engaging in conversation
- Sharing a special skill or interest, such as a foreign language or yoga

The Benefits of Intergenerational Programming

Benefits for Preschoolers
- Individualized attention
- Increased interest and involvement in literacy activities
- Acceptance, nurturing, and support
- Increased motivation to learn
- Supportive, positive role models
- Positive, meaningful relationships with older people
- Better understanding of aging
- Increased self-esteem, learning, and knowledge

Benefits for Seniors
- Increased satisfaction and purpose
- Continued involvement in their communities
- Opportunities to transfer culture, knowledge, skills, and values to the next generation
- Increased learning and knowledge

Benefits for Professionals/Schools
- Improved program quality
- More creativity
- Increased community acknowledgement and support