

# 'Prestigious' Teens for Literacy

## Select Garfield pupils tutor peers with special needs

By Emily York  
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HAMILTON

Becky Lawson never has trouble rounding up students to participate in the Teens for Literacy program at Garfield Junior High School.

"It's a prestigious thing," she said.

Teens for Literacy enlists middle school pupils to serve as reading tutors.

At Garfield, four ninth-graders tutor multi-handicapped and developmentally handicapped students during study halls weekly. They also will tutor other students who request help.

Started five years ago by Allen Berger, a professor of reading and writing at Miami University, Teens for Literacy now includes six schools in Greater Cincinnati. Schools receive \$500 a year for materials. Garfield has participated for three years, along with Verity Middle School in Middletown.

Students schedule times and activities for the 40-minute tutoring sessions, Lawson said. Tutors help with reading, computers and a host of other subjects.

Karen Richard, who teaches developmentally handicapped students at Garfield, said her students get attention in the tutoring sessions they couldn't get during regular class.

"It's a lot of one-on-one and they respect their peers so much," she said.

With students in Emily Farwick's



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**Garfield Middle School Teens for Literacy tutors Jon Evans, left, Christie Dermon and Cheryl Paragin work a puzzle with seventh-graders Chris Clemons, second from left, and Eric Hocker, right.**

multi-handicapped class, the tutoring sessions don't involve much reading.

"Some of these students may never read," she said. "It's mostly to help with social skills."

Reasons for tutoring vary.

"I want to be a teacher and I thought this would be a good experience," said Cheryl Paragin.

"I thought it'd be a new learning experience," said Christie Dermon.

Both said the sessions proved more difficult than they first imagined.

"They (students) think they can act any way they want to with another student," Paragin said.

"It's harder than I thought to get them to pay attention," Dermon said.

But Paragin praised her pupil, Eric Hocker, who is in the developmentally handicapped class.

"He's worked really hard," she said.

And Hocker was equally impressed with Paragin as a teacher.

"She's a very good tutor," he said. "It helps with my reading. If she helps me, I'll read better."