**Classroom Tips**

**GRADES 6-8 (Middle Grades)**

Thank you for volunteering to share your time and experience with JA students. The following information might help you prepare to speak to students in grades 6-8. These grades might also be called middle grades or junior high, and students most commonly range in age from 11-13.

### General Student Profile

* While adulthood is still off in the distance for these students, they are hungry for any glimpse of **what life is like** after their school days are complete.
  + They may ask personal questions about your job, family, salary, and such. Consider in advance what you are comfortable sharing and what you will need to politely decline to share.

**Try to avoid:**

* being students’ friend
* criticizing
* speaking in a monotone
* showing nervousness
  + Be yourself. Talk about your early aspirations, your current job, and how you were hired.
* There is a significant **range in maturity** from sixth graders, who are transitioning from childhood, to eighth graders, who are transitioning to their teenage years.
  + Students are beginning to think abstractly, but many still often think in literal, concrete terms, so be prepared to offer concrete examples of abstract concepts.
  + They are also becoming more independent, but still need to feel cared about and respected by adults.
  + Most, especially the younger students, are still open and enjoy interacting with adults.
  + Middle school students often aspire to be teens, so when offering examples, avoid things associated with younger children (toys); instead use examples closer to interests of a teen.
* **Conformity** is critical at this age. Avoid criticizing or making fun of students.
  + Ask them questions about their experience or previous knowledge on the topic to help them connect to the topic and feel included. Don’t assume they have previous knowledge about your topic.
  + Be prepared to **wait after asking a question** for someone to respond.
  + Be confident and decisive, but friendly.
  + Provide resources for them to do additional research on their own.
* A rule of thumb for **attention span** is one minute for each year of age. So plan to chunk your presentation into 10- to 12-minute segments in which you allow students to shift their attention to something different in between.
  + For example, as you tell them stories about your experience, stop after 5-7 minutes and ask questions, show a video, or have them tell the person next them something they remember.
  + Avoid directly lecturing to students for more than 3-5 minutes. Use stories and examples intermixed with questions for discussion.

### Planning Suggestions