



2012-13 Educational Grant Application
Deadline: Wednesday, March 7, 2012, by 4pm

Name of Grant:

Community of Writers: Scaffolding Teachers to Scaffold Students

Name & Title of Person(s) Submitting Grant:

Laura Lee McQueeney- Instructional Coach of Reading

Campus/Department: **Rountree Elementary**

Grade Level(s): **Open to K- Grade 3**

Total Dollar Amount Requested: \$571.70

Number of students who would be involved/impacted by grant: 240

Name of principal or immediate supervisor who will approve submission: Daniel Pitcock

Project Summary/Purpose: Be specific. What is the **student need** which the project will address? The purpose should describe **what students will know and be able to do** as a result of this project. Please explain how a problem will be addressed or a situation improved because of the grant.

Our state expects much more from writers than they have in the past. Students in elementary grades are expected to write compelling narratives, well-supported persuasive pieces and clear expository pieces. Many teachers did not have effective writing instruction in their own schooling, and therefore do not feel comfortable teaching writing. It is also difficult to teach something you have not authentically experienced.

Because of the drastic change in the tools of writing over the past 30 years, the need for strong writing is more critical than ever. (Richard Sterling, 2004). Web 2.0 tools make the need to write well even more critical than in the past. Our students can be writing their own blogs on topics, which they are expert – or desire to become expert. They can contribute to the knowledge base in ways never before possible. Even if they do not wish to publish their writing on the web, the need for clear written communication has never been greater.

This project attempts to support and extend the district and campus focus on writing by forming a Professional Learning Community on writing and writing instruction focusing first on teachers' own writing – the experience the process of crafting their own pieces in their Writing PLC and with their own students. Learning writing "by heart" means to have a deeper understanding because you have been through the process yourself. This work supports the findings of Linda Darling-Hammond (1998) that "[t]eachers learn best by studying, **doing, and reflecting**; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see." The core text from this project is Katie Wood Ray's *What You Know By Heart*. In this book Wood-Ray says, "Because we don't get to witness the writing process in action as professional authors use it, we have to trust in our own experiences to teach us a lot about how it is that finished

writing comes to be. We have to write like teachers of writing..." This PLC will use book studies, bi-monthly meetings and collaborative study of the actual work of each teacher and the teachers' students to support and challenge each other to improve the actual craft of writing. Participation will be limited to 12 K-3 teachers.

Teaching can be a very isolated act with each teacher practicing her craft within her own four walls. The collaborative study group will encourage and support teachers' efforts to improve their own writing skills and teaching of writing skills through new strategies from the book studies. The Writing PLC will be facilitated by the grant author and a university mentor who both have experience in staff development. Teachers will share their own work and the work of their students to better understand the process of writing. Combining book studies with looking collaboratively at teacher and student work creates a powerful learning opportunity and climate that directly impacts the students in each of these twelve classrooms. Visible results of this project will be the improved quality of writing for up to 240 students.

Project Description: How will the project or program be implemented? Describe activities and tasks. Who is the target population and in what ways will they benefit?

The K-3 teachers will study and participate in the writing process as adults while studying the teaching of writing using their own processes to guide their instruction. This will build their confidence in model writing in front of their students. The teachers will be supported by a common text, *What You Know By Heart* by Katie Wood Ray as well as grade specific texts to help them launch their writer's workshop. Guest speakers, such as Kim Dumaine, author of the newly released Kindergarten book, and Sheri Vasinda, university professor, will support the teachers prior to the books arrival. The grant author will facilitate the book study and the study of student writing samples.

Writing samples will be collected and analyze through out this project as well as attitudinal surveys and written reflections by the teachers.

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Which Allen ISD goals/TEKS does this project support? Limit to top two or three examples.

This project supports all the writing process TEKS in K-3 including ideation, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

What specific measurements will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the project?

Writing samples will be collected each 9 weeks and placed in a portfolio using a primary writing rubric.

What teaching methods will be used to implement this project?

A Writer's Workshop method will be utilized as this will be the method under study by the teachers.

Timeline for project (Funds will be available after September 1, 2012):

A Writers' Workshop format will be utilized to deliver the specific mini-lessons studied by the group although teachers may implement these lessons in a variety of ways.

Timeline for project

Sept 2012: order books

Baseline (Beginning of Year) writing samples collected from teachers and students

Writing attitude survey administered

Sept 2012-May 2013:

- PLC seminars would occur bi-monthly targeting alternating Wednesdays and continuing through May
- One writing sample from each teacher and student will be collected each nine weeks and placed in a portfolio for each student

May 2013: Final reflections from the teachers and students will be taken, collected and analyzed.

May 2013: Final Report to District office.

Explain how this idea or project enhances/supports Allen ISD curriculum or existing systems:

Allen ISD and Rountree campus are committed to supporting student writing starting from kindergarten in a focused, purposeful way. As teachers move from grade level to grade level, their experience and confidence in teaching writing is variable. Many teachers did not have a positive schooling experience in the writing process and, therefore do not feel confident in teaching the writing process to the new level of rigor expected by the state. In addition, AISD is not offering a Writing Institute this summer and we would like to offer that support in an alternative way.

Are there any additional funds available for this grant? Campus or district funds? PTA funds? If you have or will be seeking funds from any other sources to help with this project, please explain.

There are no additional funds for this project.