

Sample Grant Proposal: Studying the Concept of “Power” Through Literature Circles

This grant proposal is one I wrote and won in 2010. As you will see, many of the books on the list could be deemed “inappropriate for school”. However, I’ve found that if you can explain why something is important and why it will affect a student’s literary life in a positive way, you will be more likely to get what you need or want for your classroom.

1. **Brief Description of proposed project:** Students in high school sometimes have a difficult time expressing how their lives connect to the text. While it is easy for students to answer worksheet questions about the text they are reading, it is difficult for them to understand that *true* literacy is the understanding of the words on the line, what the text is saying between the lines, and what it means beyond the lines (how it connects to their lives). Sometimes students can’t connect because they don’t like what they are reading. Other times, it is because the reading is too difficult. This is why literature circles are such an important part of the curriculum. Literature circles allow students to be active participants in choosing what they are going to read. Literature circles are helpful in improving student reading and writing. They also contribute to an improvement in attendance and behavior because students feel like they have a more active role in the classroom and curriculum.
2. **Statement of needs the proposed project addresses:**
 - a. Reading- Students will use project materials to read daily and participate in a unit where they analyze the concept of “power,” working to read text independently for at least thirty minutes a day.
 - b. Writing- Students will complete writing assignments that build and support their conceptual understanding of “power” in correlation to the books purchased.
 - c. Attendance- It is a hope that attendance will improve because the books are high interest and dealing with power struggles between teens and the world they live in.
 - d. Behavior- When students are fully engaged in curriculum and thinking critically, behavior drastically improves.
 - e. Social-emotional skill development- When students work in literature circles, they must be engaged with their peers. In order to prepare students for conversing with their peers, the class discusses how to make the classroom environment a safe place for all students. Students write reflections at the end of every week discussing their personal social-emotional skill development while working in groups.
3. **Objectives of proposed project:** My objective is to choose books that appeal to advanced readers, reluctant readers, and all those readers in between. The goal is that the literature circles will encourage students to become independent readers and thinkers and take a more active role in his or her education. But most important, as a teacher, my objective is to use these literature circles to help my students bring their reading levels up to ninth grade and higher. In order for students to find success and graduate from high school, it is imperative that they are at a ninth grade reading level or higher by the end of their freshman year.
4. **Project procedures:**

- a. Specific ways in which the project will be administered: This project will be administered as a unit plan focusing on the concept of “power.” Freshman classes will use the books in literature circles following our study of the abuses of power in world conflicts, including the Holocaust. Books may be used in subsequent years with incoming classes of ninth grade students. Approximately 600 students a year will have the opportunity to use the proposed novels.
- b. Needed materials and how they will be used: English classes will use the following contemporary novels as a way for students to explore contemporary young adult fiction.

- i. *Rooftop* by Paul Volponi
- ii. *Rules of Survival* by Nancy Werlin
- iii. *Bootcamp* by Todd Strasser
- iv. *Snitch* by Allison van Dispen
- v. *Tyrell* by Coe Booth
- vi. *Hoopster* by Alan Lawrence
- vii. *13 Reasons Why* by Jay Asher
- viii. *Dreamland* by Sarah Dessen
- ix. *The Brothers Torres* by Coert Voorhees
- x. *Jumped* by Rita Williams-Garcia
- xi. *Catching Fire* by Suzanne Collins

All chosen novels have been published in the last three years. These novels share a basic theme of inter-relationships and self-reliance in accordance with Michigan Merit Curriculum. They also address the following essential questions for ninth grade:

- xii. *Who am I?*
- xiii. *How do my skills and talents help define me?*
- xiv. *How do I build networks of people to support me?*
- xv. *How am I a reflection of my relationships?*
- xvi. *What can I contribute as an individual?*

- c. Activities and methods involved: Before the literature circles begin, students will examine the difference between decision (power) and consequences through a series of classroom lessons. This will be a recurring theme throughout the literature circle unit. When the literature circles form, students will collaborate and take different writing roles each day. Students will discuss roles in class meetings and guided discussions. By exploring concepts, students will reach a deeper understanding of the text they are reading. The culminating project will engage students in thoughtfully taking action for change (personal, community, and global).
- d. Tentative schedule: I will order the books by the middle of February 2010. The literature circles will begin in April 2010 and be completed by the end of the school year. The project may be replicated and altered each semester.
- e. Completion date: This project will be completed by the end of May in 2010. The project may be replicated in subsequent years.
- f. Personnel involved: I will be working with ELL teachers, other ninth grade English teachers, and a literacy professor at Western Michigan University

- g. Other information pertinent to project: This project has been approved by the department chair and curriculum coordinator.
5. **Plan for evaluation of project:** Before and after literature circles begin, I will administer an interest inventory. Also, data from standardized testing will show whether students have improved their reading scores (any increases are not due solely to literature circles).
- Part of literature circle evaluations is teacher observations on how the groups work together to process and analyze the book. These observations will help me see if all students (especially reluctant readers who haven't found academic success) are taking an active role in group and class discussions. Students evaluate themselves through journal reflections and conferencing with me. At the end of the literature circle novel, students will develop their own multiple intelligence projects that will engage them in taking action for personal, community, and global change.
6. **Itemized budget:** All books will be ordered at Barnes and Noble or locally at Kazoo Books in Kalamazoo.
- a. 5 copies- Rooftop by Paul Volponi \$6.99 each, \$34.95 total
 - b. 5 copies- Rules of Survival by Nancy Werlin \$7.99 each, \$39.95 total
 - c. 5 copies- Bootcamp by Todd Strasser \$6.99 each, \$34.95 total
 - d. 5 copies- Snitch by Allison van Dispen \$7.99 each, \$39.95 total
 - e. 5 copies- Tyrell by Coe Booth \$7.99 each, \$39.95 total
 - f. 5 copies- Hoopster by Alan Lawrence Sitomer \$5.99 each, \$29.95 total
 - g. 5 copies- 13 Reasons Why by Jay Asher \$9.93 each, \$49.65
 - h. 5 copies- Dreamland by Sarah Dessen \$8.99 each, \$44.95 total
 - i. 5 copies- The Brothers Torres by Coert Voorhees \$8.99 each, \$44.95 total
 - j. 5 copies- Jumped by Rita Williams-Garcia \$11.55 each, \$57.75 total
 - k. 5 copies- Catching Fire by Suzanne Collins \$11.69 each, \$58.45 total

Total for materials requested: \$475.45 + tax

(\$28.53)=\$503.98

Plus 20% Educator's Discount= \$403.18