

A Grant Proposal to Study the

Benefits of Early

Home-School

Connections

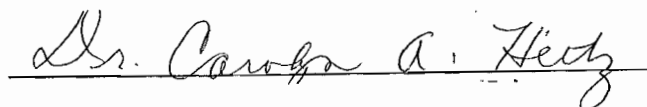
by

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Dr. Carolyn A. Heitz", is written over a horizontal line.

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ABSTRACT

Developmentally appropriate parental support of literacy skills is important for student progress. An early literacy program designed to educate parents on this type of intervention also creates a home-school connection. The grant funds requested would be used to support the delivery of the parent and children activities during the six literacy presentations.

Goals:

1. Research information will be compiled related to best practices within early literacy programs.
2. A six part early literacy program on developmentally appropriate practices will be implemented at Lincoln School during the 2009-2010 school year for kindergarten families.
3. Data will be collected and analyzed during October and March to determine the student participants' progress in concepts of print, phonological awareness, letter names and sounds.

4. Parents will be taught developmentally appropriate ways to reinforce Lincoln School's literacy program with their children at home.
5. Project will be evaluated by the principal investigator.

The primary activities of this grant will include six literacy programs with informational presentations on different aspects of literacy skills. The six topics for presentation are name activities, read alouds, alphabetic principles, writing, guiding children's reading, and literacy games. These six programs will begin with student activities separate from the presentation for parents. After the presentation, students will join their parents to work together on practicing literacy techniques. Grant activities will be evaluated through verbal communication with parents, and attendance. Grant findings will be disseminated by the grant writer through newspaper articles and presentations to Lincoln Elementary School staff, Watertown Unified School District Board of Education, and the annual Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) Convention.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Students who are not exposed to literacy in their home have a disadvantage when compared with students who come to school with the skills needed to read and write. When a student is behind in the area of literacy, early interventions will be most effective. Students can achieve a positive attitude towards literacy if they receive developmentally appropriate early interventions from the adults in their lives. A family literacy program is needed in order to promote a positive attitude towards literacy and school in general. The Early Literacy Home-School Connection Program will benefit students by teaching their parents developmentally appropriate practices to support literacy curriculum that is currently in place.

The Early Literacy Home-School Connection Program aims to engage kindergarteners and their parents in their crucial first year of school. It is important that authentic assessments be used to gain information about student needs and the type of further instruction that should be provided. Additional support for young learners will be provided through the early literacy program while also building an important connection between school and home. The results of an Early Literacy Home-School Connection Program will be beneficial to the Watertown community and the Lincoln Elementary families, teachers, and students.

Statement of the Problem

Students at Lincoln Elementary School, a K-3 building in Wisconsin, are in need of extra literacy support. Title 1 services are being utilized to their fullest extent and growing class sizes are contributing to the need for a literacy program that shares responsibility with families. Early literacy in education is important because of its tremendous effects on student success. Research has shown that teaching parents developmentally appropriate practices will support school

curriculum. Bringing literacy information to families helps schools because early literacy can be supported at home and the home-school connection is strengthened.

Within Lincoln Elementary School, the ethnicity is 1.5% Asian, 2.0% Indian, 5.4% Black, 5.4% Hispanic, and 85.6% White. Forty-two percent of students are eligible for free lunch, 6.4% eligible for reduced lunch, and 51.0% are not economically disadvantaged. At this time, 7.9% of students are serviced as Children With Disabilities (CWD) students. Recently the school has experienced an increase in English language learners.

Purpose of the Grant Proposal

The purpose of this grant proposal is to gain financial support for an early literacy program at Lincoln Elementary School. The financial resources gained will be used to implement six monthly presentations during the 2009-2010 school year for kindergarten families. The project funds will be used to compensate session speakers and trained translators, purchase program materials, support the printing costs for written communications and provide the food so meals can be served for the families. This program will benefit the kindergarten students, families, and teachers in the Watertown Unified School District.

Assumptions

This study assumes that parents will continue literacy work practice based on the programs presented. It is unknown how often and how long participants will review literacy skills at home.

It is assumed that the written documents prepared for families and the six literacy presentations are accurately translated from English to Spanish. Questions and comments translated from Spanish to English may also lose meaning in the translation process. The principal investigator will not know if the information retains meaning when translated.

Definition of Terms

Literacy is a broad term that describes the complex tasks of reading and writing. Reading and writing are achieved when multiple skills such as decoding, phonemic awareness, concepts of print, and language perception are utilized.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices are research-based guidelines that are suited to a specific learner.

Developmentally appropriate practices result from the process of professionals making decisions about the well-being and education of children based on at least three important kinds of information or knowledge:

1. What is known about child development and learning — knowledge of age-related human characteristics that permits general predictions within an age range about what activities, materials, interactions, or experiences will be safe, healthy, interesting, achievable, and also challenging to children;
2. What is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group to be able to adapt for and be responsive to inevitable individual variation; and
3. Knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for the participating children and their families. (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1996)

Authentic Assessment is the utilization of tests that accurately collect the information that is intended to be evaluated. “Assessment is the total process of collecting information to make instructional decisions,” (McCormick, 2007, p. 71). Authentic assessments serve to guide further learning. Examples include work samples, running records, anecdotal notes, and student

interviews. These assessments take place throughout the school day and the results can be used immediately.

Methodology

Chapter two will contain a literature review on the importance of literacy, early interventions, developmentally appropriate practices, and parental involvement. In chapter three, project goals and objectives will be discussed. Chapter four outlines the implementation used for this Early Literacy Home-School Connections Program. A timeline, budget, and dissemination plan will be included in this chapter. Appendixes will include a cover letter and request for proposal.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter will examine what is known about early literacy interventions with kindergarten- aged students. The concept of literacy, what literacy looks like inside the home, and the importance of consistent support will be summarized. Existing early intervention programs are studied and developmentally appropriate practices are discussed. The positive outcomes of parent involvement in schools, non-traditional roles in family participation, and the possible resistance from families will also be summarized.

Literacy

Literacy is a broad learning category that includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Literacy skills are taught through interactions long before a child enters school. Once in school, however, a learning partnership between families and educators is beneficial to students.

Young children learn through interactions and caring relationships with teachers and family. They readily learn key understandings about literacy-print conventions, vocabulary, story structure, and literacy as meaning-making, process-through daily demonstrations of others engaged in literate activity. This includes traditional storybook reading, as well as forms of literacy like environmental print, media, and technology. Research shows that young children learn parts of language (phonics, grammar, print conventions) while using language in meaningful contexts; they become phonemically aware as they explore sounds in playful ways. They learn and better comprehend text when they have opportunities to bring their experiences with life and other texts to reading experiences. They learn best when others view them as competent and capable,

and when what they already know is acknowledged and celebrated. (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008, ¶ 1)

Literacy skills look different for each student. As each student progresses through stages of literacy development, their skills also evolve.

Literacy development begins in the very early stages of childhood, even though the activities of young children may not seem related to reading and writing. Early behaviors such as ‘reading’ from pictures and ‘writing’ with scribbles are examples of emergent literacy and are an important part of children's literacy development. (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1999, ¶ 1)

Reading and speaking to children is a great place to start literacy development. Even babies benefit from adults reading aloud to them. “Each time your baby sees, hears, or feels anything, brain connections form. Eventually, the connections are strong enough to create a skill or a piece of knowledge,” (The Children Literacy Centre, 2000, ¶ 5).

Early Interventions

Successful early literacy programs can benefit students, parents, and the agency supporting the program. Student achievement and confidence in the area of literacy is increased while parent-school relationships are strengthened.

The strongest effects seem to be in the areas of perceived increases in students' motivation attitudes, and independent reading as a result of the exposure to higher quality literature... students were no more skilled as readers than before the current program was implemented. However, students seemed to be more willing to seek out books for their own reading. (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, (n.d.) p.51).

The outcomes found in Southwest Solutions early literacy programs also illustrate the importance of such services. It was found that “98% of children reached developmental milestones, 94% of parents make increases in literacy by at least one year, and 90% of families improve the learning environment at home by having regular story times.” Buffalo Public School parents reported an, “increased knowledge and understanding about age-appropriate activities, increased frequency of engaging in these activities with their children, and increased confidence in their interactions with school personnel and teachers,” (Buffalo Parent Center, (n.d.), p.7).

Long-term benefits have also been found. “Pretest-post-test scores over a period of seven years revealed that children exposed to First Level Language instruction consistently achieved large increases in test scores that were statistically significant,” according to Primak Educational Foundation. During a presentation at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Conference, Rubin (2004) states, “One of the things we also discovered—and again, through experience—was that we needed to help the families understand the importance of an activity to their children's literacy development,” (p. 2).

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

It is paramount that early literacy programs not only teach skills, but teach them in a way that is appropriate for the age and complexity of thinking that an individual student possesses. Teaching methods should always reflect developmentally appropriate practices and the teaching techniques that are being shared with parents during this program must also be research-based strategies.

One of the first interactions that children have with letters is through their own first name. We are all personally connected to our names and learning about names can help make letters, sounds, and words an important part of a child's world. “Children are learning that their names

represent them and that other words represent objects, emotions, actions, and so on. They see that writing serves a purpose to let their teacher know they have arrived, to show others their art work, or to tell someone who sent a letter,” (Koralek & Collins, 1997, p.4). A child’s name should be used in many ways during their time in kindergarten. For example, students should see their name in their classroom, write it on their work, recognize it on charts and lists, and play games with the letters it contains. Parents can also use a child’s name to initiate literacy development at home. A child’s name can be displayed in their bedroom, used as a label to indicate things that belong to them, and be a word they focus on writing through play.

Another developmentally appropriate practice for kindergarteners is the use of read-alouds. This technique requires more than simply reading a story out loud to children. It involved sharing background information, modeling what readers think while they read, and asking questions. “By actively engaging children with different aspects of shared books, read-aloud sessions offer an ideal forum for exploring many dimensions of language and literacy,” (Griffin & Burns, 1998, p. 179). Children will appreciate the level of excitement that a read-aloud provides. Read-alouds show children that adults do not only read words written on a page, but rather, that we spend time in thought about those words. We question what we are reading and form opinions. This is a goal for young readers as well. “Effective practices for fostering these goals include encouraging children to ask their own questions about the story; to respond to others' questions; to follow the text with movement, mime, or choral reading; and to notice the forms and functions of print features (words, punctuation, letters, etc.),” (Griffin & Burns, 1998 p. 180).

Children must learn the letters of the alphabet. The study of letters does not need to be a boring task for students and parents.

Play alphabet games. Sing the alphabet song to help your child learn letters as you play with alphabet books, blocks, and magnetic letters. Recite letters as you go up and down stairs or give pushes on a swing. A-B-C, dot-to-dot and letter-play workbooks, games, and puzzles are available at most toy stores. Many engaging computer games are designed for teaching children letters. Make sure these toys are available even when you are unable to play along. (Kame'enui, Adams, & Lyon, 1996, p.1).

The most important part of teaching children the letters of the alphabet at the kindergarten level is to keep the learning activities fun and interesting.

Students are in various stages of development in their writing when in kindergarten. The basic concept to be taught is that writing represents a vehicle for conveying ideas. Letter reversals, scribbles, and conventions of writing are not of significant importance at this time. "If opportunities to write are ample and well-complemented by other literacy activities and alphabetic instruction, kindergartners should be using real letters to spell words phonetically before the school year is out." (Griffin & Burns, 1998, p. 187). Parents can help their children gain writing opportunities by letting them write about what is important to them. Accepting writing that does not utilize proper conventions of spelling will help children to write without feeling overwhelmed by rules that they do not yet understand.

Learning literacy skills should be fun and empowering for children. Making letters with clay, using puppets to make up a story, singing songs, cooking, making grocery lists, visiting the library, showing interest in what a child has to say, listening to books on tape, playing direction games like Simon says, and reading signs while in the car are all ways to engage children in literacy. As with all skills associated with literacy, "It is less important for the reader to get every word exactly right. It is more important for the child to learn to love reading itself," (Kame'enui

& Simmons, 1997, p. 1). Showing children that literacy is fun insures that they will seek out opportunities to become a well-rounded, literate student.

The principles of developmentally appropriate practices can also be applied to assessment procedures. Relevant content is important to test in a way that is informal and used to guide further instruction.

Assessment of young children's progress and achievements is ongoing, strategic, and purposeful. The results of assessment are used to benefit children—in adapting curriculum and teaching to meet the developmental and learning needs of children, communicating with the child's family, and evaluating the program's effectiveness for the purpose of improving the program. (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1997, p. 13)

Home-School Connection

This early literacy program aims to reach students during their kindergarten year. The six presentations funded by this grant project will make a home-school connection that also benefits families through increased student achievement in literacy skills. The extended amount of time spent practicing literacy skills in and outside of the classroom can positively impact student achievement. The sharing of information between school and home is essential to student success. Communication from home to school is just as valuable as school-to-parent communication. Many schools overlook that the families of our students are one of the most valuable resources teachers can tap. "Parents and other family members need to be involved in their children's literacy development throughout their school years," (Reading is Fundamental, 2008, ¶ 2). The idea that a home-school connection culminates in a parent/teacher conference is outdated.

School staff members need to remember that family and even community members are willing to help if they feel that their role is important. “Schools recognize the importance of parent involvement in students' progress and are increasingly encouraging parents to play a more active role. Parents who work closely with classroom teachers also help build a sense of community from which the children can learn,” (Reading is Fundamental, 2008, ¶ 2). All students in a classroom will gain from family involvement, not simply the student whose family is active.

Students progress through the stages of literacy when it is valued, modeled, and consistent within a student's life. “With the support of parents, caregivers, early childhood educators, and teachers, as well as exposure to a literacy-rich environment, children successfully progress from emergent to conventional reading,” (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1999, ¶ 1). Learning to read is a complex task and students need support from as many areas as possible in order to make a smooth transition from pre-reading to conventional reading.

Other positive outcomes of parental involvement may include “increases in student attendance, decreases in the drop-out rate, positive parent-child communication, improvement of student attitudes and behavior, and more parent-community support for the schools” (Constantio, 2003 p. 20). The traditional view that parental involvement is limited to parent-teacher organizations, field trips, and visits to the school once each school year must evolve because student needs and family roles have changed over time.

While parental involvement at school and at home is a goal for many schools, parents can also hinder student growth if they provide support that is not aligned with school practices. When teachers convince parents to use the same terminology at home and at school, the likelihood of

student confusion will be reduced. “Educators also play an important role informing families about state standards and school expectations for student learning,” (National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, (n.d.), ¶ 7). It is often overwhelming for parents to feel that they are expected to do something unfamiliar with their children. Teachers can offer other outside resources to help alleviate that stress. “Parents should also be informed about school and community-based services that support student growth and learning (National Coalition for Parental Involvement in Education, (n.d.), ¶ 7).

Educators may think that they are not being supported by parents, and that student learning only takes place in the classroom. Teachers may also perceive that students are learning strategies inside their home that contradict the strategies taught inside of school. For these reasons, teachers may think that when students work with their families at home, the learning is counterproductive to the teacher’s efforts. Constantino (2003) suggests “[t]he home learning environment has a positive effect on a student’s achievement in school” (p. 21). Teachers may not know exactly what type of learning is taking place inside the home and are, therefore, uncomfortable with parental support.

After students begin kindergarten, parents often experience anxiety. For many families, kindergarten marks the first time their child has been away from home for an extended length of time. Students become acclimated with a new culture of friends, teachers, activities, and responsibilities. This adjustment is more noticeable in some families. “For parents who feel ‘different’ from the school because of language, culture, or income, the feeling of estrangement can be particularly pronounced. Kindergarten and first grade are especially important times for teachers to reach out and invite parents to take part in their children’s education,” (Temple, Ogle,

Crawford, and Freppon, 2008 p. 130). The importance of asking families to spend meaningful time in their child's new environment often puts both parents and students more at ease.

Families that do not speak English in the home are at high risk for feeling isolated from the school culture. For example, Hispanic families are often misunderstood by educators. It is important for teachers to spend time getting to know cultures that differ from their own experience. In addition to familiarizing oneself with cultural differences, teachers must put resources in place so that effective communication can be accomplished. Translators, both human and web-based, are imperative for successful and timely communication to take place.

"To keep Hispanic parents actively engaged, activities planned by the early childhood program must respond to a real need or concern of the parents. Teachers should have a good idea about what parents will get out of each meeting and how the meeting will help them in their role as parents," (Hispanic Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Programs, 1995, ¶ 14). If time frames are not honored and feedback is not considered, educators will have a difficult time involving the families most at risk.

Summary

Student needs have changed over time and student support must also become flexible in order to provide what is best for our early learners. Families are an important part of student learning outside of the classroom, but parent involvement must be brought into schools. When educators bring family support inside the classroom all students benefit. Resistance to this change must be met with sensitivity and additional outside support. When student success is the basis for decision-making, difficult yet positive changes can be made. Literacy skills are developed in all areas of a student's life and, therefore, parent-teacher communication is

imperative. Developmentally appropriate practices should be used when supporting school efforts at home and these strategies must be taught to parents.

Chapter III: Project Goals and Objectives

This program is important because it encourages parental involvement, strengthens the home-school connection, and educates families on developmentally appropriate skills. Students are also given an opportunity to spend time with their families in a school setting, are invited to practice literacy skills with their families away from school, and then show their increased ability through subtests from the kindergarten progress report. Program goals and outcomes will be interpreted and assessed by the principal investigator at the end of the program. Recommendations on the continuation of the program will be made at that time. The Watertown Unified School District may choose to further fund this literacy program based on the findings of the principal investigator.

Goal 1: An early literacy program will be implemented at Lincoln School during the 2009-2010 school year.

A series of six presentations will be open to all kindergarten families with the aim of improving literacy skills through a home-school connection. These six sessions will focus on name activities, read-alouds, the alphabetic principles, writing, guiding children's reading, and literacy games. Parents will be taught developmentally- appropriate practices in order to aid them in supporting Lincoln School's literacy curriculum. Workshop information will be presented by the principal investigator with support given from guest speakers including public librarian, Lincoln School librarian, Title One teacher, district literacy coordinator, district school psychologist, and Lincoln School occupational therapist. These speakers will bring materials to share with parents and add to the conversation created by the principal investigator. Developmentally appropriate practices in the area of literacy will be presented to parents while volunteer school teachers work with the kindergarten students. After the parents have learned

new literacy strategies the student will rejoin their parents in order to practice the skill.

Translators for Spanish-speaking families, babysitting services for siblings, and meals will be provided for the families.

Goal 2: Data will be collected and analyzed to determine the student participants' progress in literacy skills using the existing kindergarten progress report.

Attendance will be taken at all six of the presentations. The students who participate will be further analyzed by their classroom teacher. This data would be taken for testing purposes in October and March, even if the early literacy program was not provided. The subtests used for the purpose of this grant will be concepts of print, phonological awareness, letter names, and sounds. The principal investigator will compare student participant progress reports throughout the year in order to track improvement.

Goal 3: Project results will be evaluated by the principal investigator.

Verbal group responses from parents will be obtained at the end of all six presentations. The parent participants will be asked the same question at the end of each presentation. The principal investigator will take anecdotal notes and record no names during the verbal feedback time. Parents will be asked, "What did you learn in our session today that will work in your home situation?" Attendance will also be evaluated. Considerations on how to improve the program and modifications to accommodate families will be discussed before the program continues.

Chapter IV: Project Methodology

Students in Lincoln Elementary School are in need of extra literacy support that cannot be funded through the district. Early literacy interventions are most successful and positive adult attitudes toward literacy are crucial. Parents are a resource that educators must not neglect, but rather, utilize within an educationally-sound framework. Creating an environment where literacy is the focus of a home-school initiative is the main goal of this grant proposal. This chapter will include a timeline and evaluation plan. The tools used for evaluation will also be discussed. A plan for dissemination of information and a budget for the project are included.

Project Timeline

Month	Activities
July 2009	Research conducted on existing parent literacy programs
August 2009	List of strategies compiled and examined to determine applicability for Lincoln School kindergarten students
	Existing kindergarten progress report analyzed
September 2009	Speakers for programs scheduled
	All six programs planned
	Teacher volunteers scheduled
	Invitations sent to kindergarten parents
	Building use forms completed and filed
October 2009	Kindergarteners tested with existing progress report to determine baseline skills in concepts of print, phonological awareness, and letter names and sounds
	Program on name activities offered

	“What do I do when my child doesn’t know how to write their name?”
	Program on using the alphabetic principles
	“What do I do when my child doesn’t know the letters of the alphabet?”
November 2009	Program on read-alouds offered
	“What do I do when my child wants to read the same book yet again?”
December 2009	
January 2010	Program on writing offered
	“What do I do when my child asks me to spell a word for them?”
	Program on guiding children’s reading offered
	“What do I do when my child doesn’t know a word in their book?”
February 2010	Program on literacy games offered
	“What do I do to make learning fun for my child?”
March 2010	Kindergarteners tested with existing progress report to determine skills gained in concepts of print, phonological awareness, and letter names and sounds
April 2010	
May 2010	Evaluate project goals in connection with writing a final grant report
June 2010	District committee formed to study developmentally appropriate practices and analyze existing kindergarten progress reports
	Presentation to the Watertown Unified Board of Education

Evaluation Plan and Tools

The evaluation plan and tools will be used on the selected population of kindergarten students at Lincoln Elementary School during the 2009-2010 school year and their parents. At

the end of each of the six presentations, parent participants will be asked, “What did you learn in our session today that will work in your home situation?” Anecdotal notes will be recorded by the principal investigator and no names will be associated with the comments given. Attendance will be taken at all of the sessions so that student improvement can be analyzed. Also, student achievement will be studied based on student success on three subtests from the existing kindergarten progress report. The principal investigator will compare the results of participating students in three subtests -- concepts of print, phonological awareness, and letter names and sounds. This will take place in October and March and their progress will also be compared to other elementary school kindergartners in the school district.

Literacy assessments do not always give educators adequate information on student performance. The current progress report for kindergarten is based on assessing students for skills that they can demonstrate, not skills that they are able to apply. It is suggested that “students are learning and practicing how to apply important knowledge and skills for authentic purposes. They should not simply recall information or circle isolated vowel sounds in words; they should apply what they know to new tasks,” (Valencia, 2008). This type of assessment also allows teachers to see what prompts student thinking and what strategies may need re-teaching. Improvements that reflect best assessment practices will be made to the Watertown Unified School District. Authentic assessments may be more time consuming, but they offer a much deeper understanding of student thinking and subsequent teacher planning.

The methodology of this study will be limited by the accuracy of the translation of English presentations into Spanish, if needed. The presentations and written documents will be translated into Spanish by a trained translator. Questions and comments from Spanish speaking

families will be translated into English, but the principal investigator does not know if the authenticity of the language may be compromised.

Dissemination Plan

Information regarding the Early Literacy Home-School Connections Program will be included in the first Lincoln Elementary School newsletter of the year. This same article will be available on the school website for a month. During the month of the first program, the local newspaper will print an article explaining the new literacy program and include the dates the programs are offered. In the last month the program is offered, a presentation detailing the nature of the Early Literacy Home-School Connections Program, results, and future plans will be made to Lincoln Elementary staff. After the six literacy programs have been offered, a briefing will be made to the Watertown Unified School District Board of Education and an article highlighting that presentation will be included in the district newsletter. Also in June, an article including the results of the program will be printed in the *Watertown Daily Times*. The early literacy program plan, results, and future will be presented at the WEAC Convention in October. All writing, presenting, and planning will be done by the principal investigator.

Budget

Description	Cost	Amount	Total
Guest speakers	\$100/hour	6	\$600
Translator	\$50/hour	6	\$300
Meals			
Main Course	\$40	6	\$240
Bread	\$25	6	\$150
Vegetables	\$30	6	\$180
Coffee	\$20	6	\$120
Milk	\$15	6	\$90
Dessert	\$25	6	\$150
Cups, Napkins, Straws	\$10	6	\$60
Materials and Supplies			
Invitations	\$1.50	75	\$112.50
General Office Supplies	In Kind Contribution		
Childcare	In Kind Contribution		
Building Rental	In Kind Contribution		
			\$2302.50

The principal investigator will conduct research on existing parent literacy programs, compile a list of strategies that applies to Lincoln School kindergarten students, and analyze existing kindergarten progress reports. Invitations will be sent to all kindergarten families enrolled in Lincoln School. The cost of these invitations covers printing and postage. General office supplies will be used, but not purchased. Lincoln School will be providing these items. A translator will be hired for all six presentations in the event that there is at least one family that does not speak fluent English. This translator will be found in the community and will be paid an hourly rate for six hours of work if necessary.

All kindergartners will be assessed by their classroom teacher in October and March. The results from three subtests -- concepts of print, phonological awareness, letter names and sounds will be compiled and analyzed by the principal investigator. Parents will provide verbal feedback at the end of each of the six sessions. The principal investigator will take anecdotal notes during the feedback time and no names will be included.

Lincoln Elementary School is willing to provide their building, free of charge, for the early literacy pilot program. Many teachers within the building will also volunteer their time to work with the kindergarten students while the parents are listening to presenters. Childcare for siblings will be provided by high school students in need of volunteer hours. Six guest speakers will be hired under the grant. A meal with main course, bread, vegetable, dessert, coffee, and milk will be offered at each program and has been calculated into the budget for this grant.

All kindergartners will again be assessed by their classroom teacher in March. The testing results of the students participating in the early literacy program will be compiled by the principal investigator. Existing progress reports will be analyzed by a committee of kindergarten teachers selected by the school district to determine the need for changes. A presentation will be given to the Watertown School District Board of Education in order to determine the future of the Early Literacy Home-School Connections Program.

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Appendix A: Cover Letter

May, 2009

Ms. Susan Dauber
Spencer Foundation
625 N. Michigan Avenue
Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60611

Dear Ms. Dauber:

As a teacher, I have observed that literacy can best be supported by collaboration between parents and teachers. I have also seen that there needs to be more data analyses in the area of parent involvement in literacy through developmentally appropriate practices. I am a graduate student who is working on my master's degree in education at the University of Wisconsin-Stout and I am interested in exploring this issue.

I propose to use grant money from the Spencer Foundation to help organize, facilitate, and implement six early literacy programs during the 2009-2010 school year. The topics of these programs are name activities, read-alouds, alphabetic principles, writing, guiding children's reading, and literacy games. These literacy programs would be open to all families of kindergarten students at Lincoln Elementary School and, therefore, aid in making a home-school connection.

Enclosed please find my information to review. I look forward to hearing from you regarding this grant proposal. Please contact me with any questions that may arise.

Sincerely,

Leah M. Klotz
Graduate Student University of Wisconsin-Stout

Enclosures

Appendix B: Spencer Foundation Request for Proposal

Administering Organization Information

Name of Organization: Watertown Unified School District

Address: 210 North Montgomery Street

City / State / Zip code / Country: Watertown/WI/53094

Website: www.watertown.k12.wi.us

Proposal Information

Project Title: Early Literacy Home-School Connections Grant Proposal

Requested Amount: \$2302.50

Duration: 11 months

Start date: July 2009

Primary Spencer Focus Area: Teaching, Learning, and Instructional Resources

Additional Spencer Focus Area(s):

Principal Investigator Information

Name: Leah

Title: Klotz

Department/School: Kindergarten Teacher/Lincoln Elementary School

Organization: Watertown Unified School District

Mailing Address: 210 North Montgomery Street

City / State / Zip code / Country: Watertown/WI/53094

Office Phone: 920-262-1465

Primary email: klotzl@watertown.k12.wi.us

Website: www.watertown.k12.wi.us
