

Professor Jason Courtmanche
Director, Connecticut Writing Project
Department of English
University of Connecticut
215 Glenbrook Road, Unit 4025A
Storrs, CT 06269-4025

November 5, 2009

Dear Professor Courtmanche:

Please find my application for a Connecticut Writing Project Teacher Consultant Mini-Grant attached.

As you know, my colleagues and I at Quinebaug Valley Community College are constantly working to provide the best services possible in our developmental English program. We are always seeking ways to improve instruction, efficacy, and long-term student retention.

My application for funds is directly related to invigorating our approaches to the writing process by using the vehicle of student publication.

Thank you for considering this proposal, and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Jon

Jon Andersen
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Jon Andersen

Proposal for Mini-Grant: Supporting Student Publication

I am writing to apply for a Connecticut Writing Project Teacher Mini-Grant to use towards our work in the English area at Quinebaug Valley Community College.

For me, one of the most intriguing and provocative short articles we were required to read in the 2009 C.W.P. Summer Institute in Storrs was “Raising the Bar for Classroom Publication: Building a Student Press Initiative,” by Erik Gordon. Gordon describes how he used his experience in publishing to create an ongoing Student Press Initiative in New York City Public Schools. I have long felt that publication for an audience is an important tool for motivating not only student production but student revision of original texts, and that too often the students who stand to benefit the most from publication are the least likely to have the opportunity to work towards publication. Like Gordon, I am keenly interested in ways to “not only democratize students’ opportunities to publish, but also, more importantly, raise the bar for what, and how, and why students write” (63).

At Quinebaug Valley Community College, I have been teaching developmental English courses in reading and writing since I began as a full-time faculty member in the Spring of 2008. In English 063: Introduction to the Essay, I have introduced a class publication unit that asks students to go back and choose a piece from their first two-plus months of writing in the class, and revise that piece to as close to perfection as possible. In this way, each student contributes to a class anthology. Students also design graphics to accompany their text, as well as make decisions about the anthology’s title, format, and order.

While this has produced very nice results, the project has a number of limitations that I would like to address. First, it costs a lot of money to make even a modest print run if the

publication is going to be produced in a format we can be proud of. We have limited access to color printing, no access to color copying, and limited access to binding. Second, I would like to modestly expand the audience range. Rather than just running off one copy per student, I would like to make copies for the academic deans, the college president, the participant's families, and for our libraries in Willimantic and Danielson. My feeling is that the increased audience range will add to the authenticity (or "realness") of the publication experience for the students, and directly impact the level of investment in the students' processes.

I feel that I could use five hundred dollars to purchase a quality color laser printer and mid-range document binding machine to achieve this uptick in publication range. I have done a preliminary survey of available products, and this seems like a reasonable estimate. Depending on how far I can stretch these dollars, I might also invest in a small audio recorder, to support experimentation in recording oral narratives, which then can be transcribed as workable text and a document stapler. These technologies would also have a sizable long-term impact in allowing me to continue or expand the publication project by avoiding the necessity to tap my limited budget every year to have print runs done at Staples or a local printer. The grant money would be used to support publications by at least two different sections of English 063 at the college, both on the Danielson and Willimantic campuses.

I would follow the project with reflection on the impact of student publication on writing in developmental English classes at the community college level. This reflection would be based primarily on my experiences at the college, and supported through research that may help me hypothetically generalize my findings.

Works Cited

Gordon, Eric. "Raising the Bar for Classroom Publication: Building a Student Press Initiative."

English Journal. 96.1 (2007): 63-67.