

Program Grant- Funded Application
Project – eInstruction for Success in American History
Project Director – Lawrence David

A. Overview

My project is the implementation of a system that would more greatly put students in charge of their own learning via a personal response technology system. The eInstruction for Success in American History Project is designed to engage students and require every student to be involved in his or her own learning. Instead of the typical classroom activity of asking informal questions that might engage a few deeply active and motivated students, this technology enables greater structure for classes and requires every student to think and respond electronically, via a small transmitter that each student will be given at the start of class. Responses can be analyzed on the spot and inaccuracies can be corrected immediately. Furthermore, a variety of activities can be created and utilized: quizzes, reviews, class surveys. The questions can even be integrated into existing Powerpoints. Overall, by providing the needed technology, this grant would help set up a very revolutionary way of teaching history at Lexington High School.

Description

1. Goals and Outcomes:

This project has three main goals through this different style of technology-aided teaching: increased engagement for students, instant feedback to help improve direct instruction, and improved conceptual and factual understanding and analytical thinking for students.

Much research has emerged in the past twenty years with regards to the use of Classroom Performance Systems (CPS). Much of it has been in the realm of science education (see the work of Erik Mazur especially in this regard), but benefits can be found across the curriculum. Research by Darrell Ward in the early 1990s showed that a technology-empowered classroom had lessons that were 1000% more interactive than those of non-technology-empowered classrooms. It was deduced that the CPS-system classrooms enabled more interaction and also allowed the students to process and answer questions in an enjoyable and non-threatening way (Ward, 1991). Furthermore, a key aspect of the CPS is the ability to grant instant feedback, which has been validated as an extremely important facet of teaching and learning (Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, Kulik, and Morgan, 1991). The instant feedback and repetition both will enable students to improve their scores and knowledge, as noted in Ward's 2003 study, "Interactive Data Driven Instruction".

I anticipate that the eInstruction technology will lead to greater engagement on the part of the students. With the comfort of a technological device akin to a remote control in their hands, many students will have an easier time involving themselves in class discussions

and debates. Under traditional instruction, a question would be asked and some students might raise their hand in response or perhaps call out an answer. However, some number of students would unfortunately not know and thus not volunteer an answer, might feel uncomfortable speaking up, or might not be paying attention. By contrast, the eInstruction program utilizes a personal response system. Thus, rather than asking informal questions that might involve a relatively lower percentage of students, this process would involve every student in a more structured fashion. Each student is given a small transmitter, akin to a remote control at the start of class, and at certain junctures, would be told to input answers. When every student has transmitted their answer, the overall class responses would be displayed on a screen via the in-focus projector in the classroom. This would then be discussed and analyzed. Between the requirement of providing an answer and the different educational experience of using this type of technology to input answers, students would be involved to a much greater extent.

The granting of instant feedback is an additional benefit. Under the traditional form of instruction, students might get a brief explanation for a wrong answer, or a “nice try”. However, the rest of the students in the class might not get anything out of it, nor even consider trying to solve the problem. With eInstruction, the teacher can see how all the students did, immediately address the knowledge deficit if it is apparent, and immediately correct any widely held errors.

Finally, students will show improved skills in a variety of areas. Due to the benefits listed above, it is expected that students will gain more factual information, become more analytical (especially if they are repeatedly asked to think critically and are more or less forced to do so).

The use of eInstruction technology should fit right into the goals of the school system, as stated in the school’s mission statement. These goals include the abilities to “read and comprehend varied materials and be able to interpret and apply what they have read”, “gather data and critically evaluate their content, source, and relevance”, “reason logically, using appropriate qualitative or quantitative methods, and use their analysis to answer questions and to solve problems”, “demonstrate practical applications of knowledge”, and obviously, “employ technology to gather, organize, and communicate information...and to investigate and solve problems”.

On a related note, this technology would especially be useful for students at the intermediate and lower levels. With MCAS being phased in for US History as a graduation requirement for the class of 2012, it is more critical than ever that every single student be given the tools and help needed to enable them to pass the MCAS tests and earn their high school diploma. The system is especially helpful in how it gives instant feedback, so that student errors can be almost instantly rectified. Furthermore, this system would be in many ways more geared towards helping students who are less likely to find class “fun”, and putting them in charge of their learning in a non-traditional fashion would seem to be one way to help them learn at a higher level and do better on both traditional and MCAS tests.

Finally, it should be noted that similar technology is currently in use by members of the Science Department. Cathy Abbot and Jackie Crowe received an LEF grant in 2004 for an interactive system from a different company, and geared their teaching and research towards conceptual learning and peer teaching for senior physics students. They have utilized this system for several years now and have reported to me that it has been very successful in boosting scores and making classroom learning more interactive and enjoyable. This type of technology has not been tried in the Humanities, nor at a grade level of students who need to take the MCAS, nor with a subsection of those students who may be at risk of failing the MCAS.

Description

1. Target Population: This project will initially just involve one social studies teacher (Larry David) and his classes, which at this point have not been determined for next year. Based on past precedent, it seems likely that the five classes will be junior classes: AP, Level I, and Level II US History, with a total maximum number of 125 students. All the same, the intent is to use the system at all levels.

2. Activities and Timetable:

May-June 2007: For baseline purposes, record scores on teaching unit assessments.

June 2007: Purchase and install eInstruction system.

August 2007: Develop and organize questions and integrate them into class activities and PowerPoint presentations, test out system.

September 2007 – June 2008: Employ eInstruction system in all five US history classes.

February 2008: Submit midyear report on preliminary observations of effectiveness of eInstruction system.

June 2008: Compare scores from teaching unit assessments from both 2008 and 2007 baseline.

June 2008: Submit final grant report.

* At some point in time, either in the 2007-2008 or 2008-2009 school year, as per Mr. Collins' request, I would be granted some time during a department meeting to demonstrate how this technology works and educate fellow staff members on how to use it and incorporate it into their lessons.

Project Impact

1. Evaluation Plan:

I will administer level appropriate baseline exams to students in June of 2007, which will be given to a Level II US history class, a Level I US history class, and an AP US history class taught with conventional methods.

After one year of using the eInstruction system, I will administer the same exam to classes at the same levels in June of 2008. (The exact levels and numbers of these classes have not yet been assigned.) The test results from the two years will be compared to

measure how improved student analytical, factual, and conceptual understanding has been improved.

Also, students will be asked in written interviews to evaluate how helpful the eInstruction program was in their classroom learning. Responses to the end of the year course evaluations will also be utilized to see if students specifically mention the system as being helpful to them in their classroom learning.

2. Dissemination Plans: First, I will give a demonstration to the Social Studies Department during a department meeting. Later on I will offer to conduct a professional development workshop, open to any teacher of any department, in order to share my findings and hopefully encourage others to obtain and use the eInstruction system, which can easily be utilized in any other subject area and with any level of student.
3. Replication Potential: The eInstruction system can be used in any classroom, and the equipment is relatively inexpensive.

Budget

Expenses:

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| 32 pad IR CPS system (includes receiver, carrying case, site license, software, user manual, sample databases, online training sessions, lifetime warranty, software upgrades tech support via 800 number) | \$1995 |
| Three staff days for one person for compiling/organizing conceptual questions and slideshows. | \$ 450 |
| Shipping and Handling charges | \$ 25 |
| Total: | ----- \$2470 |

Income: I have not gotten funds from other sources

Partial funding: I would not be able to proceed without full funding. The bulk of the cost is for the technology.

Commercial Contracts: Any relationship I have the vendor (eInstruction) or their salesperson (Robert Grela) is strictly business. I have no financial investment in this company. My rationale for choosing them is due to an article about them which I read in a professional journal two years ago, and the subsequent research I have done on this style of education and use of this type of technology.

F. Qualifications

Larry David has an undergraduate degree in History from Haverford College, a Masters in History from Binghamton University and a Masters in Education from Boston College. He has been teaching history at Lexington High School for ten years and has taught every

American history course offered by the department and several electives, including American Pop Culture, Law, and Women in American History.

G. Support Letters

Support letters are enclosed from Principal Michael Jones, Social Studies Department Head Robert Collins, and Interim Director of Technology Marianne McKenna. Also included is the resume of Robert Grela, the eInstruction consultant and trainer who will be helping me in implementing the technology.

Program Grant – Funded Application
Project –“Critic’s Corner”
Project Director – Ruth Litchfield, Bridge School

A. OVERVIEW:

In one hundred words or less, summarize the focus of your project. Your overview should include the following:

- one or two sentences summarizing program/project, “The Critic’s Corner” will be held before school for 2 – 5th grade children who are invited and elect to come. The purpose of the group is to encourage, expand and support classroom instruction and to nurture a love of reading. The children participating in this group will not be receiving any other reading services through the school. These children will be selected/recommended by the classroom teachers in conjunction with the Reading Specialist It is hoped that this group will include able readers who want to expand their reading, use their voices and have an opportunity to share books in an open forum with others.

This program has existed for the past 6 years due to LEF’s generosity and been very well received, we are hoping that LEF will be able to extend that support once again.

- how the program/project enhances student learning and/or improves teaching practice,

The ‘need’ for this project is based upon observation and on-the-run informal assessment by teachers. This group is evolving to include able readers who are hesitant to give their opinions. They were encouraged to join this group to help the teacher learn what children really think of some children’s books. The children will be truly encouraged to trust their voices and to know they will be acceptable. We will ‘agree to disagree’ with our choices, likes and dislikes. (Read-Aloud Handbook – J. Trelease, Stages of Reading Development – J.S.Chall, Let’s Read About – B. Cullinan, Fostering the Love of Reading – ed. Cramer & Castle)

- how it reflects an innovative approach to the educational issue(s).

I do not believe there is another group such as this in the system. This group will meet outside the regular school day, be presented as an opportunity and be invitational.

This will not be a group for children in ‘trouble’.

B. PROJECT GOALS AND RATIONALE:

- What are the goals of the project?

My hope is that the children will be more able to state their own opinions and to truly be comfortable stating them even when there is not total agreement. The children will grow in allowing their own voices and opinions to be heard, honored and to accept differences. Hopefully this will promote diversity in one more area and also encourage children to use their voices in responsible ways, furthering and expanding their communication skills, along with being a great deal of fun.

- How do they relate to the school system’s goals?

Our goals include creating life-long readers, which this initiative definitely supports as it crosses curriculum and integrates instruction and learning.

- What current educational research supports the project goals?

From the Overview

C. DESCRIPTION

Write a clear, succinct description of your project. Be sure to include specific details as you describe the following:

- 1. Target Population:** How many and which students or teachers or parents will benefit from the project?

Second through 5th Graders, usually 9-12 per group due to our meeting location.

- 2. Activities and Timetable:**

- What activities will be undertaken to achieve the project goals?

Children select books from pool of new books that are provided by the teacher, including books she truly wants evaluated.

Discussions, as critic's, of individual books. Some may want to buddy up, in which two copies will be required.

Meetings will be monthly or bi-monthly.

- When will various stages of the project take place?

Initially this was designed to run throughout the year, however, over time, it has become necessary to delay the beginning of this program until after Thanksgiving or even to the first of the year.

- List each activity and the timetable for accomplishing it.

Through time we have tried using a common book and this was not as well received by the children as simply having the opportunity to share their books and gaining new titles from peers.

- Indicate who will be performing which activities.

- 3. Other Participants:** If the proposal depends upon the involvement of faculty and staff members other than those applying, please describe the process used for determining the level of interest in participation by those intended participants.

D. PROJECT IMPACT:

Describe ways that you can ensure that the project has an impact upon the school system by providing the following:

- 1. Evaluation Plan:** Your application should contain a plan detailing how you will measure your project's achievement of its goals during the course of the year. When you present this plan, please list each goal of your project followed by a description of the method you will use to measure its achievement.

The evaluation process includes informal assessment by the participants in June, our last meeting. We truly begin this program mid year due to scheduling restraints.

Taken together, each project's Goals, and Measures of Success will form the basis of the mid-year and end-of-year reports required of all grant recipients. LEF uses these reports to evaluate the effectiveness of its grant programs

- 2. Dissemination Plans:** Please describe how you will share project results with colleagues.

This has not yet been determined, because this is an invitational group, there is the possibility that it could become unmanageably large for one teacher. This year every child invited participated and to date, attendance has been perfect. This will eagerly be shared to those interested and perhaps in the future at the fall Conference for the International Reading Association or the Mass. Reading Association, spring reading conference.

- 3. Replication Potential:** Please describe how your project could be replicated in other classrooms or schools, and, the resources that would be needed to reproduce.

I believe something similar is also taking place at Clark Middle School. I really feel it takes the initiative of one teacher to make this happen. The children are eager as are the parents.

E. BUDGET:

Present a complete breakdown of the total funding requested. *Please see page13 for a sample budget.*

- 1. Expenses:** Include a *detailed accounting* of each item on which you will be spending grant money.

- **Purchases:** \$500.00

The children participating in this group also have the opportunity to request books and the reading specialist would like to be able to purchase NEW books, (newly published) for the children to truly have the opportunity to critique. This project originated because through the past years I have informally asked children in the hall or around school to read a book and let me know what they think. Those asked have always

completed the reading quickly and felt very proud to have been asked. The ‘Critic’s Corner’ is an expansion and broadening of this theme.

- **Payroll:** NONE
- **Consulting:** NONE

2. Income: NONE

3. Partial Funding: In the event that we can only partially fund your project, please indicate if the project could proceed with partial funding. If so, explain how you could reduce the scope of the project but still meet its key goals.

The program will be eliminated due to the expense to the teacher involved. This has nearly happened this year with the fiscal issues of the system and constraints on time.

4. Commercial Contracts: Indicate any relationships you may have with any vendor, supplier or consultant listed on your project.

I will continue to use Sundial Bookstore in Lexington for the books purchased as well as other bookstores if necessary.

F. QUALIFICATIONS:

Briefly describe the training and experience of the project participant(s).

Ruth A. France-Litchfield is presently a Reading Specialist at Bridge Elementary School, for the Lexington Public Schools with her CAGS in Developmental Studies from Boston University. Resume attached.

G. SUPPORT LETTERS:

All applicants should submit at least two supporting letters with their proposal.

Please see page 14 for a sample support letter.

- **Elementary Faculty and Staff:** Please submit supporting letters from the school principal and Deputy Superintendent. Dr. Lynne Sarasin or the Assistant to the Superintendent, Carol Pilarski and/or an elementary curriculum specialist.

Barbara Manfredi

Linda Lee Lamb – parent of child

Liza Connolly – parent of child presently and in the past

**Program Grant – Funded Application
Project – “Pirate Writers”**

Project Director – Dana Wendel, Hastings School

A. Overview: Simply put, The Pirate Writers Society helps students to develop writing skills. Whether the students are working in the realm of fantasy fiction, poetry, or binary tree stories, students begin to become more confident by understanding they already have the innate ability to become outstanding writers; they just get assistance pulling out their talents. What makes this program innovative is its approach to the topic and the philosophy that the more kids write about zany topics, the better writers they become, and are able to transfer these skills to all areas of the curriculum.

B. Project Goals and Rationale:

The goal of the club is to help all students understand that they already have the skills needed to become better writers. The group is loosely modeled on 826Valencia Writing, a non-profit program started by the author Dave Eggers. The program has expanded to over 8 national locations and has worked with thousands of teachers and students, using offbeat methods to help all learners. An important goal is for all students to better understand the power of the written word. This is a supplemental program idea, but can also be utilized for remedial assistance.

C. DESCRIPTION

1. Target Population: All fourth and fifth grade students are encouraged to apply. They have to personally draft a well-written paragraph about anything (without parental assistance), and show a willingness to follow directions and work hard. If their writing shows promise, they are accepted into Pirate Writers. All students show promise, I believe, so all applicants are accepted. The process only indicates which students want to write. The group will run 2 sessions, 2 times per school year, and each group will have 15 students, so a total of 60 students can possibly be involved.

2. Activities and Timetable: Weekly lessons are planned. Integral to the end of every session is peer sharing, when each Pirate reads their work aloud, and fellow Pirates applaud and make positive comments. Several lessons follow:

Write like a Spy

Our students will learn to see like spies! In our first of two workshop sessions, students read aloud from the famous Harriet the Spy and discussed the intricacies of each character and their traits. Our students will adopt Harriet's knack for being super observant. The last session will be devoted to applying being observant and descriptive within our writing, after having spied on people. We will then further develop and elaborate on the conversations we overhear as material for our stories.

Protecting Your Secret Identity

We will create heroes and their secret identities. All of our characters will need:

*Power

Nemesis

Sidekicks

Hideouts

Fueling the Imagination through the Senses: Notes on Sensory Writing

We believe in firing the marvelous abilities of our imagination through sensory detail of the world around us. We close our eyes and travel through the front door of our homes, stopping in the kitchen for a chocolate chip cookie warm from the oven on our way to the one room that is so distinctly our own, the bedroom. While there, we enjoy the bright colors and muted colors, patterns and textures that adorn our walls, our floors and our furniture. We discover afresh the sweet smell of our own clothes, our lead pencils and our pets. We listen to comforting murmurings coming from the kitchen just before dinnertime and our father's snoring that told us all was safe in the house. It won't be easy to open our eyes and start writing; the journey itself will be so much fun.

We will make lists of remembered sightings and tastes and lists of others we could imagine. We write poems and prose using all these words and sometimes using each other's favorite words as well

Four Literary Superheroes and Curious George

We center on the stories about Curious George, and will include a surprise visit of four literary superheroes to help teach us about aspects of story. Captain Character, Wonder Where?, and the two Plot Pirates (Conflict and Resolution) drop in during our reading of the story, amid much ruckus. They obviously hadn't been out of Storyland for a while, as they will have a LOT of questions about the story: Who are our characters so far? What is George feeling? Has the setting changed since we began? George's uncanny ability to get himself into sticky situations allows for many interjections by the Plot Pirates, making us aware of the problems and solutions throughout the story.

After reading the book, our young readers are ready to begin their own superhero training! They divide into groups, outfitted with Superhero Training Passports, and are guided by our superhero guests to complete three tasks: composing a letter to a character of Curious George, drawing their favorite setting, and diagramming two of the plot conflicts. Once their passports are filled, the students are welcomed into the ranks of elite superheroes, now able to travel freely to Storyland whenever they want!

Exploring the Possibilities: Notes on Get Yourself Writing

We share and develop ways to overcome writers' block, invent stories, and create and develop characters and conflicts.

We'll explore what would happen if the president wandered into a stranger's kitchen (the woman of the house throws a pair of running shoes at his head, in case you were wondering). Writers have the opportunity to interview one of their own characters. Most importantly, though, we learn that there are countless ways to miss the bus, and that it often occurs at tremendous personal loss.

Each person involved can expect to see tales about marshmallows with superpowers, warring computers, magical fairies, possessed travelers, stolen backpacks full of sensitive

materials, criminals who defy authority, or other products of these creative young minds.

Visual Verse

If you write a poem about a comet, should it have a tail of fire? Should a poem about a cow be black and white? In this one-session workshop, we'll explore how verse gets visual by using word cutouts (along with markers, pencils, and paints) to make our very own collage poems. We'll use our creativity to choose words, shapes, and colors that all stick together. At the end of the workshop, students will take home an artwork that works two ways: an awesome poem that hangs on the wall as a super-cool collage.

Create an Ancient Myth that Explains Something

How does the sun rise every day? Why do we have seasons? Many, many, many, many, many, many years ago (before telescopes and weather Doppler), people answered those questions with stories about gods, goddesses, thunderbolts, and chariots. Come explore the ancient myths and create some of your own. Join us in explaining the unexplainable!

Mommy, Why is that Squirrel Vexed?

Using an image and creativity Pirates create a fictional tale describing what is happening in a picture simply by using their power of imagination. Emphasis will be on the value of surprise in writing, using outside sources to prompt storytelling, finding inspiration around us, and being aware of the senses – sight, sound, touch, smell and taste – as tools of storytelling. Workshop participants will collectively and collaboratively create image-driven fiction stories.

Whiner of the Week

Come on; what's your problem?? There must be something that bothers you SO MUCH that you can explain it. This week, we'll figure out how write about what really gets on our nerves. Using all of our senses, we'll justify why cold takeout makes us furious, as does a rainy weekend. Once we decide how to best express our annoyance, we will have a "Whiner of the Week" who gets to wear the incredibly lovely sash.

Say it, Don't Explain It

In this writing class, we will work in teams to create a story only told through dialogue. A tricky challenge, for sure. Pirates will decide if they want a starting line ("Yeah, that's my castle", "Is that your dog?," "I like the purple better", and more, or if they need to figure out what's in the box. They have to put their narrative forth only through dialogue.

D. Project Impact:

1. Project: Writing and peer-sharing activities with the overall goal of increasing writing skills, comfort, and peer-sharing abilities.

Goal #1: Every student will increase his or her writing abilities.

Method to measure success of Goal #1: At the end of every session, writers fill out a questionnaire to report on their feelings about the club and their abilities as writers.

Goal #2: Every participant will increase their comfort level when confronted with

classroom writing activities.

Method to measure success of Goal #2: At the end of every session, writers fill out a questionnaire to report on their feelings about the club and their abilities as writers.

Goal #3: Students will become more confident in sharing their work with other students as well as positively critiquing the work of peers.

Method to measure success of Goal #3: At the end of every session, writers fill out a questionnaire to report on their feelings about the club and their new-found comfort in hearing positive support as well as looking for the best in the attempt of others.

2. Dissemination Plans: The Pirate Writers lessons will be made available to all teachers as classroom activities, for their proven use in getting reluctant writers to become more confident in their skills.

3. Replication Potential: As above, any classroom and school can integrate these writing lessons into their classroom schedule with great success.

E. Budget

Payroll: \$33 per hour for Dana Zazinski Wendel, at 1.5 hours per session, with 40 sessions throughout the school year (2 separate groups with 15 students that meet weekly for 10 weeks, and there are two separate sessions in the school year) is \$1980

Expenses (optional): Published anthology for each student should cost around \$200

Total Project Expenses: $1980 + 200 = \$2180.00$

Partial Funding: The project could be run once a week, even once a year, to cut the costs of the program, but fewer children will be affected.

F. Qualifications:

I have been an Instructional Assistant at the Hastings School since 2002. I am also a professional writer, having been published in national newspapers, Parents and Esquire magazines. I received a BA in English from UMass-Boston and also have a Med from Lesley University, so I know how to work with children. Also, I have been running the Pirate Writers at Hastings since November 2006 with tremendous results.

Additionally, I have worked with 826Valencia in a volunteer capacity and have a tremendous knowledge base of using “offbeat” techniques to help kids understand how to be a better writer.