

Writing a Mini-Grant: Easier Than You Think

Here's an opportunity to implement a classroom or school project that you may have wanted to carry out but didn't have the funding to accomplish. Each year the Teacher Center funds innovative curriculum projects developed by teachers, awarding up to \$1200 to an individual or \$1500 to a group who develop a project. Perhaps this is your year to submit a winning project!

Did you know that last year the Teacher Center awarded 21 grants totaling \$29,260 to teachers in 18 different schools? The many creative projects ranged from interactive physics to character education through law and literacy to a parallax robot project. You are eligible to apply if you are a staff member of an SETC consortium district. At least one applicant must be a teacher.

There are a broad range of projects that can qualify for a mini-grant award. In addition to creating original classroom projects to advance student learning, a teacher can construct a mini-grant to research programs for district or school use, develop innovative curriculum resource materials, initiate projects that her school district will augment or continue to fund in the future, or focus on professional development programs.

Is there a template to follow in applying for a mini-grant? Yes, there is. A 2008-2009 Mini-Grant Guide will be available on the SETC website at www.seteachercenter.org or by request when you contact the Teacher Center. It explains the eligibility requirements, the application process, what mini-grant monies can be used for, who

judges the mini-grants, as well as specifying the complete format and all judging criteria.

Mini-Grant projects must have an educationally sound purpose and follow district policies. The specific guidelines are in the box below.

Mini-Grant Format Guidelines

- 1) A brief summary of your project (2-3 sentences)
- 2) Need and Rationale
- 3) Curriculum, Grades and Population of your school
- 4) Objectives
- 5) Projected Positive Impact on Student Learning and Teacher Practice explicitly stated. How will your grant increase student learning and improve teacher practice?
- 6) Activities
- 7) Timeline (The grant period begins upon notification of the award and ends June, 2009)
- 8) NYS Standards clearly stated in laymen's terms
- 9) Itemized Budget. What will you purchase? How much of each? How much are you asking for? The budget description should note if the project will have in-kind support or matching funds from the applicant's district or other sources.
- 10) Assessment (What assessments you will use for your project, and how you will know if the project has been successful.)
- 11) Collaboration (What kind of collaboration, how will it be done?)

If you win a mini-grant, a final report is required at the end of the project.

If you've worked with the Teacher Center before, you know that its programs are created in direct response to the needs of its teacher members. It is dedicated to promoting excellence in education by helping teachers meet their professional challenges.

If this is the first time you've considered writing a mini-grant, please give it a try. The Center can conduct a mini-grant workshop in your district to help you develop your idea. Find out more by talking with your district's representative on the Policy Board. His/her name is listed online at www.seteachercenter.org. Or contact the Center directly using the information at the bottom of Page 2. We look forward to working with you.



On-line Teaching and Learning Resources

A Teaching and Learning Celebration, sponsored by Channel 13 and WLIW 21, was held on March 7 and 8, 2008 at the Hilton Hotel in NY City. Listed below are some of the many resources made available to attendees. We hope you find an idea or two here to use in the new school year.

Technology Resources

www.Think.com is a password-protected, teacher-monitored site that includes no advertising, and is free of spam and viruses. It connects schools, teachers, and students from around the world to collaborate on projects, share experiences, and build knowledge.

Homework Hotline. This PBS program, geared to students in grades 4-12, is available on the digital channels live each day at 5:30 pm. The shows include quick, simple and interactive instruction, especially in the areas of math and science. Find out more at **www.homeworkhotline.com**.

Science Resources

Human Body-Bio Resources K-12. You may have seen "Bodies the Exhibition" at the South Street Seaport.. A teacher's guide containing free lesson plans and resources is available at **www.bodiestickets.com**. Click on Bodies the Exhibition and go to the Education page to register for an electronic, downloadable copy

of the guide for your grade level.

Cold Spring Harbor Lab at **www.cshl.edu** features Partners for the Future, a 10-month program for seniors giving them a taste of real world biomedical research. Programs for elementary and secondary students on nature study are available.

Team-Based Service Learning

Animal Action Week. The International Fund for Animal Welfare education initiative offers tools to help young people learn how to be responsible stewards of the earth's living resources. September, 2008's theme is Beneath the Waves: Protecting Marine Wildlife. For educational kits go to **www.ifaw.org** or **www.animalactionweek.org**.

On the website **www.childrenforchildren.org** you will find seven service learning projects, youth leadership groups, service events, online resources and grant opportunities (for students and teachers). Children for Children teaches all children, no matter how young, that everyone has something important to give.

The Jane Goodall Institute, Roots and Shoots at **http://www.janegoodall.org/** sponsors an excellent program at **http://www.rootsandshoots.org/** which seeks to create small communities of students all over the world that wish to make a positive change in the environment.

Graduate Programs Starting January 2009

Reduced off campus pricing through the Teacher Center

School District Leader Program

Stony Brook University
Open House: Oct. 15 at 4 PM

MS in Literacy Education

Dowling College
36 credits: Literacy B-6th
or 5th-12th
45 credits: Literacy B-12th

MS in Technological Systems Management

Stony Brook University
30 credits
Online/hybrid courses will be offered

Turn Your Resolve Into Action (Research)

What teacher isn't excited and perhaps a little apprehensive at the beginning of a new school year? Teachers are driven by a creative urge. After a little rest and relaxation, our thoughts start churning. It begins around the end of July...a feeling of restlessness. New approaches pop into our minds, we optimistically visualize ourselves doing something different. Maybe we took a course over the summer that has us brimming with inspiration. There's a lot percolating in our minds through August into September.

Whatever it is, gradually a teacher's resolve to do SOMETHING takes a clearer shape in her mind and she begins to plan to include it. Perhaps she plans to radically change the arrangement of her classroom, or resolves to try a new teaching method that she just never got around to last year. Maybe a teacher decides to revamp his assessment methods to more accurately gauge student learning, or to try a new strategy to elicit student response. Putting a resolve into *action* is important; taking it one step further by putting it into *action research* increases its value tenfold.

What is action research? Action research is a process in which teachers examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research. They may work collaboratively with their colleagues to implement new classroom practices and observe and document student responses with the goal of improving classroom practice.

Action research is based on the assumptions that teachers work best on problems and solutions they have identified for themselves and they become more effective when encouraged to examine and assess their own work. Working collaboratively with colleagues further enhances the group's professional development.

Imagine stretching yourself to begin an action research project with your colleagues. You may gain a clearer idea of what methods and strategies work in your classroom by using systematic evidence collection and collaborative reflection. Please use the Teacher Center contact information to the left to find out how you can get started.

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