

## OUTREACH INCENTIVE GRANT FUNDING: END-OF-YEAR PROJECT REPORT

Title of Proposal: *Building Partnership to Improve the Writing Skills of High Poverty Youth*

Your Name: *Dr. Yujeong Park*

Project Date: *01/2015-05/2015*

Additional project support received from other university or external sources:

Source	Amount	Title
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Please use this sheet to answer each of the following questions about your project (1-2 pp total)**

1. **ASSESSMENT:** How did this project document or assess its engagement with the community?

This project occurred at a local Boys & Girls Club of the Tennessee Valley. Meetings and discussions about how to implement this writing strategy at the Club were held throughout the duration of this project with faculty and doctoral students at UT, as well as the Education Director at the Club. Informal discussions with student participants also occurred throughout the project.

2. **PARTNERSHIP/RECIPROCITY:** How did the university and community work together?

The University of Tennessee and one of the locations of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley partnered to provide an effective writing strategy for students in fourth and fifth grades. The Education Director of this Club expressed an interest in providing a writing intervention to students who struggle in English Language Arts (ELA) at school. The students routinely provide report card grades to the Club, so the Director was able to identify these students easily. UTK recruited two preservice special educators to help implement this strategy weekly at the Club. A doctoral student in Special Education trained these students to use this strategy and was available weekly during implementation. Students participated in this intervention once weekly at their local Club. The preservice teachers and doctoral students worked with these students for 60-90 minutes weekly.

3. **BENEFITS:** What were the benefits (University/community) of this partnership?

Students from high poverty backgrounds participated in this project. Students selected to participate were considered struggling writers at the onset. This project provided these students an effective writing strategy, teaching the entire writing process (e.g. prewriting, drafting, revising/editing, rewriting, publishing). These skills are critical for students to learn at a young age. Preservice special educators also benefited from providing an intervention to students who struggle in the area of writing.

4. **SHARED DECISION-MAKING:** Did the community have a "voice" or role for input into this project?

With the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards, writing instruction has become a common concern among many educators. This concern spans to the community level, as well. The Club staff expressed an interest in interventions and strategies related to written expression for their students. Moreover, the Club selected the student participants for this project. Selection was based on need and ability levels (as outlined in the research questions).

5. **SCHOLARSHIP:** Are there any examples of faculty scholarship that will be informed by this project?

University researchers and faculty are interested in future opportunities to provide upper elementary-aged students with an effective writing intervention. This project helped fine tune the intervention, as well as

determine the most appropriate dependent measures to assess the effectiveness of this strategy. Faculty and doctoral students associated with this project hope to implement this in several schools in the future, helping teachers design an effective writing program to all learners including those deemed at-risk.

6. **CONCLUSIONS:** What conclusions and best practices can be drawn from the partnership?

Struggling writers need effective strategies and interventions that focus on the entire writing process. This project provided students an interactive strategy that can be implemented in general education classrooms. More research is needed to further develop this writing strategy, but this project provided a good framework for future research.

7. **FUTURE PLANS:** What are the future plans for this partnership?

This partnership will continue in summer 2015. The Modified Summer Institute, which provides novice special education teachers the required coursework for licensure, will partner with one of the local Boys & Girls Clubs. The students enrolled in the UTK coursework will provide free tutoring to students in grades K-5 in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Tutoring will occur in small groups and will focus on specific student needs.

This partnership will also continue in fall 2015. We plan a research project to (1) provide morphological awareness intervention to upper elementary students with reading difficulties in high poverty and (2) enhance use of morphological awareness knowledge and strategies as tools to increase vocabulary knowledge and passage comprehension. As this project develops, our goal is to continue efforts to support BGC's academic programs and to establish an ongoing partnership with BGC to empower and increase the literacy achievement of students in high poverty by providing free, research-based reading/writing intervention.