

## Write Time: A Project by Sarah Davis

### I. Narrative

#### Statement of Need:

The program Write Time is a monthly writing club to encourage elementary age (3rd-6th grade) children to write and to share their stories. The population served at the Martin Regional Library in east Tulsa includes many children who come from minority, marginalized, and/or struggling communities. Their stories and experiences are not always represented in the books on the shelves. Also, many children who spend their after-school time in the library are looking for a creative outlet other than being bored or playing an online game (Mattison 2016)). A writing club will encourage children to tell their own stories (Woodson 1998) while also learning skills that will help them in the classroom and in life.

I was inspired to create this program while hearing Jamie LaRue of the ALA speak at the Tulsa City-County Library 2016 Staff Development Day. In his talk, he spoke of the need to encourage diverse young voices to write. The words, "writing club," sprung to my mind and I started taking notes on my phone about ideas for such a program. After recording these initial ideas, I searched for information to support Write Time. I discovered many useful resources for my bibliography, including ideas from ALA's Programming Librarian website, NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) Young Writer's Program resources for Educators, and many books especially for helping kids with creativing writing. I also spoke with my supervisor about the viability of starting such a program and received her approval to begin the program in 2017.

Mattison, Addie. 2016. "It's Genius Time." *School Library Journal* 62(10): 36-38.

<http://www.slj.com/2016/10/technology/its-genius-hour/>.

Woodson, Jacqueline. 1998. "Who Can Tell My Story." *The Horn Book Magazine* 74(1): 34-38.

<http://www.hbook.com/1998/01/authors-illustrators/who-can-tell-my-story/>

National Novel Writing Month Young Writer's Program Website, accessed December 7, 2016.

<https://ywp.nanowrimo.org/>.

Skokie Public Library Youth Programming Department. 2016. "Blog: WRITE Stuff Writing Club." Accessed December 7, 2016.

<http://www.programminglibrarian.org/blog/write-stuff-writing-club>.

#### Project Design:

The objective of this program is to start a monthly writing club for upper elementary age children. I would like to partner with a school media specialist at a local school as a way to recruit children interested in writing for the club. Meetings will be held at Martin Regional Library on a regular monthly schedule (to be determined after speaking with the school media specialist), except for the busy summer months. I will provide pens, notebooks, and paper. I will lead each session with the following structure:

- “Ice breaker” activity with [Story Cubes](#)
- Discuss the week’s topic
- Free writing time
- Reading aloud from writing if children are interested in sharing

Each month will have a specific focus. The early meeting topics will be about basics in writing and storytelling. If the club is successful with children returning for club meetings, the topics will become more complex. Please see the tentative schedule of topics below:

**February 2017:** Write Time Introduction

**March 2017:** Journaling

**April 2017:** Silly Stories

**May 2017:** Short Stories

**(Summer Break)**

**September 2017:** Comics/Graphic Novels

**October 2017:** Nanowrimo activities

**November 2017:** Nanowrimo activities

**December 2017:** Editing

I will evaluate the program based on repeat attendance and on interactions with children at each Write Time meeting. Some questions I will consider include:

- Are children returning?
- Do children understand the activities?
- Do children enjoy the activities?
- What activities would they like to try in the future?

Based on the responses of Write Time attendees, I will increase or decrease the difficulty level of topics. I will review responses with my supervisor and coworkers in order to problem-solve challenges that arise.

**Impact:**

Martin Regional (MR) Library’s children’s department currently offers a number of programs for children ages birth to sixth grade. For staffing reasons, the older elementary age group has not had a regular program dedicated to them during the school year. This writing club requires upfront work to recruit children to come to the club and some preparation time for each meeting, but most of the preparation will be completed in this program plan.

One possible outcome is to help children create writing they can submit to the Tulsa City-County Library’s Young People’s Creative Writing Contest (for ages 10 and up). This contest takes place in February-April, so 2018 will be the next season of eligibility for future participants in Write Time. The late 2017 meetings would devote time to encouraging participation in that contest.

I reviewed the [Oklahoma education standards for English Arts](#) and considered utilizing some of their goals and outcomes. However, none of those standards related to creative writing. While I hope that Write Time will help children succeed in school, I want this club to encourage creativity, not stifle it.

## II. Bibliography

### Professional Bibliography

1. Been There, Done That: Writing Stories from Real Life. 2015. Edited by Mike Winchell. New York: Grosset and Dunlap.

Twenty different authors share childhood stories paired with a fictionalized retelling to demonstrate creative storytelling. These stories offer inspiration from a diverse group of writers for professionals to consider.

2. Dajevskis, Erika, Mary Ann Cappiello, and Patricia Crain de Galarce. 2016. "Therapy By the Book." *School Library Journal* 62(10): 32-35.

This article explores the idea of using books therapeutically with young people who are struggling with difficult issues, including an example of using storytelling as an outlet for challenging emotions. While a writing club would not try to diagnose or treat struggling children, these authors demonstrate how writing can be impactful and important for children.

3. Johnson, Ann Klein. 1983. "Stray the Course or Spark out Stagnation: How to Develop a Creative Creative Writing Club." *The English Journal* 72(8):45-46.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/816481>.

These instructions for a Creative Creative Writing Club in the early 80s is a reminder of how some types of programming are timeless, despite changes in technology. The ideas offered here are a good foundation for a writing club today.

4. Mattison, Addie. 2016. "It's Genius Time." *School Library Journal* 62(10): 36-38.

<http://www.slj.com/2016/10/technology/its-genius-hour/>.

Mattison explores the idea of a Genius Time or Genius Hour where young people are given time to be creative. This article offers support for the idea that children should be encouraged creatively, including the activity of writing.

5. McCallum, Kathryn Eileen. 2014. "Critical Multimodal Composition: A Qualitative Practitioner Inquiry of Digitally and Critically Oriented Practices in an Afterschool Writing Club." Order No. 3635752, University of Pennsylvania.

<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/docview/1614122420?accountid=12964>.

This dissertation offers an analysis of a writing club for young people, evaluating the role of the practitioner, the students, and the activities. This dissertation is an excellent review for any professional who is interested in scholarly support for writing clubs beyond library trade journals.

6. National Novel Writing Month (NANOWRIMO) Young Writer's Program Website, accessed December 7, 2016. <https://ywp.nanowrimo.org/>.

The NANOWRIMO Young Writer's Program offers accounts for educators that are filled with resources to encourage children in writing, including handbooks, activities, and guides for many ages. These extensive free resources will give endless ideas for writing program.

7. Skokie Public Library Youth Programming Department. 2016. "Blog: WRITE Stuff Writing Club." Accessed December 7, 2016. <http://www.programminglibrarian.org/blog/write-stuff-writing-club>.

This article details the structure of an existing Writing Club called The Write Stuff in Skokie, Illinois, complete with ideas and suggestions. Their guidelines give examples for writing program-runners to follow in their footsteps with proven results.

8. Verma, Henrietta. 2016. "Write Here: Programming." *Library Journal* 141(13): 40-42. <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2016/08/public-services/write-here-programming/>.

This article discusses library programming as a support for writing and self-publishing, particularly for adults. The professional starting a program for children can use the success stories offered here in defense of the overall concept of encouraging writing and storytelling.

9. Woodson, Jacqueline. 1998. "Who Can Tell My Story." *The Horn Book Magazine* 74(1): 34-38. <http://www.hbook.com/1998/01/authors-illustrators/who-can-tell-my-story/>

Written in 1998, this piece by Jacqueline Woodson reads as though it is ripped straight from today's headlines, discussing the idea of writers telling their own stories. This piece is a must-read for understanding voice and story in writing and publishing today for professionals leading young people in a writing program.

10. Writing with Writers from Scholastic, accessed December 7, 2016. <http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/index.htm>.

This website from Scholastic gives projects and suggestions for writing activities provided by a wide variety of published authors. These activities would be an excellent addition to activities for a writing club.

1. Langston-George, Rebecca. 2016. *Telling Tales: Writing Captivating Short Stories*. North Mankato, Minnesota: Capstone Press.

Part of a series of how-to writing books for young people, *Telling Tales* offers creative story prompts and introduces important writing techniques for short stories. Children will be able to use this book and others in the series to learn about different kinds of story writing.

2. Larsen, Andrew and Mike Lowery. 2016. *A Squiggly Story*. Toronto: Kids Can Press.

A perfect introduction to storywriting, this picture book shows young people the important elements to a story with word bubbles and creative drawings. A young club participant who may be intimidated by longer writing handbooks will find the basics in this accessible book.

3. Giff, Patricia. 2016. *Writing with Rosie: You Can Write a Story Too*. New York: Holiday House.

With the help of Golden Retriever Rosie, a young reader walks through the basic steps of writing a story using creative activities. This step-by-step book will show a younger elementary-age child the basics of outlining a story.

4. Guillain, Charlotte. 2014. *Get Writing!* Chicago: Raintree.

*Get Writing* uses pictures and large text to give young writers ideas and encouragement as they start the writing process. Tentative young writers will be comfortable using this book and finding activities to help them write.

5. Levine, Gail Carson. 2015. *Writer to Writer: From Think to Ink*. New York: Harper.

Beloved author Gail Carson Levine encourages young readers to be creative, offers writing prompts, and answer young aspiring writers' questions. Children who want to hear from a successful author will be able to use her advice and activities.

6. Mazer, Anne and Ellen Potter. 2010. *Spilling Ink: A Young Writer's Handbook*. New York: Roaring Brook Press.

For advanced young writers, *Spilling Ink* is a fantastic resource with writing examples, suggestions, and prompts. As children work towards writing a novel, they will be able to use this book to advance in their writing skills.

7. National Novel Writing Month's Young Novelist Workbook, accessed December 7, 2016 <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8BdGvczaryXaEVXeHRHVkZ6TUE/view>.

Filled with prompts and activities, this workbook gives young writers interested in novel-writing a guide to writing their first books. Whether a child is ready to write a novel or simply wants to explore, this NANOWRIMO resource is an essential tool.

8. Shaskan, Trisha Speed. 2011. *Art Panels, Bam! Speech Bubbles, Pow!: Writing Your Own Graphic Novel*. Mankato, MN: Picture Window Books.

Using graphic novel style, *Art Panels, Bam!* Illustrates the critical steps to creating one's own graphic novel. The emerging form of graphic novel is a great outlet for writing children and this book will help any aspiring graphic novelist begin.

9. Spilling Ink the Book Inspiration Library, accessed December 7, 2016.

<http://www.spillinginkthebook.com/inspiration-library/>.

The Inspiration Library hosts links to a number of online resources for children, including magazines like Stone Soup and Skipping Stones. Children looking to explore the world of publishing, especially online, will enjoy perusing the links available.

10. Story Starters from Scholastic, accessed December 7, 2016.

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/story-starters/>

For children with access to the internet from home, this website from Scholastic offers creative Story Starters for inspiration. Any child looking for interesting and quirky story inspiration will be able to use this fun tool.