

**The St. James Parish Excellence in Education Fund  
Mini Grants for Teachers  
Cover Page**

**Instructions:** Complete this cover page and narrative. Signatures must be in blue ink. Send original and **4 copies.**

Project Title: Moving Forward with Literature Circles Budget Request: \$1,000  
Teacher's name: Ashley Boyd  
Mailing Address: 5035 Trudeau Street  
City: Convent State: LA Zip Code: 70723  
Phone No. 225-806-0790 Email Address: aboyd@stjames.k12.la.us  
School: Paulina Grade Level: 5  
Teaching Position: 5<sup>th</sup> grade No. of Students Served: 371  
Subject(s) taught: Reading, English, Science Enrollment: 679

This proposal addresses a **balanced, developmentally appropriate instruction and comprehensive learning opportunities, with an emphasis on the implementation of Common Core Standards.**

By affixing my signature, I certify that the following:

1. This project is allowable under Local, State, and Federal guidelines.
2. The St. James Parish Foundation has the right to use this project, if funded, for public information or to help other educators.
3. This project does not displace, replace or supplant programs funded through St. James Parish General Fund, the Minimum Foundation Program or State General Fund.
4. This proposal is in keeping with the vision and mission of St. James parish Public School System and is intended to impact student achievement or vocational skill.
5. I am a full time teacher in St. James Parish School system directly involved with the instruction of children.
6. Supplies and equipment will be used to successfully implement the grant and will be housed in the school where implemented.
7. Participants in the project are PK-12<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled in St. James Parish Public School System.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant                      Date                      Signature of Principal                      Date

(Office Use Only—to be secured by St. James Parish Excellence in Education Fund)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent                      Date                      Fund Director                      Date

**Complete and mail to:  
St. James Parish School Board  
Attention: Rhonda Lee  
1876 West Main Street  
P.O. Box 338  
Lutcher, LA 70071**

**The St. James Parish Excellence in Education Fund  
Mini Grants for Teachers  
Application**

**Please limit your responses to 250 words. This document is in a table. As you type your response, the table will move.**

**Project Title: Moving Forward with Literature Circles**

**Budget Request: \$1,000**

**A. Project Summary:** Provide an overview of the proposed project including any unique characteristics as well as the purpose of the project and how it will be achieved.

This project involves building the resources necessary to help ensure that all students are college and career ready in literacy. The goal within my classroom is for my students to become independent, responsible, life long learners. One strategy teachers use to prepare students to be college and career ready is through Literature Circles, sometimes compared to adult book clubs. Well-designed and effective literature circles can be a powerful tool for addressing the Common Core State Standards. According to Schlick and Johnson, "Literature circles provide a way for students to engage in critical thinking and reflection as they read, discuss, and respond to books. Collaboration is at the heart of this approach. Students reshape and add onto their understanding as they construct meaning with other readers. Finally, literature circles guide students to deeper understanding of what they read through structured discussion and extended written and artistic response."

This project's goals will be accomplished as students use the suggested anchor and literary texts the Louisiana Department of Education recommends through their Sample Scope and Sequence document available through the Teacher Toolbox for implementing Common Core Standards. Using the anchor texts and literary texts, students will read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. Secondly, determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. Thirdly, students analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

To date, multiple grade levels utilize literature circles in their classrooms to expand and enrich instruction. I have been planning and utilizing literature circles in my classroom as planned and am now seeking more resources to allow for more student choice in selecting novels for literature circles as well as implementing the suggested texts offered by the Louisiana Department of Education's Sample Scope and Sequence. I am currently limited to the novels offered by the LRCE, our school library, and our very own classroom library. It is difficult when using literature circles in a school of our size to make sure we are not using the same titles from one grade to the next. By utilizing the state department's suggestions, this will ensure that the students will not be reading the same text at multiple levels and will ensure that students are meeting the new rigor of the Common Core State Standards. This is why this project is so important to our class.

**B. Number and Description of Participants:** Provide a description of the students who are to be directly served if this project is funded, including any special characteristics or unique situations.

This particular school has a total student body of nearly 700 students. Nearly 400 of the entire student body receive free or reduced priced lunch. 55% of the students at this school are African American while 42% are white. Approximately 3% identified themselves as either Hispanic, American Indian, multi-ethnic, or Pacific Islander.

The overall SPS at this particular school dropped nearly 10%. It is imperative that teachers have the resources to prepare students to be successful on the new PARCC assessments.

Students in grade 5 would directly benefit when this project is funded, which means 50 students would be impacted by this project. Based on the data, the professional development of this particular school is focusing on ELA; therefore, teachers across the grade levels are receiving additional support in ELA. This is another way this particular school is addressing the 10% decline. In addition, this school has entered into contract with the state department to present thinking maps and other strategies to improve the percentage of proficient students in ELA. As a decision maker in my classroom, I am also implementing Literature Circles as another way to prepare students for the rigor of Common Core.

**C. Purpose:** Provide the rationale for the proposed project, including anticipated results for students.

The purpose of this proposed project was best summed up by Brabham and Villaume, Students' insights and reflections, rather than ready-to-use questions from the teacher, drive the learning in literature circles. Students and teacher work together to break away from the traditional literature teaching methods. These learners also generate their own ideas and contribute to thoughtful conversation about what they read. This kind of practice helps to develop thoughtful, competent, and critical readers.

I anticipate a reduction in the number of students scoring non -proficient on the ELA portion of the state assessment, by as much as 20%. Currently, nearly one fourth of our students are scoring non- proficient.

**D. Needs Assessment:** Provide evidence that there is a need for this project, and describe the needs of the students to be served.

The iLEAP and LEAP assessment for the 2012-2013 school year show that nearly one fourth of our students are non- proficient in English Language Arts. This along with the increased standards, have solidified the need for strategies such as literature circles in order to increase the number of students scoring proficient on state assessments. In order to meet the Common Core Standards, students must be exposed to the kind of "meaty" thinking that promotes deep reading for understanding, critical analysis, and finding evidence on which to draw conclusions. Literature circles provide excellent opportunities for students to develop proficiency with these specific anchor standards for reading:

#### **Key Ideas and Details**

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the

key supporting details and ideas.

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

### **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

### **Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity**

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

**E. Design:** Give a complete description of how the project integrates a comprehensive design (including key activities, and other related information) for improving student performance using effective assessment.

The design used at this particular school is based on Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups by Harvey Daniels.

1. Students choose their own reading materials.
2. Small, temporary groups are formed.
3. Different groups read different books.
4. Groups meet on a regular, predictable schedule to discuss reading.
5. Kids use written or drawn notes to guide their reading and discussion.
6. Discussion topics come from students.
7. Group meetings aim to be open, natural conversations about books so personal connections, digressions, and open-ended questions are encouraged.
8. The teacher serves as a facilitator, not a group member or instructor.
9. Evaluation is by teacher observation and student self-evaluation.

**F. Objectives & Evaluation** – Provide the anticipated impact, outcome(s), and changes the proposed project will have on student performance, and provide a description of the evaluation methods the applicant will use to determine how well it has met its objectives.

The use of Literature Circles as a strategy to improve student achievement will reduce the number of non-proficient scores on the state assessments. Students in grades 3, 5, & 6 take the iLEAP assessment while 4<sup>th</sup> graders take the LEAP assessment. The grant writer will compare the 2012-2013 percentage of non-proficient students in English Language Arts to the 2013-2014 state assessment. We anticipate a 20% reduction this year with continued success because the books provided due to this project can be used year after year.

This project will also help prepare students to meet the new Common Core Standards. In 2014-2015, the state will transition to PARCC assessments, which is more aligned with Common Core Standards. It is imperative that we begin to make the transition to prepare them to meet the new rigor of PARCC.

“PARCC’s next-generation assessment system will provide students, educators, policymakers and the public with the tools needed to identify whether students — from grade 3 through high school — are on track for postsecondary success and, critically, where gaps may exist and how they can be addressed well before students enter college or the workforce.” (Found on parconline.org)

**G. Itemized Budget**

**Complete the columns:** Items to be purchased should be justified within the DESIGN OF THE PROJECT. Projects cannot displace, replace or supplant programs funded through St. James Parish School Board of the State General Fund.

**Note:** All items purchased through this grant are for the use of teachers in assigned St. James Parish schools. Should a teacher leave the St. James parish Public School System or transferred to another school in the system, all grant purchases will remain in the school where the teacher last taught. Grants awarded to teachers reassigned to a different field of teaching will be evaluated to determine if grant purchases are eligible for transfer.

Items to be Purchased	Projected Cost
Literature Circle Novels	\$1,000.00
Coming to America: The Story of Immigration by Betsy Maestro	50 @ \$5.21= \$260.50
The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe by C. S. Lewis	50 @ \$5.00= \$250.00
Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli	50 @ \$5.24= \$262.00
Wonderstruck by Brian Seiznick	50 @ \$5.00= \$250.00
<b>Total Project Cost:</b>	<b>\$1, 022.50</b>

**Additional Funding Sources:** List other revenue sources or donated items and funding sources.

Although the materials have surpassed the projected \$1, 000.00 grant, our school library will be willing to supplement the funds needed to successfully implement the project *Moving Forward with Literature Circles*.