

2007

Grant Application for Redwood City School District

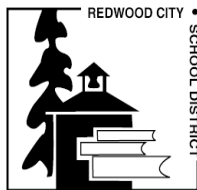
Ethan Annis, *Redwood School District*

REDWOOD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

750 Bradford Street, Redwood City, CA 94063 650-423-2230
facsimile 650-423-2294

Board of Education

Patricia Wright, President
Shelly Masur, Vice President
Craig Baker
Maria Diaz-Slocum
Dennis McBride



Superintendent

Jan Christensen

District Librarian

Ethan Annis
650-423-2255

Paul Shepard
Land Manager
Cargill Salt
7220 Central Avenue
Newark, CA 94560

June 4, 2007

Dear Mr. Shepard:

I am writing on behalf of the Redwood City School District to request that Cargill Salt consider supporting either of the two programs described below.

Program 1—Light Reading Materials for Reluctant Readers

Eight of the Redwood City School District's schools have failed in the No Child Left Behind act and are in Program Improvement status. It has been demonstrated that students learn to read by reading. One of the limitations with our libraries is that they do not have enough materials that students find interesting but accessible. The renowned reading educator Stephen Krashen wrote:

Perhaps the most powerful way of encouraging children to read is by exposing them to light reading, a kind of reading that schools pretend does not exist and a kind of reading that many children, for economic or ideological reasons, are deprived of. I suspect that light reading is the way that nearly all of us learned to read.¹

We would like to buy light reading materials for the 4095 students who attend the program improvement schools. These materials have a track record of getting students excited about reading. We could measure the success of purchasing these books by assigning them a discrete barcode range and tracking their circulation against the rest of the collections. The

¹ Krashen, Stephen, *The Power of Reading, Insights from the Research*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc. 1993: 47-48.

Cargill donation would be recognized in a Board Meeting and each book purchased with the Cargill donation would have a bookplate stating that it was part of the donation. Fortunately, these books are so popular that it is unnecessary to make special marketing efforts.

Program 2—Students Achieving Literacy using Technology (SALT)

In our District, 48% of the 3rd-8th graders are not proficient readers based on SRI tests. Currently, teachers employ two strategies for getting students to read and each has a severe limitation.

The first strategy is to have every student in the class read the same book. The problem with this “one book fits all students” approach is that sometimes the subject matter or the story does not hold the interest of all students. With the “one book fits all” approach, the students can be tested on what they have read. The teacher simply makes a test for the book. Of course, the students for whom the book was not a fit often fail the test. The book may have been too challenging, too easy, or it may have contained subject matter that the student found uninteresting.

Another approach is to have the students go to the school library and check out a book. In the District, an average of 13.2 books are borrowed per student, per year. These books are often of great interest because the student has chosen them. However, currently we usually do not know if the student has understood the book or even if the student has read the book. We have no way of entering into any sort of informed dialogue about most of the books and no way of determining whether the reading material is too hard or too easy for the student.

SALT would use Accelerated Reader Enterprise Edition (ARE) to give 1st-5th grade students, at 12 schools, access to quizzes for 104,000 books. The library books with quizzes associated would be labeled with color-coded stickers indicating their levels. Three times throughout the year the students will take a STAR Reader adaptive test, which will indicate their reading level. This is part of the ARE program. They will then be able to select books at their reading level, borrow them from the library, read them, take the quizzes; if available they will then be able to take the literacy quizzes about the book. These literacy quizzes test whether the students can answer questions on subjects such as cause and effect about their book. As the students take the quizzes, ARE tracks their progress on a wide variety of scales. It can track how a whole class is performing, how an individual student is performing and even tell a teacher that an individual student needs help in certain reading areas such as cause/effect. It will be possible for teachers to then target instruction to very specific areas of students’ needs. Librarians will also be able to generate reports and tell a student if a book is too hard or too easy before they borrow a book. We have a trainer on staff who has volunteered to train teachers to use ARE and some training is included in the price of the software.

In short, SALT would allow students to read in their areas of interest, would give teachers the ability to test students on what they were reading and would give teachers the information they needed to present very specific instruction in areas where individual students most need

help. A large study with a substantial control group demonstrated that ARE significantly raises reading levels.²

To recognize Cargill's contribution to SALT, we would have a ceremony dedicating the program. We would also have the link to the program mention Cargill and of course, the program would be called SALT, which would remind us of Cargill's generosity every time we used it. During the 2007-2008 school year, a pilot project for the program is being run using ARE at one of the schools. This pilot project is being funded by contributions from Wells Fargo. The District itself will fund the STAR Reader module of the program. The cost of the program to help the 4095 students will be \$30,947.37, which includes training for the teachers. The subsequent years will cost less because there are one time start-up costs. We are initiating a campaign to have various community donors each fund part of this comprehensive and innovative program. Consequently, contributions can be scalable. A contribution of \$2,578.95 will support one school. Funding the six schools that educate our most socio-economically disadvantaged students will cost \$15,473.70.

We believe that Cargill is an especially appropriate partner for this program because your corporate citizenship goals align so clearly with the district's goals with this program. We will use innovation in education to help socio-economically disadvantaged youth develop logic and thinking skills. Currently 56.6% of our students receive free or reduced priced meals. The literacy part of the program tests students thinking skills and allows teachers to focus on developing students' ability to think critically and logically about situations. Helping all students develop into critical thinkers will prepare them to become integral participants in the 21st Century workplace. Successful, competent citizens create happy, healthy and productive communities for all of us.

...

Either program would help socio-economically disadvantaged youth to become literate and would be of immense value to the community.

Thank you for again considering making a donation to our school district. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Ethan Annis
Redwood City School District Librarian
(650) 423-2255
eannis@rcsd.k12.ca.us

² Nunnery John A., Ross Steven M., McDonald, Aaron. "A Randomized Experimental Evaluation of the Impact of Accelerated Reader/Reading Renaissance Implementation on Reading Achievement in Grades 3 to 6," *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)* 11:1 (2006): 1-18.