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A Dream Deferred: Maybe Not

By Mark Szymanski <marks@pacificu.edu>

Currently educational institutions at all levels are slashing budget lines and capping spending. Educators are being told to be patient and wait until next year for more resources. In short, they are being asked to defer their dreams until more money is allocated for technology. This should be a concern for everyone since every year more students and teachers expect technology to be a part of their learning.

As a final effort at appeasement, administrators often tell their teachers that, “you can write a grant and try to get some funding”. Sadly, this often rings hollow with teachers because they don’t have the skills or experience for such an effort. It’s an especially difficult message for new teachers who have just learned how to integrate technology into their teaching practice. They don’t see technology as an extra tool; they see it as an essential tool. Thus, we have to ask ourselves; how do we help our new educators transform their dreams to reality?

The first thing to do is help our educators learn to write grants. Grant writing requires a set of skills that have to be practiced and learned in context. The best time to learn these skills is early in a teacher’s career. It’s my guess that educators who are successful grant writers early in their careers (they get their proposals funded) continue to be successful grant writers later in their careers. So where does a new teacher turn for help?

Dave Moursund (1), the long time editor of Learning and Leading with Technology (2) has just released the second edition of his book, Obtaining Resources for Technology in Education: A How-to Guide for Writing Proposals, Forming Partnerships, and Raising Funds (3), published by the International Society for Technology in Education (4). The book can be purchased in hard copy and it is also available in full text on the web (3).

The book is written for people with little or no grant writing experience. One of the things that separates this book from others is that Moursund expands the definition of the term resources beyond money, hardware, and software. He believes it is essential to consider staff development, curriculum materials, and consulting as resources an educator can apply for. I agree. Educators
at all levels can make good use of a range of resources that will allow them to continue to integrate technology into their work. In addition, applying for staff development from your school might seem like a more manageable task than applying for $250,000 from Microsoft.

Moursund describes this as a “how-to” book focusing on methods for securing resources for educational technology.” He considers educational technology as computer-related technologies. It’s more than just computers. The book is divided into six sections which Moursund describes in the following way:

1.) The first section provides some general background information on educational technology. If you are going to write educational technology proposals, you need to know quite a bit about educational technology.

2.) The second section examines the proposal business, including five key ideas, budgetary concerns, and the human elements.

3.) The third section focuses on proposal writing, with an emphasis on writing grant proposals in competitive situations. However, many of the ideas are also applicable to noncompetitive proposal writing situations.

4.) The fourth section focuses on other sources of resources, such as fund-raising, school and business partnerships, and entrepreneurship

5.) The final section offers several appendices that include a sample preliminary proposal and three sample proposals, and identify many sources of proposal-related information.

6.) Annotated Bibliography. Most of the references are Websites. The reader should be aware that Website references have a tendency to “disappear” over time, as the specific Website is no longer maintained by its creator.

This organization allows the reader to develop a broad understanding of the big picture. In addition, Moursund identifies and describes six major sources of resources (5).

- Competitive Situations
- Noncompetitive Situations
- School and Business Partnerships
- Fund-Raising
- Entrepreneurship
- Other Resources

Most of the book discusses competitive and noncompetitive resources since these are the areas where most of the resources exist, but the information on the other funding sources is certainly valuable and makes for a nice starting point for teachers.

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In conclusion the “how to” nature of the book as well as the way in which Moursund organizes the essential elements make it valuable tool for new teachers who don’t want their dreams deferred. Moursund’s decision to write the book with the new teacher in mind might be the angle that gives the book the most power; since it’s these teachers that have technology and learning dreams driven by their new knowledge.

Maybe Langston Hughes’ famous poem What happens to a dream deferred? might help us consider the consequences of deferring our dreams for our students.

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore-
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over-
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

References:

(1) http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~moursund
(2) http://www.iste.org/LL/
(3) http://uoregon.edu/%7emoursund/Books/GrantWriting/index.htm
(4) http://www.iste.org/
(5) http://uoregon.edu/%7emoursund/Books/GrantWriting/index.htm

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3 THOUGHTS ON “A DREAM DEFERRED: MAYBE NOT”

nigeria social network

on February 4, 2014 at 10:21 AM said:

it is usually very good to determine these information in your post, i was searching precisely the exact same but clearly there was hardly any right resource, thanx now i’ve the connection that we wanted my research.
nigeria entertainment news  
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I did finally watch A Mighty Wind! Very good stuff!