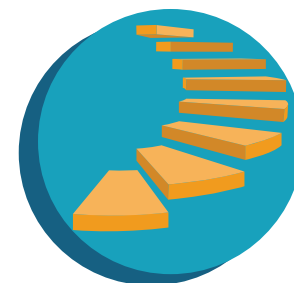


Stepping Up

Harnessing the Attitudes of Your Audience for Advocacy

By Deborah Rinio



When we advocate, we typically attempt to persuade someone to shift their attitude, alter their priorities, and care about what we care about. Persuading others is difficult, but it's something we do all the time; for example, we might recommend a movie to a friend or encourage a family member to try a new restaurant. Sometimes just suggesting the shift in attitude is enough other times it requires monumental effort. The difference is the result of many different factors, but one of the major ones is the difference between your position and theirs.

As many of us have experienced personally and professionally, if a person is noncommittal or indifferent, they are likely to be open to new ideas, but if a person feels very strongly about a topic, or has a strong personal connection to the idea, it is much harder to get them to listen, let alone shift their attitudes (Sherif 1963).

Understanding how people make decisions and change their attitudes can help when developing advocacy strategies. To persuade someone, you must first understand where they fall on a continuum of ideas about your topic. Are they strongly in favor, strongly against, or somewhere in the middle?

If you're familiar with your audience—your principal, for example—you are likely to know their positions, but those of school board members, superintendents, and legislators may be less clear. Thus, the first step in understanding your audience is to pay attention to what they promote and decry. You can glean ideas about their positions from emails, speeches, social media, and other communications they produce.

If you are unable to determine an individual's position, or if you must persuade more than one person, adjust your strategy. For example, if you wish to convince the superintendent to promote the freedom to read, but you have never heard his or her thoughts on students' freedom of choice, find a related issue you can capitalize on.

Perhaps he or she has often expressed the importance of supporting students with various difficult life circumstances. In this case, you may wish to frame your message as one of ensuring that students can benefit from learning about difficult life issues via the safety of age-appropriate literature available in the library.

Once you've established the attitudes of your audience through observation and friendly conversation, you can begin to craft your message. If your audience has no strong ideas already, you can probably be direct, clear, and cut to the chase. However, if the person you wish to persuade has strong opinions, you're likely to be more successful if you approach them with an idea that is closer to their existing perspective.

When a person with strong opinions encounters a message they perceive as opposing their position, they will exaggerate the difference between the two. For example, suppose your principal believes that students should be completely silent in the library. If you suggest that the best libraries are lively ones, your principal may assume you will tolerate any amount of noise from students. You didn't say that, but because you argued an opposite idea to the principal's position, he or she exaggerated the argument and leapt to erroneous conclusions. If, however, you instead make your argument closer to the principal's current position, you are much more likely to gain traction. For example, if you instead suggest that you teach the students about differing noise levels (shoulder voices, elbow voices, etc.), the principal may think it's a brilliant idea because it falls much closer to his or her current position.

In short, data, research, and common sense are good starting points, but if you want to be effective, establish the position of your audience, and if it is a strong position to one side or the other, match your message to be close to their existing ideas on the topic. It may not get you to your goal in one

fell swoop, but it will help you move in the right direction.



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University of Alaska, Fairbanks. She has served as president of the Alaska Association of School Librarians (AkASL) and on the 2017 AASL National Standards Editorial Board. In 2015, she received the AkASL Linda K. Barrett award for outstanding service to the school library profession.

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Begin Your Grant Writing Adventure Today

By Carolyn Vibbert

Conversations about grant funding often include a list of opportunities missed. Grants remain an elusive mirage on the horizon for many librarians and teachers. We see funding out there, but we just can't get ourselves across the challenging desert to reach it. Just like the real desert, grant funding is the unexpected beauty that is there, waiting for you to go on an adventure.

What many librarians do not realize is that many national applications don't garner that many applicants. I've been on several AASL award committees with fewer than ten applicants. Some awards go un-granted because too few qualified applications are submitted. If you don't start the adventure, you won't finish it. Let's get you ready for your journey.

Brainstorm Your List

Turn your ideas into reality by using some design thinking. You have a challenge—how will you approach it? You learned something—how will you interpret it? You see an opportunity—what will you make of it? You have an idea—how do you build it? You tried something—how will you evolve it?

Identify Strong Foundations

Childhood literacy, technology, and STEM are all hot topics in funding. However, you cannot simply ask for tablets because you think they will be great to have in your library. The foundation of your grant is not the items you need, but the student learning outcomes that will be achieved. Look at your list of brainstormed topics and identify the ones with the strongest student learning outcomes.

Explore the Grant Landscape

Securing grant funding can only happen when you find the successful match between your project, the grant funding available, and the timeline of both. Fitting these puzzle pieces together requires sleuthing and patience. Generate a list of possible grants, the funding given, and the deadlines. Don't just look ahead at the landscape but look behind you. If a deadline has passed for an annual or semi-annual grant, add it to your list. When that opportunity comes around again, you'll be ready. Keep a master list of annual grants, their websites, and any details about the application along with your files of grant ideas.

Five Places to Look for Funding

Local Funding

Community educational foundations secure donated funding from the community and turn it back to the schools in grants, scholarships, and educational initiatives. Local foundations usually have a broad mission: support the students and teachers in our community.

State and National Associations

Membership can be expensive, but one of the benefits of membership is the ability to apply for organization-sponsored grants. Your membership can pay for itself if you win a grant or awards. One librarian said to me, "My principal wants me to get grant funding. Maybe she'll pay for my AASL dues?"

Corporations

Businesses have tightly focused visions and missions. Making the correct match to your project requires that your project also falls in line with the goals of the corporation.

Nonprofits and Small Businesses

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These grants can be smaller monetary values, but also with narrowly focused missions. Community gardens, for example, are one project I've seen tackled through these types of funding. There are grants out there if you want orchards, bees, and herbs. This laser focus is perfect if you were really hoping to start a school orchard, but not so great if you were hoping for a butterfly garden.

Crowd-Sourced Funding

This type of funding is great for specialty projects or projects for some more foundational needs. These are the projects that will help students but may have learning outcomes a bit harder to prove with traditional data sources.

Travel Documents

Start with a shiny new "Grants" folder on your computer or in your hand. Some documents are must-have in order to move forward.

- Grant application
- Grant rubric
- List of previous winners or sample projects
- District grant forms
- Your school's state/district report card
- Three to five years of testing data
- Data specific to the grade levels targeted
- Current percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch
- Current school demographics
- State or national data related to your topic

Do some basic research related to the topic of your project. What do other articles and national surveys say about trends and best practices? More than a map, all of these pieces will make your way toward funding an easier trek.

Doing the Work

Grant applications come in many different forms with word counts, required questions, or more freedom. Most will follow a simple progression: student need, the idea, project outline, outcomes and assessment, and logistics (budget and timeline).

State your need. Support that need with

appropriate data. Put local data into the context of state or national trends. Connect to your district's goals or long-term plan. I received a grant for kindergarten embryology equipment because I made a connection to a desired district high school outcome of having more students participate in advanced science opportunities. Even though you have identified a need, start your story positively. It is not about what students don't have or can't do, but about the opportunity that is ahead.

Identify a solution—your project—that will address at least one of the areas of need.

Is your idea innovative? Innovation is thinking about what will be innovative for your students and their learning, not about trying something no one has attempted.

Clearly outline the project steps in a simple format so that funders know exactly what materials will be needed, how you will use them, and how you will know if the project was successful. A key idea in one of my recent grants was teacher booktalks. I was sure to clearly explain what this meant in the classroom. For this section in particular, look at the steps from a non-educational lens.

What outcomes are you expecting? How will this grant impact the wider community? How will you measure the project's impact? As you write, embed as much of the assessment as possible. Keeping a document open for creating supporting documents at the same time I outline the steps in the application helps me be ready to go when funding arrives.

A detailed budget should list exactly what you will purchase at the full cost (not the amazon.com "sale" price). Identify one or two items that could be purchased in addition to the budgeted items should something fall below its targeted price. Partial funding may be an option. Explain what will happen to the project if full funding is not received.

Include a timeline of action steps. Place tasks into the timeline with reference to a previous step or to the calendar: "two weeks after receipt of materials," or "early February."

Many funders are looking for projects that have the potential for replication. Think about project refinement. How will you assess implementation? How will you improve the project?

If you need letters of support or recommendation, ask for more than you need. If you have excess letters returned to you, include the strongest ones.

Absolutely, without a doubt, number one: stay focused on student learning.

Take a Buddy

Find a grant-writing partner or someone willing to review your work. If you teach in a larger school district, you may have access to a grants coordinator. Make friends with this person! I've applied for so many grants in the past few years that my coordinator will now reach out to me when she sees something she thinks is attainable. Ask someone outside of education to review your application. With the exception of association funding, grant reviewers are often from the business community.

Enjoy the Results of Your Journey

When you have finished, you have time to sit down to relax and wait. But just for a minute because another opportunity is waiting for you. Writing grants is like real travel. Once you finish successfully, whether the grant is won or not, you will start looking for more and more adventure!



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Appalachian State University, and has National Board Certification in library media.

Grant Lists

AASL Awards and Grants. <http://www.ala.org/aasl/awards>

Big Deal eBook. <https://www.bigdealbook.com/ebook/>

Edutopia. The Big List of Educational Grants and Resources. <https://www.edutopia.org/grants-and-resources>

Grants Alert. <http://www.grantsalert.com/>

The Journal. K-12 Grant Opportunities and Ed Tech Event Listing. <https://thejournal.com/articles/list/listings.aspx>



Grants

Free, My Favorite Four-Letter Word

By Tracey Wong

If you ask any school librarian about their budget, chances are they will tell you it is nonexistent, inadequate, or has been cut. Many school administrators do not realize the full value and impact of the library media center. As a result, the library budget tends to be the first source to pull money for areas that are non-library related. While some school districts do give their school libraries the state aid mandated per child, others use it at their discretion.

Six years ago as a school library media specialist starting out, I used grant funding to build resources and create stimulating learning opportunities. Through grant writing, I have grown tremendously as both an educator and a person. The school library and its wonderful scholars have been able to participate in transdisciplinary learning through these projects and activities: an invitation to visit Michelle

Obama's garden at the White House; an elevator pitch to Warren Buffett; a \$5,000 check from HSBC for a water creation project; a New York City award presented by Council Member Ritchie Torres; and ten Surfaces from Microsoft for being filmed playing Mystery Skype for ABC's *Born to Explore* series with Richard Wiese.

Donors Choose

Anyone who is interested in writing grants should start with Donors Choose as it provides an excellent foundation to learn how to write high quality grants. When I first started teaching in the South Bronx as an elementary teacher, I discovered Donors Choose. I had heard about a site that would help teachers cut through administrative red tape and quickly put materials into the kids' hands. All the



The old adage “practice makes perfect” is very true. If you practice anything long enough, it is easy to master it. Writing is no different. Looking to create specialized programs and wanting to have a bigger impact on the learning community, I turned to foundation, state, and federal grants since the funding available is much larger.

wonderful and fun things I envisioned as a teacher were suddenly possible. Donors Choose was my stepping stone into the world of grant writing and I still use them to this day. Most recently, Donors Choose had their #BestSchoolDayEver when Ripple funded every single live project to a total of \$29 million. Donors Choose first qualifies teachers by their district through a drop down menu and asks for a picture of your students to be uploaded in order to put a face on the project. The site then walks you through a three-part, simple process of grant writing. Providing answers to questions about your students, your project, and what you hope to accomplish are all you need to complete a proposal.

In order to be successfully funded on Donors Choose, please have these tips in mind. Keep your requests reasonable. Sticking to a \$300-\$500 range project will enable you to quickly get funded.

Donors tend to shy away from large projects, and donors who may only have a few dollars to spend will feel their donation is more greatly appreciated on a smaller project. If you do have a big project and the funding is steep, break it up into several different requests labeling them Part A, Part B, and Part C. Always look at the funding opportunities before you begin to write. Often different companies like to promote different learning dispositions or topics and will automatically fund half a project. Once when there was partner funding for any project that was garden related, I was able to secure two iPads for the library. Since the library had already created a garden and I had connected it to the science and math curriculum by having kids document growth with plant size related to days, I proposed using iPads to record the growth process in a series of pictures as well as in creating digital stories to present learning outcomes. As I learned how to more finely tune this habit

of thinking outside the box and creating transdisciplinary connections and collaborations, I became able to grow as a writer and a teacher.

Six-Figure Grants

After getting funded on many Donors Choose projects, I began to look for bigger funding opportunities of anywhere from \$1,000 to \$5,000. I applied for every grant I could. I spent approximately twenty hours a week on my own time writing grants. I wanted my scholars in the Bronx to be able to have learning opportunities that would enrich them since they suffered from so many disadvantages as it was. Since the library is literacy based, I knew that I could teach almost any topic around research and reading and make it into a transdisciplinary learning opportunity by communicating and collaborating with other teachers. Through grant funding I was able to provide family engagement workshops, health and wellness hands-on classes for classes and parents, summer school programming, after school enrichment, desktops, iPads, field trips to Broadway, cultural enrichment art-based units, gardening, and composting. The sky was the limit. If I could think of it, I would write about it.

By applying indiscriminately to medium-sized grants, I began to get bombarded with numerous emails about more grant opportunities. The old adage “practice makes perfect” is very true. If you practice anything long enough, it is easy to master it. Writing is no different. Looking to create specialized programs and wanting to have a bigger impact on the learning community, I turned to foundation, state, and federal grants since the funding available is much larger.

In applying for bigger grants, it is important to allot a sufficient amount of time to complete them and not feel overwhelmed. Additionally, it is a good idea to work on sections of the proposal at different times. It is beneficial to write and later revisit the writing two, three, or even four times to reread, edit, and improve what you have already written. Use the language provided in the grant guidelines and directions in order to craft your response. This can often be as simple as turning the questions into sentence starters to frame your writing or working from a word bank you create specifically for the proposal. As you later go back to your draft, you add to and create your vision, which then begins to take a life of its own. The various sections drawn from the questions should be highlighted as headings within the proposal to make it easier for the grant reviewer to see where you are answering what they are seeking. This not only makes your proposal clear and clean, but it also assists you in the drafting process as it will become obvious how you will need to align your writing to the questions.

Always use data. This will help paint a true picture of the learning community. In order to obtain the most recent data, visit the National Center for Education Statistics (<https://nces.ed.gov/>) for statistics on ethnic breakdown, total student population, and the percent of teachers to students. You will need to provide data on the population you service. State benchmarks are relevant, as well as the percentage of special education, English language learners, and the percentage of students who receive free/reduced meals.

Helpful Tips, Tricks, and Techniques

Though you will be asked about the materials and/or budget being proposed, do not spend too much time on this. Instead, concentrate on how you will create a multi-sensory learning

experience. Use powerful words and details to bring your project to life. Create a mental image for the reviewer. Have a printed copy of Norman Webb’s Depth of Knowledge handy that you can refer to as you write (https://static.pdesas.org/content/documents/M1-Slide_19_DOK_Wheel_Slide.pdf). This will help you focus on the learning you need to inspire so you can vividly describe the experience. What will children be doing? Why is it beneficial? Avoid using education-specific vocabulary that the grant reviewer may not be familiar with. Instead, write out any abbreviations and use a formal tone. Always use the third person.

A solid grant proposal often has good measurable outcomes. Measurable outcomes are often the difference between grants that are funded and grants that are not. How will funders know their grant made a difference? What learning transpired and how will it be measured? A favorite thing I like to do is to use student service learning to implement the grant. As I work with a team of scholars, who are essentially the board members, I rely on them to deliver the grant and turnkey it to the general population. This has always been a wonderful experience as it builds confidence, leadership, and has other students mindful of how they behave as they want to be asked to lead a grant.

Additionally, many funders are concerned with sustainability. They do not want to fund a proposal only to have it languish or die off after the first year. Since you are requesting to fund a special learning experience, how can it be continued? What steps will be taken to ensure that not only will it target the greatest number of students possible but also has a lasting effect?

After you have finished writing and have submitted the proposal, save your work and make sure to organize it in a manner that will be easy for you to recall and retrieve. As you begin to write more and more grant proposals, you will notice they have many similarities. It is not uncommon for a good grant writer to recycle, reuse, and repurpose what was written before.

In conclusion, grant writing is an art form and a numbers game. The more grants you apply to, the more you will have accepted. While you will get rejected on some, the key to being successful is to stay focused and persist. By collaborating with colleagues, creating transdisciplinary curriculum, and utilizing data and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge, many grants are within your reach. Lastly, besides the amazing experiences scholars will enjoy, a very important side benefit to grant writing is that they will advocate for the library media center and the work you do. Too often, parents, administrators, and even other teachers are under the mistaken belief that school librarians just check out books. Writing grants will help to highlight the special learning that transforms children’s lives and forms memories well into adulthood.



Tracey Wong is a school library media specialist in New York. She has taught at the elementary, secondary and college level. She enjoys creating transdisciplinary learning opportunities. For more information on her library programming please go to traceywong.weebly.com.