



Red River Valley Writing Project
Improving Literacy, K-College

Dear Appropriations Committee Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ben Melby, Director of the Red River Valley Writing Project (RRVWP), and I support HB 2013. Specifically, I support continued and (if possible) increased funding for a pass-through grant supporting North Dakota's writing project sites. Currently, the ND DPI allocates \$25,000 to the RRVWP's support of writing and writing instruction. An increase to \$45,000 per biennium would allow us to fulfill our aims and service to the state. The removal of funding would mean the end of our programs and our mission:

1. To provide high-quality teacher training for **using writing to enhance student learning** across the curriculum.
2. To increase the **quality and quantity of student writing** done both inside and outside of schools.
3. To enrich our communities and **civic life** through more opportunities to write together and share through writing.

In the past biennium, the RRVWP reached a total of **216 teachers**, with **329 professional development contact hours** focused on writing instruction. Additionally, we engaged **over 1,000 student writers** in our writing competitions, writing camps, writing workshops, and writing groups, and writing marathons.

Our flagship program for teachers is the **Summer Institute**, which provides intensive, 45-hour professional development to North Dakota writing teachers from K-College—led by veteran writing instructors, who demonstrate effective teaching practices and guide participants as they create and refine their own lessons. We identify and invite the most talented, hard-working teacher participants who have great leadership potential. Our writing project trained teachers often go on to become literacy leaders and coaches for their local schools and districts.

Our flagship program for students is the **Scholastic Writing Awards**, which gives all North Dakota teens the opportunity to enter the country's most prestigious and competitive art & writing competition, with thousands of dollars of scholarship and prize money offered at both the state and national levels. Our organization, in partnership with Plains Art Museum, hosts a literary reading event, exhibition, and state awards ceremony each year to recognize the award recipients. We reach all corners of the state with this program.

A detailed **project summary** with performance measures and proposed **budget outline** for the 23-25 biennium are also attached.

Without continued and increased DPI funding, we would be forced to limit the number of teachers and students we serve (at a time when our youth **need more and better writing, not less**).

Thank you for your important, time-intensive, and committed civic service. We hope to return the favor by working hard to support student writers and the teaching of writing in the state of North Dakota.

Sincerely,

Ben Melby

Ben Melby, Director, Red River Valley Writing Project

RED RIVER VALLEY WRITING PROJECT

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