

Dear Chairman and Appropriations Committee Members,

I am writing to urge you to continue funding the Red River Valley Writing Project, which is supported by a Department of Public Instruction pass-through grant. As a teacher in the Moorhead Public Schools District and member of the Red River Valley Writing Project (RRVWP) community, I have seen firsthand the positive impact this program has on our teachers and students.

Purpose

The Red River Valley Writing Project is a professional development program that provides teachers with the training and support they need to improve their writing instruction. By participating in this program, teachers gain new skills and strategies that enable them to better engage their students and help them develop stronger writing skills. This, in turn, benefits our students by preparing them for academic success and future careers.

Furthermore, the Red River Valley Writing Project is a program that focuses on training teachers to increase North Dakota's voice in both written and spoken mediums, ensuring that all students have access to innovative and high-quality writing instruction. This is especially important for students from rural and low-income communities who may face barriers to academic success.

Impact

I first went through the summer institute in 2012. It was a grueling 3-week course. It was the best professional development I have ever had, and it hooked me. Since then, I have become the co-director of RRVWP. In this role, I have worked with teachers all over North Dakota. For three years, I mentored teachers in writing strategies on the Turtle Mountain Reservation. I have worked with teachers in rural cities around the state to help create a sense of community and develop a support network for teachers that are often the only teacher in their content at their school. North Dakota is an amazing state, but it is huge. Teachers are spread out across the state and that can be isolating. RRVWP is a way for teachers to find that community, to learn best practices, and to become teacher-leaders in their own schools.

Besides creating a community, I have seen how research-based teaching practices have improved not only writing instruction, but all instruction in the classrooms of the teachers who attend our professional development. Often professional development is done by outside groups who do not know our students and our demographic. The RRVWP is the only organization dedicated to teachers teaching teachers to further writing instruction. This gives our North Dakota teachers opportunities to lead and grow their skills in ways that hiring outside organizations cannot provide. These teacher-leaders become leaders in their school and often begin leading professional development on their own. This is the kind of success RRVWP is looking for: one where teachers' experiences and knowledge are honored. This can be seen in the number of alumni teachers who have become state and even national recognized.

The majority of our funding goes back to the teachers. This money compensates teachers for their time and expertise, provides travel to national conferences and events, gives scholarships to teachers attending writing institutes, and creates professional development. It allows North Dakota teachers opportunities to work within a national network of teachers and to represent all that North Dakota can offer, something that would not be feasible for teachers to do on their own.

And, I cannot talk about teacher impact without talking about students. The RRVWP is dedicated to improving student writing. We host the Scholastic Writing Contest and Awards at the Fargo Art Museum. Students from across the state compete for scholarships and awards, and the winners move on to the national competition. This is an opportunity for North Dakota students to shine on the big stage; these opportunities are rare for individuals in our state. The RRVWP hosts creative writing workshops for students in the summer, has worked with schools to provide grief writing workshops, and has provided game writing workshops to teens. These will all be lost without funding.

Finally, the RRVWP is dedicated to helping the community write. Warrior Words is a workshop for veterans. The Pens and Pints Writing Crawl is for community members to gather and write. Part of our mission is to bring people together through writing and give people the opportunity to be writers.

Removing this funding affects all teachers and students across this great state.

Request for Funding

Continued funding would allow the writing project to fulfill its aims and service to North Dakota's teachers, students, and citizens. Without funding from the DPI grant, this valuable program may be forced to cut back its services or even shut down entirely. This would be a tremendous loss for North Dakota and the students and teachers who rely on this program (at a time when our schools need **more and better writing, not less**).

Therefore, I urge you to support continued funding for the Red River Valley Writing Project. Please consider the impact that this program has on our community and the importance of providing our teachers and students with the resources they need to succeed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Angela Hase

English Teacher

Co-director of the Red River Valley Writing Project