

## **Extension Proposal**

### **Continuing to Bring Science to Life**

In a few short months our “Brining Science to Life” Grant will come to a close and this will be a sad ending to a three year program building project that provided us with our Science Expert, Mr. Bruce Wear, trips to the National Science Teachers Association Conference for training, a wealth of science supplies and last, but certainly not least improved student performance in Science.

Although, we will not be able to quantifiably prove this increase until the results from the FCAT are returned to us in May, I am pleased to point out that we have seen a significant improvement thus far. In the in the spring of 2002, while our grant was just be planned, a pilot Science test was administered to our fourth grade students. While no data was returned to us, a scatter plot had been developed to illustrate how Palm Beach County Schools compared to one another. Unfortunately, Lake Park Elementary was at the very bottom of the scatter plot meaning that all Elementary Schools performed better than us. To be sure, we took this news very hard. But, rather than be discouraged, our Science Planning Committee put a plan together, wrote our grant and through the help of the Pew Public Education Fund, we were able to jump from the cellar to the middle of the pack last year. In fact, our average score was greater than Washington Elementary, an A School and even higher than Canal Point the school we visited to get ideas for starting our own program.

The fifth graders who will be taking the Science subtest of the FCAT on Tuesday and Wednesday of next week have had the benefit of three years of intensive Science instruction so we are looking forward to even better results this year and in a few short months, we will be able to submit our final report, quantify our data and reveal exactly

how we benefited from our three year grant that was benevolently funded by Mary and Robert Pew and through the unwavering support of Ms. Louise Grant, a true advocate for Lake Park Elementary!

I am writing this proposal to extend our grant through the 2005-2006 school year. Our rationale is quite simple. For the first year since the implementation of the FCAT Science subtest individual student results will be reported as levels in the same fashion that student math and reading results are reported. According to the A Plus plan, schools are recognized for high achievement when 60% or more students score over a level 3.0. Next school year, our fifth grade students will have had the benefit of 4 full years of intensive Science instruction. Therefore, we have but one goal:

At the end of the FY 06 school year, over 65% of our students will score above a 3.0 on the FY 06 FCAT Science Subtest.

While this is an ambitious goal, we feel that it can be accomplished as we have learned over the last three years what our students need to succeed; more opportunities for life-like or hands on experiences, more exposure to quality reading materials and teachers who have the benefit of continued staff development and quality planning time.

Over the last three years, several of our teachers have been able to attend the National Science Teacher Association Conference. Each year, we would send a delegation of 6 teachers who would bring back a suitcases full of free give aways, catalogs, materials and lesson plans to provide our staff with state of the art teaching methods to effectively illustrate the concepts and build the skills that are demanded in the National Science Standards. The 6 delegates that are able to attend this conference provide training for our teachers and teacher to teacher staff development is always more meaningful and effective than training offered by non-classroom teachers.

Meaningful staff development for teachers is a key component to improving student achievement. In fact, Linda Darling Hammond (1998), the director of the

National Commission on Teaching and America's Future believes that every dollar spent on improving the quality of teachers has a bigger effect on student achievement than any dollar spent elsewhere in education. Hammond maintains that the single most important determinant of how students achieve is their teacher's qualifications.

For this reason, we would like to continue sending a delegation of teachers to attend the National Science Teacher's Conference so that we can continue to stay current on methods and strategies so that we can continue to offering a quality standards-based Science Program.

Douglas A. Grous and Kristen J Cebulla (2000) insist that life like or hands on experiences are positively related to increases in student science achievement and improved attitudes toward science. Grouse and Cebulla both maintain that hands on experiences help students construct useful meaning for the scientific concepts they are learning. Consistent with this research, we at Lake Park pride ourselves in our ability to provide the kind of real life/ hands on experiences that contribute to authentic learning. In fact, many years after our student have left us for middle school, they may never remember the title on their Science textbook, but they surely will not forget the authentic, hands on learning activities that they experienced.

At this point in time, there are hundred of items that we could purchase to meet student needs. However, we would first like to receive the results of the FY 05 Science sub-test that will come back to us in May. According to these results, we will make selections that will best support the strands that caused students the most difficulty on the FCAT Science sub test.

One final request we would like to make for the 2005-2006 school year involves extra stipend money for planning time. Our academic programs have been very successful at Lake Park Elementary and this is mostly due to our collegial "Brain Power". Well before the onset of Accelerated Academic Achievement and learning team meetings, the teachers on each grade level would plan and develop strategies,

assessments and share best practices so they could make a unified effort to help students succeed. When teachers have a chance to plan together and implement strategies and lessons that they develop, they gain a sense of efficacy that gives them ownership over what they are doing and this leads to both teacher and student success. In fact, for the last three years, the percentages of students making gains in math and reading has continuously increased. Therefore, we would like to make one final request and this is for paid planning time over the summer. This time will allow us to solidify our plan, purchase and organize materials and schedule our Common Assessments for the 2005-2006 school year.

## **BUDGET**

NSTA Conference	\$ 7,000.00
Hand's on	
Supplies	\$ 5,000.00
Teacher Training	\$ 3,000.00
10 AP Duty Days	\$ 4,000.00
10 Contact Duty Days	\$ 4,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 23,000.00</b>