

Foreword

During my first year as a teacher in Chicago, the resources available to me were confined to a tall metal cabinet in a corner of my classroom. The best thing that can be said about that cabinet is that it was full. But the praise ends there. Its shelves were crammed with dusty dittos, outdated textbooks, faded worksheets, and reading passages that bore little relevance to the lives and experiences of my students.

I remember opening the double doors of that cabinet many times and just staring inside, hoping something different—something I could actually use to help teach my students—would magically appear. It never happened.

I pieced together a curriculum the best I could that year, but the lack of resources was a constant challenge. Our school's budget was tighter than tight, and I had almost no knowledge at the time of what assistance—financial or otherwise—might be available beyond my school's doors.

Over two decades later, teachers in Chicago and many other school districts across the United States still face dwindling budgets and limited resources. Underfunding of K–12 education combined with expenditures focused on high-stakes testing have meant cuts to arts programs, after-school activities, and even basic classroom supplies. In the summer of 2013, protestors converged on the Chicago Board of Education to draw attention to a new round of funding reductions. One teacher held a sign that read:

Dear students,

Due to recent budget cuts, please bring the following supplies on the first day of classes:

toilet paper

paper towels

markers

one case copy paper

hand soap

books

pencils

floor wax

teachers

teachers' aides

nurse

Sometimes as a teacher you have to laugh to keep from crying. But you also have to take action. In part, that means raising your voice in the struggle for educational equity—protesting, blogging, joining with grassroots teacher activist groups. But it also means arming yourself with the know-how to sustain your classroom and provide for your students when you don't have adequate resources.

That's where this book can help.

Dakota Pawlicki, Chase James, and the other young educators who contributed to *The Insider's Guide to Winning Education Grants* understand the process of grant writing inside and out. They've done it for their own classrooms. They've helped others do it. They've led workshops and created helpful resources for teachers. And now all of their knowledge and experience are collected in this incredibly useful book.

As the authors point out, what you'll learn in these pages was probably not on the radar screen of your teacher preparation program. You may have learned a lot about curriculum construction, alternative assessment, or technology integration, but through it all, the unspoken assumption was likely that you'd have the resources you need once you landed in a classroom of your own. Far too often, that's not the case.

I've known Dakota, Chase, and many of this book's contributors since they were undergraduates studying to become teachers. What impressed me about them then, and what continues to now, is not only their unwavering commitment to working with students in under-resourced schools but also their determination to bring other teachers along for the ride. These young educators are not satisfied with simply closing their classroom doors and doing the best they can for their twenty-five or thirty kids. Like all good teachers, they want to share what they've learned with colleagues. They want to effect change on a larger scale, and this book is just one fruit of their labors.

So, don't just stand there staring into a cabinet full of decades-old textbooks or pointless worksheets like I did my first year. Close the cabinet doors, gather some colleagues together, read this book, and start writing that first grant.

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