

## Impact Report: Classroom Library Project Spring 2012 – Spring 2016

### Overview

In Spring 2012, the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education (CPIE) launched Classroom Library Project (CLP), an initiative that promotes the availability and use of diverse children’s books in classrooms. In CLP, College of Charleston clinical practice interns (early childhood, elementary, and special education) are invited to select three titles from a list of children’s books. CPIE then purchases two copies of the selected books—one is given to the intern for his/her future classroom, and the other is given to the cooperating teacher’s classroom. In exchange, each intern is expected to incorporate at least one book into classroom instruction during clinical practice and to submit a reflective essay that describes which book was used, how it was used, and the intern’s perception of the lesson.

CLP was initially conceived to run in conjunction with the National African American Read-In, an effort to infuse literacy into Black History Month. Consequently during its first two years, CLP occurred in the spring semester only and the book list reflected Black history themes. Also, the program was limited to interns majoring in early childhood or elementary education. Beginning in 2013-2014, the program expanded to include both fall and spring semesters, as well as special education interns. The fall semester book list consists of children’s books dealing with death/dying, disability, chronic health conditions, or mental health. The spring semester list is comprised of children's books written by or about African Americans.

Recruitment of participants is handled by the Office of Student Services and Credentialing (OSSC) that oversees clinical practice. OSSC staff members make announcements at in-person sessions and send emails to the interns, college supervisors, and cooperating teachers. Follow up emails are sent close to the registration deadlines. When necessary, college supervisors are asked to remind interns to submit their reflective essays. In all five years of CLP implementation, fewer than five interns have failed to submit a reflective paper.

As indicated below, participation in CLP has grown dramatically since its inception. This is largely because of the efforts of the Office of Student Services and Credentialing staff to ensure interns are aware of this opportunity so they can take the initiative to register.

2011-2012	3 interns
2012-2013	0 interns
2013-2014	11 interns
2014-2015	19 interns
2015-2016	31 interns
<b>Total</b>	<b>64 interns</b>

### Impact

From spring 2012 through spring 2016, Classroom Library Project has directly impacted 64 clinical practice interns and over 1,300 children in grades preK-12, representing 36 schools in four school districts—Berkeley County (10), Charleston County (19), Dorchester Two (6), and Dorchester Four (1). Twenty-two or 61% of impacted schools are classified as Title I schools, therefore the project is reaching students from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Seventeen (27%) of the interns worked in special education resource or self-contained classrooms. Because both the intern and cooperating teacher each receive a copy of the selected books, it is expected that both will continue to use the books in the future, thus impacting countless additional students. During the period spanning spring 2012 through spring 2016, CPIE invested approximately \$3,300 (average of \$660 per year) in Classroom Library Project, for an estimated \$51.60 per intern or \$2.50 per student. In addition to having minimal impact on CPIE’s annual budget, other strengths of the Classroom Library

Project are its usefulness in helping pre-service teachers to: address social emotional needs, engage and relate to students, and increase their own awareness of children's books as teaching resources. As described in the interns' reflective essays, this small investment has reaped tremendous rewards. Selected excerpts are included below.

On social emotional needs:

*"While it was Black History Month when I chose to use this book, it was not my main reasoning for using it. During this time, my students were auditioning for parts in a school play and many of them were feeling insecure about their abilities based on their physical differences. I felt that reading this book would help them understand that being different is a wonderful thing and that many positive things can come from being yourself." –1<sup>st</sup> grade intern*

*"The books were used to spark discussion about what disabilities are, how they affect students just like us, and how we should treat those who may look, talk, or act differently than from us. We also talked about respecting differences and how it is a good thing to have friends that are different from you." –2<sup>nd</sup> grade intern*

*I used the book Grandma's Purple Flowers in a lesson on dealing with grief. The lesson was with the whole group of thirteen students and tied in with our unit on plants. I chose this book to use because several of our students lost their grandparents during my time with the class. My students with disabilities require explicit instruction on certain social skills, including how to cope with loss. –High school special education intern*

*"As I have come to know the students in my cooperating classroom, it has become evident that many of them strive to be perfect. Many students get upset when they make any type of mistake and have trouble with coping skills. I thought this book would [relate] wonderfully to the students and be helpful to model to and teach the students about the topic of perfectionism." –3<sup>rd</sup> grade intern*

*"I originally heard about the book at the Association for Constructivist Teaching Conference here in Charleston in the Fall of 2014 and fell in love with the meaning behind the words. I am very interested in the social/emotional development of early childhood aged children and know that self-esteem is something that develops early on and often times is linked to the development of peer to peer relationships. I felt that the mini-lesson went extremely well and plan on using this text at the beginning of the year in my future classroom every year!" –1<sup>st</sup> grade intern*

*"We focused on being happy with ourselves and our surroundings despite any differences we have from others and what others think about us." –3<sup>rd</sup> grade intern*

On engaging and relating to students:

*"The students were just really engaged and excited to see their writings for the ones that they love as well as the pictures that the students came up with to go along with their sentences."—Kindergarten intern*

*"I was certainly thankful to be provided these books because they helped motivate and engage my students. It is important to incorporate children's books in the classroom as much as possible, and I found that this project was the perfect opportunity to do so." –2<sup>nd</sup> grade intern*

*"Each student was extremely creative with their interpretations of what they would do if they were in Henry's situation, and even more creative in their artistic representations of this narrative...Even more interesting was students' thought processes while they were writing their narratives and making their pictures. They really had to put themselves in the shoes of Henry to understand the turmoil that he went through and the tremendous strength that he needed to have in order to escape slavery. The students really took this to heart and wrote some very compelling stories about this topic." –3<sup>rd</sup> grade intern*

*"My third grade class is a group of nine boys. They got excited when they saw the cover of the book, which has a large basketball on it. Many of them play basketball at the school so it was certainly a high interest book for them." –3<sup>rd</sup> grade intern*

On increasing awareness of teaching resources:

*"This book provided a good way to discuss symbolism in literature and cycles of the season with young learners." –Kindergarten intern*

*"I chose this book because we had just started talking about writing to people that we love and what we love about them and I thought this book [definitely] covered how to write to someone about how you love them." –Kindergarten intern*

*"I explained that we would be making our own growth charts just like Michael Jordan had as a child. Each student took turns standing next to a paper meter stick that ran the length of the front wall, as I marked off their heights with their names and the date. I found this to be a useful activity to integrate reading into our unit on measurement. We reviewed how to read a meter stick and how to record measurements taken. We have recorded the student's height on the wall every Monday since this lesson was taught to encourage maintenance and generalization of the skill." –Middle school special education intern*

*"While studying the selected book list, I was able to see that there are books that address difficult subjects, such as death and disabilities. Knowing that children's books on these topics exist will be so helpful while I am teaching. Participating the project allowed me to have some of these helpful books." –2<sup>nd</sup> grade intern*

*"This experience was a great chance for me to incorporate literature into my lesson of writing. This was a good resource to help explain in detail examples of expository writing and have the students follow the example. I was able to incorporate many of the common core state standards into it and it was enjoyable to read this to them. Reading this book to them increases their awareness of this disability and be able to learn to accept others that are different from them. This experience was a great one and the genre fit perfectly with what they were learning about." –3<sup>rd</sup> grade intern*

*"This experience is very new for me. I have never really discussed serious illnesses/conditions before with students. It was always easier for me to avoid serious conversations or ask students to discuss their questions and/or concerns with their parents. This book helped to 'break the ice' and express the importance of genuine acceptance." –4<sup>th</sup> grade intern*

*"It was also great because it allowed me to connect Reading with Social Studies." –5<sup>th</sup> grade intern*

### **Limitations and Suggestions for the Future**

Anecdotally, it is clear that the Classroom Library Project is a beneficial initiative. It will be important for CPIE to utilize more rigorous methods to better understand and quantify the impact of CLP on the preK-12 students in the classroom and the cooperating teacher. Additionally, long term data such as the intern's use of the books beyond the clinical practice internship might be useful. For sustainability purposes, CPIE should consider limiting the number of CLP participants per semester or academic year or seek external funding to support the program. The book lists should be reviewed annually to ensure the current titles are still available and that newer books have the opportunity to be added to the list. Each semester, a few interns fail to retrieve their books from CPIE in a timely manner because of our downtown location. It is not clear what impact, if any, this delay has on the intern's use of the books in the classroom. To mitigate any possible negative effects, CPIE might consider using the North Campus as an alternate pick-up location.

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