

Peer Review

LSTA Grant Agreement No. T06357-00

Project name: Vivian Vande Velde Author Visit

Interview participants:

Leslie Bair, Sawtooth Middle School Library
Linda Brilz, Boise Public Library
Joanne Hinkle, Boise Public Library
Kit Parker, Les Bois Junior High Library
Jillian Subach, Boise Public Library
Gregory Taylor, Hillside Junior High Library

Questions discussed:

1. How has this project benefitted your library's patrons?
2. Will the library be providing more programs of this nature? If so, will the target audience be the same?
3. How will future programs of this nature be funded?
4. What were the biggest challenges?
5. What is the history of this project? Why did you need grant funds this year?
6. What has been the impact on summer reading programs?
7. Describe your school partnerships.
8. Was your budget adequate for publicity and programming?
9. What was the role of the Teen Advisory Council in planning, implementing and evaluating the program?
10. Any additional comments.

I spoke with Joanne and Linda about this history of the project, "Kids Read the Same Book". The program began in 2001 for adults, with the addition of kids in 2002. The library held local, in-house programming until 2007 when they decided to host author Vivian Vande Velde. The Teen Advisory Board (TAB) chose titles, brainstormed programs and took part in the interview.

Linda and Joanne both expressed the success the event had for both the public library and the schools. They received anecdotal feedback in addition to statistical reports. Both of these are available in their final report submitted to the Idaho Commission for Libraries.

This grant provided them the opportunity to host a well-known author. In the future they anticipate receiving funds from their Friends of the Library and do not believe budget will be an issue. Their greatest struggle is with staff time. This project takes a great deal of time and staff is already stretched to their limits.

Linda Brilz is a Youth Services Librarian for Boise Public Library. She works with the Teen Advisory Board, does all acquisition for junior and young adult fiction,

works with middle school and high school students. Her time for additional programs, such as an author visit or the "Kids Read the Same Book" program is limited.

This program takes a year to plan and implement. The following is a rough timeline they followed:

September 2008-May 2009

- Create & print announcements, brochures, posters, PSA's
- Update website
- Coordinate mailings to schools
- Distribute publicity materials
- Plan programming
- Coordinate with other libraries and sponsors

October 2008

- Announce 2009 titles to teachers

- Select 2010 titles-separate groups meet twice each month to identify potential titles, read the best candidates and choose final selections.

January 2009

- Announce to public
- Promote to schools

February 2009

- Publicity for 2009 titles

February-May 2009

- Programming

May 2009

- Evaluation of program

October 2009

- Announce 2010 titles to teachers

In 2007 the summer reading statistics were up, but not as high as 2008. They do not know if there was any correlation to the Vivian Vande Velde programming.

Boise Public Library has in-house printing capabilities so their costs are low for posters, flyers and other print related materials.

Gregory Taylor has been part of the "Kids Read the Same Book" program since it began in 2002. He believes this program is a success and hopes that it will continue indefinitely. Teens are involved in the process from the beginning, equal partners with an equal voice in the selection of books. Teens are part of the discussion and selection process which lends to their ownership in the entire program. The entire committee is involved in the process which is how the

program succeeds. Committee members include public and school librarians, teachers, students and community sponsors.

Students who wanted to participate in the author program signed up in the library the week prior to the event. It had been announced for weeks prior, books had been available in the school library and teachers promoted in class. Having a “go to” person is key to information dissemination and worked well on this project.

The biggest challenge was fine tuning the schedule with a community partner. The partner wanted the program in September, which did not work for the libraries and the schools.

Gregory is the Librarian for Hillside Middle School, serving 450 7th-8th and 9th grade students. There is a history of support for the arts at his school, including book related activities. One teacher makes book talks a class reading project. So gathering support from teachers and administration for an author visit or the Kids Read the Same Book program was not difficult.

As a member of the Boise Education Association, Gregory was able to present and promote this program and garner their support, building the partnership.

His total time commitment in the six weeks leading up to the event was 12-15 hours. This does not count his work on the committee.

When asked if he saw an increase in interest or participation in the summer reading program he said that the Collister Library was new in 2008 so he did not believe he could accurately answer this. He did say that he often saw his students over the summer at the new library which was a great tie-in to talk about books outside of school.

In his view the greatest success of this project was that Vivian Vande Velde and the event itself got kids very “enthused” for reading. Kids are still reading her books and he would be hard pressed to find one on the shelf.

Kit Parker is the Librarian at Les Bois Junior High School, which serves over 1,000 students. This was her first author visit. Les Bois serves a predominantly upper middle class demographic, but sits a few miles outside of Boise making it difficult for students to get to the local public library.

She loved how the event got students excited about writing. Teachers were asked to submit names of students to attend the writing workshop with Vivian Vande Velde. Kit also selected some students who she knew to be good readers and had read her book, *Heir Apparent*. Approximately 100 students listened attentively to Vande Velde and interacted with her about her writing and theirs.

The biggest challenge for her was pulling the students from class. Teachers fully supported this project, but coordinating 100 students from different classes was difficult. With such a short lead time from the Boise Library, due to their late notice of the grant award, Kit had to scramble to coordinate the schedules. If they were to do this project again, she suggests 2 months notice for schools to plan.

She said there was no real impact to summer reading. Students did not talk about it more and she did not hear back from any students who may have participated due to this program. This may be in part because the closest public library is a few miles away.

Kit liked the enthusiasm for the Boise Library staff and their dedication to this project. She is interested in partnering with them again on projects similar to this or other ideas as well. The students were excited about this opportunity and wanted to visit more with Vande Velde when she was here. They had so many questions and not enough time; she could have spent most of the day with students sharing her experiences and writing techniques.

Leslie Bair is the Librarian at Sawtooth Middle School in Meridian. As the time of the program in 2007, there were over 1,400 students at Sawtooth. Twenty-five 7th and 8th grade students participated in a writing workshop with Vivian Vande Velde. One student in particular sticks out in her mind that was greatly impacted by this program. "Ty Skidmore-his name speaks volumes."

Students were chosen by teachers who excelled at reading and writing. Ty was not one of those students. He happened to be in the library as an aid during the period she was presenting. Leslie asked him if he wanted to join the group and he told her sure, but he didn't like writing. Her 1-hour program changed his life. Leslie said Ty asked countless questions and visited with Vande Velde after the program. Now a sophomore, she saw Ty recently and he is doing well-and writing!

There is a new Youth Services Librarian at Meridian Public Library since this program. Jillian Subach was the Librarian at the time and worked well with the schools. The new librarian has followed in her footsteps getting information to the schools about programs and celebrations for the students. This is an important area for any partnership-getting information to the schools in ample time to promote to teachers and students.

One challenge is also the benefit-only a few students were able to participate in the workshop. Had Ty not been in the library at the time he would have missed out on that opportunity. Leslie wonders how many other students like Ty are out there that would have benefitted from a one-on-one with an author. At the same time limiting the number ensured that the students present wanted to be there and they received a high quality program. Filling the gym with the entire student body would not have had the same impact.

Jillian Subach was the Youth Services Librarian at the Meridian Public Library at the time of this program. She is now the Collister Branch Manager for Boise Public Libraries.

The most significant benefit to this project was the direct user impact-teens benefitted from time with a nationally recognized author, for many a once in a lifetime opportunity. Authors of this caliber do not often times come to this area and to have one come in and visit with students at their level through programs, interviews and workshops is invaluable.

The project also showed the local School Districts and the Mayor that the Library followed through with a quality program in schools and at the library. It raised the awareness and level of awareness with officials of partnerships in the community. There has been positive feedback from the school district.

The biggest challenge was writing the grant. It seems like there was a lot of hoop jumping and she believes this leads to less people doing projects like this one. The staff time it took to write the grant would make it nearly impossible for smaller libraries to bring an author to their students.

Jillian said there were more kids at their 2007 summer reading program but not necessarily because of the Vande Velde program.

The greatest strength was that kids got to meet someone of a national caliber. Her writing and enthusiasm inspired kids.

Students from the TAB had the opportunity to interview Vande Velde. The recorded interview was an excellent opportunity for students to talk directly with the author about her life, books and writing. There was some technical difficulty and the session had to be done a second time. This was caught before Vande Velde left town and she was gracious enough to agree to a second interview. DVD's were sent to participating schools for teachers to use in their classrooms.

The Kids Read program is a great program. Staff time is critical as the planning, scheduling and implementing the program is a lot of work. There is financial stress for libraries since most do not have the funding in their budgets either for more staff or to bring in an author.

Summary

Overall, all parties in the Kids Read the Same Book, Vivian Vande Velde program had nothing but positive, enthusiastic comments. Being able to bring an author of caliber to students in schools and public libraries had a tremendous impact on students and the community. The program raised awareness of libraries in the community, inspired students and built or strengthened partnerships.

Libraries considering this type of program should be aware of the time commitment from writing the grant to planning and implementing the programs. The benefits to students and the library far outweigh the time and cost of the project. Each interviewee expressed the importance of this kind of program. They each talked about being organized and working with their community partner to build a strong foundation from programming.

Statistics and anecdotal responses in the final report further indicate the importance and success of this grant. Each school and the library are eager to host another author event. Funding will be sought from local partnerships, including past Kids Read supporters.