

## NEA's Learning & Leadership Grant

### **Grant Proposal Summary**

This grant would fund travel, food, and lodging for attendance at the 2018 Train the Trainer Institute hosted by Argument Driven Inquiry (ADI) in Colleyville, TX, just outside of Dallas. At the institute, I would be trained in how to host the two introductory level workshops that ADI normally hosts, as well as receive training materials to use in my own future planning and presentations. The certification I would receive through the training would allow me to return and train the rest of my department in this specifically scaffolded inquiry-based science teaching method as well as qualify me to even operate as an official trainer for LAUSD.

At my school site, through the science department, this could potentially impact 900+ students in the first year alone. With bi-monthly analysis of student performance data taken from assessments made at milestone points throughout ADI cycles, and monitoring student grades, I could monitor student performance and the effectiveness of implementation of the method within my department. With the experience of developing this monitoring cycle, I would develop a plan to propose to the local district science coordinator, Michael Beyersdorf, to potentially expand this method and monitoring cycle to other school sites.

### **Explanation of Topic and Funder**

Argument Driven Inquiry is a comprehensive strategy for incorporating the three dimensions of the NGSS into a research-tested and conceptually approachable format that still bears significant initial resemblance to many traditional laboratory activities. I would be trained in how to equip and certify other teachers with this technique. Having studied it in depth and begun using it in my classroom, I believe ADI to be a well-scaffolded method for both new and veteran science teachers to transition into inquiry- and project-based teaching.

However, despite the considerable research I've done on the topic, as it serves as one of the cornerstones to my action research project, my experience in implementing the technique has revealed a number of points I hadn't anticipated, most notably how best to scaffold the progress of the technique for EL students and students with IEP's. So, beyond getting certified to train others in this strategy, I plan to go into this institute looking for ways to best adapt this framework for use in classrooms of diverse students, teachers, and available learning materials.

### **Plans for Submitting**

In perusing the many options for grants, I was drawn to the fact that the NEA is a recognizable and reputable name in the world of education, whereas a number of the grant funders I had never heard of and some of their goals for disbursing money seemed odd or questionable. Also, although most grants I came across were for providing classrooms with science materials or for funding specific projects, I already had in mind that I wanted to receive further training in a technique that I was relatively familiar with. This grant, though, was specifically for leadership

and professional development, and so it seemed to align much more readily with what I had in mind.

However, I initially had not planned on using the grant for the “Train the Trainer Institute”, but for other workshops. Unfortunately, I found that the majority of those workshops are were going to be out of state and didn’t seem to cover the points I felt were lacking in my understanding, that is how to better adapt the existing scaffolding to diverse learners and classrooms so that I might get my immediate colleagues to see the benefit of the technique and voluntarily adopt it. So, when I serendipitously discovered that there would be a “Train the Trainer Institute” in late July of this year, I got really excited and immediately started researching flights, hotels, and even places to eat. It was much to my chagrin that I read the grant’s fine print more closely where it said that any project that would be requiring the money *before* the announcement of recipients would automatically be rejected. I double-checked the deadlines and saw that my proposed institute would be taking place nearly two months before the grant decisions would be announced.

Uh-oh.

So, now begins the quest for other sources of funding. I am already in enough personal debt from this MA program that putting one more thing on credit is out of the question. And, at this point in the year, there does not seem to be a large selection of monies at my school site to draw from, although that would have to be determined by a conversation with my administrator. Several years ago when I first agreed to teach AP Chemistry, I was adamant with my my principal that I would not jump into such a position without getting AP training and having it paid for by the district, but I was simultaneously intimidated by speaking so forthrightly with a superior and by the possibility that the money simply was not there and that my AP dreams might come crashing down before they had ever really gotten off the ground. But, to my surprise, she agreed with me and found the money. This year might be different, but I would be willing to sit down again to see if that barrel could be re-opened.

Besides funding from the district, there may be any number of other grants for professional development, especially in science education, but hunting them down seems to be quite the artform, and explains why being a grant writer is a career all its own. Still, with the worst case scenario, I may scale back my dreams and apply simply for funding to have myself and my department take the two online trainings that ADI offers all year long. That way I would have practice in writing a full grant proposal, could potentially bring money into my department, and demonstrate to my colleagues that not only is ADI worth giving a shot - especially if the PD is free - but that I am competent and independent enough to take the initiative to seek outside funding as well as see the process through to completion. If they are to really adopt a pedagogical shift this significant based, essentially, on my say-so, I believe I will have to display a level of maven-ness as well as leadership character that wins their respect. With that, and hopefully with some results I can point to from my own students that they themselves might not

be able to, perhaps I could become a more effective change agent in my department and school.

So, for right now, while this assignment sparked my curiosity to move beyond what I typically do in my classroom, it's still relatively the early stages. In the worst case scenario, I won't get any funding for any professional development this summer, but perhaps the same institute will be held next year, and armed with better preparation I will be able to apply for and win the grant then.

### **Further Questions to Consider**

Beyond the requirements for this assignment, I want to document here both for you and for myself the kinds of questions the NEA Foundation asked in the application. These are the kinds of questions I myself would like to ask if I were giving away money to people purportedly seeking to "make a difference" in order to realistically hold them accountable. However, before doing this project, I had not thought these things through and now realize that having a plan to handle these things might actually make the training more effective for producing the kinds of change I'd like to see. As of this moment, I don't actually have the fullest answers to these questions but now I *want* to answer them.

#### ***Questions:***

1. **Describe the professional development plan. What are your goals in this learning? What learning resources do you plan to use?**

**I pretty much answered these questions already in my summary statement.**

2. **How, when, and where will the learning be accomplished?** (Please be aware of the date of grant announcement. Any project taking place prior to the announcement will automatically be removed from consideration. Grant announcement dates can be found [here](#).)

**(This was when I realized that my plan as it stood had no shot of success)**

3. **How does the proposed professional development advance your professional goals? How does it advance your workplace goals?**

**Also pretty much answered this.**

4. **What is the need for this professional development? How did you and your colleagues assess the need? Please define need in terms of both student need and professional need by the applicant(s).**

**I have also answered this question mostly, but I have not actually talked about any of this explicitly and specifically with my colleagues because I didn't see until the very end that there was a section of this application asking about it. However, having talked about *this kind* of thing often with them, many of us are frustrated with the minimal NGSS support from the district and lack of cohesive materials as pre-made *packages* that are more or**

less turn-key ready. This particular method would help solve some of that problem.

5. How will this project continue beyond the grand period? How will you continue sharing the knowledge gained in this project? Describe sharing in relation to your colleagues, students, and administrators.

I would like to think that my vague suggestion of a “monitoring” method looking at student data would do the trick, but I honestly have no idea right now.

## **Appendix: Minimum Grant Requirements**

I am also including the minimum grant requirements in this document to demonstrate some of the fine prints kinds of details one would not necessarily expect when perusing posted funding opportunities in aggregation sites. I had to actually begin the application process to get to the pages asking these questions.

1) Are you a practicing U.S. public school teacher in grades PreK–12, public school education support professional, or faculty or staff at public higher education institutions?

**Yes**

2) Are you an employee, member of the board of directors, or an immediate family member of the staff or board of the NEA Foundation?

**No**

3) Will grant funds be used to do the following: pursue degrees pay indirect costs, grant administration fees, or salaries support travel costs or conference fees for more than one person pay for applicant's stipends (if not for study group) lobby or support religious purposes?

**No**

Based on your answers, it appears that you qualify to complete the NEA Foundation's Learning & Leadership Application. Please click the link below to review and submit an application.