

**Team Name:** Noi scriveremo sempre  
**Team Lead Name:** Mrs. Lenore Jean Butler  
**Team Member(s):** Ms. Carla Ruscito

**Salutation:** Mrs.  
**Last Name:** Butler  
**First Name:** Lenore

**Middle Initial:** Jean  
**Preferred First Name or Nickname:** Lenore

**Home Address:** 5 Arwood Road  
**City:** Farmington  
**State:** Connecticut  
**Zip:** 06032

**Job Title:** Grade 5 teacher  
**Number of Years Teaching:** 21

**Primary Phone:** 860-404-2258 (Home)  
**Primary Email:** lbutler@southingtonschools.org (Work)

**Alternate Phone:** 860-990-5697 (Work Mobile)  
**Alternate Email:** jl5arwood1@comcast.net (Personal)

**School Name:** William Strong Elementary School  
**School Classification:** Elementary

**School Type:** Public School  
**School District:** Southington

**School Address:** 820 Marion Avenue  
**City:** Plantsville  
**State:** Connecticut  
**Zip:** 06479

**School Phone:** 860-628-3314  
**School Fax:** 860-628-3322  
**Principal Name:** Melissa Barbuto  
**Principal Email:** mbarbuto@southingtonschools.org

**Current Teaching Assignments:** English/Journalism/Language Arts, History/Social Studies, Literacy, Reading/Writing, Science  
**Current Grade Level:** Pre-K - 5th Grade  
**Subject Area of Project Activity:** Literature/Writing  
**Estimated Dates of Fellowship:** 07/09/2020 - 07/13/2020

**Brief Description of Proposed Fellowship:** Participate in the Creativity Workshop in Florence, Italy, to supplement writing workshop units and provide students with strategies to generate ideas, cultivate memories and harness curiosity through mindfulness practice.

**Number of Members on Team:** 2

**I've previously been awarded a Fund for Teachers grant:** No

# *Proposal*

## **Brief Description of Fellowship**

Participate in the Creativity Workshop in Florence, Italy, to supplement writing workshop units and provide students with strategies to generate ideas, cultivate memories and harness curiosity through mindfulness practice.

## **Fellowship Rationale and Purpose**

We are a team comprised of a grade five and grade six teacher who teach in different suburban school districts. We are sisters who have been collectively teaching for over forty years. We have a history of sharing best pedagogy and a passion for continuous learning that will positively impact our students.

The grade five educator teaches in a suburban town with over 6,500 students enrolled. The elementary school is one out of eight schools in the district and is a Title 1 School. The enrollment at this school is 267 students with 10 identified as English Language Learners, 41 students are either Hispanic, Latino or two or more races, 26 identified as learning disabled and 49 students qualify for free or reduced-priced meals. A recent School Profile and Performance Report for this school in the area of English Language Arts shows students earned 48.1 points as compared to the state average of 67.6 points. High needs students earned 42.5 points as compared to the state average of 57.5 points. The district's vision of the graduate is to prepare students with the skills to communicate effectively, think creatively and critically, and contribute to the global community.

The grade six educator teaches in a suburban town with 5,919 students enrolled. The school is one of fourteen in the district and is one of the few in the state that is an all sixth grade model. The enrollment at this school is 468 students with 11 labeled as English Language Learners, 62 students are Hispanic, Latino or two or more races, 56 are identified as students with disabilities. and 40 qualify for free or reduced-priced meals. A recent School Profile and Performance Report for this school in the area of English Language Arts shows students earned 50 points as compared to the state average of 67.6 points. High needs students earned 43.6 points as compared to the state average of 57.5 points. Furthermore, approximately 500 students in district speak another language (over 40 different ) other than English at home. There are over 130 English Language Learner (ELL) students navigating the language barrier every day. The grade six teacher's district is focusing on several goals and strategies to achieve them. The Creativity Workshop fundamentally correlates to three of these goals, especially the goal supporting student and staff health. The district is focusing on resilience, resolve, and relationships in order to ensure that every student's learning needs are met. Importance is placed on student social and emotional learning in addition to academics. Another district focus is student and staff wellness. Professional development has been designed to encourage caring for our physical and mental wellbeing in order to reduce stress and respond to setbacks. As a learning community, the district is encouraging us to find opportunities to better understand the mind- body connection and to improve our personal and work relationships in order to maintain a strong work culture and positive school climate.

The Creativity Workshop provides us with an opportunity to foster our own creativity and well being, so we can encourage our students to do the same. In both districts, ELA curriculums are implemented via the Columbia Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshops units of study approach. Information gleaned from our collective years of teaching is that learners continue to struggle to generate ideas for writing during the planning process and with elaboration strategies. Student engagement is also very low during the writing workshop process. The words, "I don't know what to write about" are heard often, and many days there are students who do not get much writing done. If granted the opportunity, we aim to unlock the writer in each and every student. We aim to answer the following essential questions: How can we increase student engagement/ownership in writing? What are some instructional strategies we can implement to better support all writers, including struggling writers such as, but not limited to, our ever increasing ELL , SRBI and

Special Education students ? How can we set our students up with a foundation for a writerly life? Ultimately, we hope that by immersing ourselves into the writing process via the Creativity Workshop in Florence we will gain valuable experiences as writers ourselves so that we can, in turn, elicit the same results from our students. Before going into this fellowship, we will start a personal writer's notebook to record our new learning and to bring back an authentic writing samples to use as a mentor text in our writing lessons.

## **Project Description**

The Creativity Workshop is offered in several locations across the globe, but we chose Florence, Italy because we were raised in a traditional, tight-knit Italian-American home. Our uncle was the first family member to attend college, and both of us followed in his footsteps by attending college and becoming teachers too. Storytelling is a cornerstone of our family gatherings, just as storytelling is an integral part of our teaching lives. The workshop will help spark our imaginations and creative thought processes. On day one of the workshop, we will be introduced to relaxation and visualization techniques to help our imaginations flow and retrieve memories from our past. During this session, we will reflect upon the work of famous writers, scientists, and artists. Day two of the workshop will include opportunities for getting over hurdles in the creative process by engaging in free writing and exercises on listening to lives outside of our own by participating in a "Writing in Cafes" learning experience. Day three will include letter writing, storytelling with found objects (miniature worlds) and writing in groups. Day four will involve three activities: The Myth of the Other (imagining yourself in a parallel life), Trips to the Past (using a foreign environment to invoke memory and inspire transformation) and The Close- Up (using photography and drawing to focus on details and change the way we see). This day's work will harness the powerful phrase of "What if...", a phrase that will transform us as teachers and learners, but more importantly, it will help us foster our student's creativity. On the final workshop day, we will apply our learning by immersing ourselves in the cafes and culture through "exercises of writing, drawing, and photography about people you find in local places". Finally, a culminating activity will be participating in a "collaborative exercise by combining mediums with a Sand Mandala activity." We will also be keeping a photo log and journal entries of daily activities both during and outside of workshop hours.

We will continue our learning outside of the Creativity Workshop classroom hours by visiting Mercato Centrale daily to chat with the artisans and immerse ourselves in the culture. Furthermore, during one of our afternoon visits, we will take a cooking class at the Lorenzo De' Medici Cooking School. We will meet with founders/teachers of the school, Carla and Fabrizio Guarducci. We will become part of the Florentine community and culture, just as we plan to contribute to our schools and communities upon our return. Other venues we will visit during the afternoon after our workshop sessions include the Boboli Gardens, the Duomo Complex, and Its Hidden Terraces Tour, the Accademia Gallery, and the Gucci Museum. After the five days of the workshop are over we will continue to live as scholarly writers on a day trip to Tuscany and the Tower of Pisa. Visits to these sites will provide us with the opportunity to practice and apply all the new learning from the Creativity Workshop.

## **Teacher Growth and Learning**

Through this fellowship, we will improve our practice by doing what we ask of our students each and every day: write. We will be immersing ourselves in the writing process while strengthening our instructional practice by identifying hurdles and successes we may experience along our own writing journey. Very rarely do we incorporate art or physically getting up to leave the classroom to get inspired for writing. We will be stepping out of our own comfort zone to try unconventional writing practices. We will ask the same of our students.

In addition to the Creativity Workshop, we plan on meeting with Professor Peirluca Birindelli at ISI, International Studies Institute. We will meet with him to gather knowledge and insights about teaching

writing and stay in touch with him via email and blogging to foster ongoing communication. The sixth-grade teacher has already established contact with him via Facetime and email since her daughter was enrolled in his Summer 2019 Food and Culture class. We look forward to meeting him in person and meshing his pedagogy with both our own and our new learning from participating in the Creativity Workshop.

### **Application of Learning to Instructional Practice**

Prior to launching the first writing unit of study in the 2020 -2021 school year, we will share our experience of the Creativity Workshop with our students. We will begin by showing students artifacts from our fellowship and our writer's notebooks, which will be a model for their own notebooks. Students will be given their own notebooks that will serve as a place for drawing, mapping and writing about objects, ideas, and experiences that can spark story ideas. Both of us launch our schools' writing workshop models with a personal narrative unit. Students are expected to establish a voice and an awareness of the audience as they share a memory that has a "So what?": a new realization, insight or lesson learned. This directly correlates to the Creativity Workshop "Miniature Worlds Activity: Storytelling with found objects. We will teach a miniature worlds lesson which will include students bringing in items of significant importance from home to use in the planning stages of writing in our personal narrative writing units.

Units include personal narrative, memoir, and fantasy. Our own writer's notebooks will serve as mentor texts along with mentor texts being used in these units that are part of the current curriculum. Some of these texts include A Writer's Notebook and Marshfield Dreams by Ralph Fletcher. Each writing unit will begin by revisiting the ideas from the Creativity Workshop in order to tap into the creative processes of idea generation for each unit of study. Our new learning will enhance our teaching of the following Common Core standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.B

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

It is our hope that we will also meet and collaborate with fellow teachers, authors, artists and scientists to build a network of connections to nurture and sustain long after the fellowship is complete. These will be shared on our Weebly blog. Upon our return to the 2020 school year, we will be sharing our Weebly blog on our teacher websites and to the teachers and families at our schools. We will share the writing methods we learned about and practiced during common planning times with our grade level peers and writing professional development days with Columbia Teacher's College.

### **Student Growth and Learning**

We anticipate that students will benefit from our fellowship experiences by seeing our own authentic writing processes as models for their own learning goals to take risks and think outside of the box and embrace adventure to gain writing inspiration. We will implement lessons similar to those at the Creativity Workshop, which will put students in charge of what they will write about, beyond that of our scripted curriculum. The use of a personalized writer's notebook and the process of individualized idea collection for students will automatically differentiate the content of student writing. This fellowship will show our students that we have worked as scholarly writers ourselves and they can act in that role themselves.

Students will be guided in developing and owning individualized growth opportunities as they relate to the writing process. At the start of the 2020 school year students will complete a writing profile by answering questions about themselves as writers. Some questions they will be asked are as follows; Are you a writer? Explain. What does someone have to do in order to write well? Where do you get your ideas for writing? What genre of writing is your favorite? Least favorite? Students will also be given a writing personal narrative pre-test which will be scored based on the Columbia Teacher's College writing rubric. Each student will be conferenced with individually to go over strengths and areas for growth. Students will set growth goals and will be met with frequently over the 4 to 6 week writing unit for progress monitoring. Students will complete a writing survey at the end of the personal narrative unit to highlight growth and areas to continue to improve. Each unit will be run with this same method of self-reflection, goal setting and progress monitoring with teacher guidance. Students will also reflect upon the lessons that are directly tied to our learning (ie. miniature worlds).

Through this fellowship, we aim to wake up the dormant writer within each and every student. Their fear of failure will be replaced with curiosity and collaboration.

### **Benefits to School Community**

We will share our participation in the Creativity Workshop by documenting our fellowship learning on a Weebly Blog. The blog will be shared with teachers in our districts. We also would like to share our learning experiences on the November 2020 Professional Development day (Election Day) in both of our school communities. We will share our Weebly Blog content highlighting our learning at the Creativity Workshop and share the Fund For Teachers grant writing opportunity so that others may reap the benefits from this experience. We will also share the writing skills gleaned from this opportunity to parents and the school community at both our school Open Houses. Families will be invited to writing celebrations at the end of each writing unit. At the end of the school year in the grade 5 teacher's school, families and board of education members will be invited to a Young Author's celebration highlighting student's published pieces. The grade 5 teacher's district has a local art center in which students can display their mandala art and miniature world artifacts along with their published writing pieces that were sparked by participating in these activities. Both teachers will showcase students writing by submitting student pieces to both the Connecticut Writing Project and Letters About Literature writing contests. These opportunities celebrate young authors and give them a platform to share their creativity with a broader community.

### **Budget Narrative**

Transportation:

Round trip flights:

Via Google Flights from John F. Kennedy airport in NYC to Peretola Airport in Florence, Italy during July 2020  
\$1,300 per person x 2 people = \$2,600

Airport parking (JFK) :

\$18 x 7 days = \$126

Taxi: to and from lodging \$60 Florence x 2 trips , arrival and departure = \$120

Lodging:

Airbnb

(with a kitchen because we both have celiac disease and may need to cook some of our meals if we have

difficulty finding dining locations to accommodate our allergies)

\$1,800 apartment in Florence x 7 nights

Food:

\$50 a person a day

$\$50 \times 7 \text{ days} = \$350 \text{ per person}$

$\$700 \text{ total food for the week}$

Participation Costs:

Tuition:

\$1,395 per person Creativity Workshop tuition

$\$2,790 \text{ total tuition for 2 people}$

Tours to spark our creativity and writing ideas:

Lorenzo De' Medici Cooking School class

\$80

$\$80 \times 2 \text{ people} = \$160$

The Duomo Complex and its Hidden Terraces Tour

\$70

$\$70 \times 2 \text{ people} = \$140$

Accademia Gallery in Florence

\$110

$\$110 \times 2 \text{ people} = \$220$

Gucci Museum

\$22

$\$22 \times 2 \text{ people} = \$44$

Tuscany/Pisa (UNESCO - listed Leaning Tower of Pisa) sightseeing tour

\$270

$\$270 \times 2 \text{ people} = \$540$

Materials:

\$760

Items to be used during the fellowship and upon our return to implement strategies and activities learned within our classrooms with students.

Art supplies:

$\$20 \times 20 \text{ sets} = \$400$

Mandala Sand Art: A unique Activity Kit for Creative Self-Expression

(Kits for students use in the classroom) Many cultures throughout the ages have used mandalas as a way to release creative energy and focus on positive change.

$\$30 \times 2 \text{ people} = \$60$

writing utensils, blank and lined journals for Creativity Workshop assignments and afternoon excursions.

\$300

various artifacts from Florence Italy to use in miniature world lessons upon returning to the 2020 school year

# Itemized Budget

Length of Fellowship (days): 6

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**Destination(s):**

City:	State/Province:	Country:	Continent:
Florence		Italy	Europe

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<b>Transportation Type:</b>	Airplane, Other	<b>Amount:</b>	\$2,846.00
<b>Lodging Type:</b>	Other	<b>Amount:</b>	\$1,800.00
<b>Food Allowance Amount:</b>		<b>Amount:</b>	\$700.00
<b>Participation Type:</b>	Course/Program Tuition, Museum Fees, Other, Tour Fees	<b>Amount:</b>	\$3,894.00
<b>Material Type:</b>	Books, Other	<b>Amount:</b>	\$760.00
<b>Equipment Type:</b>		<b>Amount:</b>	\$0.00
<b>Other Fees Type:</b>		<b>Amount:</b>	\$0.00
<b>Total Proposed Cost of Fellowship:</b>		<b>Amount:</b>	\$10,000.00
<b>At Applicant's Expense:</b>		<b>Amount:</b>	\$0.00
<b>Total Requesting from FFT*:</b>		<b>Amount:</b>	\$10,000.00

**Team Name:** Noi scriveremo sempre  
**Team Lead Name:** Mrs. Lenore Jean Butler  
**Team Member(s):** Ms. Carla Ruscito

**Salutation:** Ms.  
**Last Name:** Ruscito  
**First Name:** Carla

**Middle Initial:**  
**Preferred First Name or Nickname:** Carla

**Home Address:** 71 Maltby Lane  
**City:** Northford  
**State:** Connecticut  
**Zip:** 06472

**Job Title:** 6th grade English teacher  
**Number of Years Teaching:** 23

**Primary Phone:** 860-847-0280 (Work Mobile)  
**Primary Email:** ruscitoc@glastonburyus.org (Work)

**Alternate Phone:** (Work Desk)  
**Alternate Email:** njruscito@comcast.net (Personal)

**School Name:** Gideon Welles School  
**School Classification:** Middle

**School Type:** Public School  
**School District:** Glastonbury

**School Address:** 1029 Neipsic Road  
**City:** Glastonbury  
**State:** Connecticut  
**Zip:** 06033

**School Phone:** 860-652-7800  
**School Fax:** 860-652-7825  
**Principal Name:** Kent Hurlburt  
**Principal Email:** hurlburtk@glastonburyus.org

**Current Teaching Assignments:** English/Journalism/Language Arts  
**Current Grade Level:** 6th - 8th Grade  
**Subject Area of Project Activity:** Literature/Writing  
**Estimated Dates of Fellowship:** 07/09/2020 - 07/13/2020

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