

REPORT 2019 April Cycle

GENERAL INFORMATION

Organization Information

Legal Name: Gemini Ink		Federal Tax ID#: 74-2774094	
Address: 1111 Navarro Street	City: San Antonio	State: TX	Zip Code: 78205
Website: www.geminiink.org		Fax: (210) 734-9673	

Head Of Organization

Name: Alexandra van de Kamp	Title: Gemini Ink
E-Mail Address: avandekamp@geminiink.org	Phone: (210) 734-9673

Application Contact

Name: Alexandra van de Kamp	Title: Executive Director	E-Mail Address: avandekamp@geminiink.org	Phone: (210) 734-9673
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REPORT INFORMATION

Report Funding Cycle: 2019 April Cycle	Report Date: 03/23/2020 12:00 am
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1: Please include in your report the dollar amount of the funds that were awarded, the date they were funded and what the funds supported.

Awarded Amount: 15,000	Date: 04/12/2019
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2: Were the objectives cited in your original proposal met? Please address each started objective and how it was met.

Gemini Ink's proposed project outcomes included:

- o increased student confidence as readers and writers
- o increased student confidence with sharing their work
- o increased understanding of literary devices and genres
- o increased awareness of and comfort with writing/revision process

Objectives were met and measured using Gemini Ink's pre- and post- surveys and writing samples. WIC instruction helped students adopt a more positive attitude towards writing, reading and community, making them better poised to learn in all areas. 52 children were provided writing instruction in the summer & fall of 2019; 125 people attended final celebrations. Data for our 2019 K-5 students evidenced the following:

Summer 2019

- o 65% of students came out of this program with a positive outlook on writing.
- o Over half the students felt that the workshop had helped them "become a better writer."
- o 60% of students stated they liked reading, an increase of 17% over pre-survey responses.

Fall 2019

- o Over 50% of students reported liking writing and reading, with many of the others claiming they liked to read or write "sometimes."
- o 53% of the students stated they enjoyed sharing their work and 60% felt positive about their future.

These results indicate the program's ability to foster a sense of community and a positive engagement with language--key to building literacy skills in underserved populations. The children served at Ella Austin are 95% under Federal Poverty. Due to these promising results, Ella Austin and Gemini Ink continue to seek funding to offer this programming to vulnerable students year-round.

3: Please explain any changes from the original proposal and the circumstances that lead to the modification of the objective.

All aspects of the project were carried out as outlined in the proposal for the summer and fall 2019 semesters. For the spring 2020, we had intended to serve at least 20 children K-5; however, COVID-19 directly impacted this program. The classes launched in early March and our teaching artists were able to hold one class for the K-2nd and 3rd-5th sections before the program was suspended to ensure the health and safety of the students and Gemini Ink instructors.

As a result of COVID-19, Gemini Ink had to pivot our programming to online offerings to respond to San Antonio's shelter-in-place reality. We developed free youth virtual offerings in creative writing via YouTube video lessons and Zoom workshops for 3rd graders and above. We contacted Ella Austin about these virtual offerings and worked with Bowdon Elementary School, which serves the same youth community as Ella Austin, to deliver these virtual educational opportunities to this at-risk population. Sensitive to the fact that not all of the families in this Eastside community have access to computers at home, Gemini Ink's teaching artists first focused on developing YouTube videos that can be easily accessed via a cellphone, a device more readily available in low-income households. Gemini Ink continues to generate imaginative, interactive Zoom workshops exploring fairy tales, flash fiction and Instagram poetry to broaden our ability to meet the communities we serve as our city enforces work from home/stay safe parameters.

This is an interim report; our spring program ends in late May.

4: What needs were addressed?

Needs addressed include literacy, mental health, and self-efficacy in at-risk youth.

In 2014, Time Magazine rated San Antonio the 5th most illiterate city in the US, and we currently have a 25% functional illiteracy rate. This achievement gap in the language arts disproportionately impacts minority and low-income students, including students from the Eastside who access Ella Austin Community Center's services: there, 10% of the residents are unemployed, 31% live in poverty, and 29% over 25 do not have a high school diploma.

Building literacy skills and engagement among youth is vital to our community's long-term economic vitality and well-being. According to BeginToRead.com, 85% of all juveniles who interface with the court system are functionally illiterate, and over 70% of inmates in our prisons cannot read above a 4th grade level. Only by improving educational outcomes can the cycle of poverty be broken and the widening achievement gap reduced.

WIC employs working writers who are gifted teachers who incorporate methods of building character, self-esteem and overall life resiliency skills into the creative writing exercises they use. WIC's imaginative and skill-based workshops have a proven track record of sparking lifelong engagement with reading and writing, resulting in improved language arts performance. Addressing literacy among youth is critical to building the next generation of leaders in San Antonio. Project-based arts education that sets high expectations and results in a final product builds key social and emotional learning skills, including project management, self-confidence, and resilience.

5: What method of evaluation did you use to monitor and measure the project's outcome and what are the result?

In addition to measuring attendance, conducting site visits, and communicating closely with Ella Austin, Gemini Ink depended on pre- and post-surveys and writing samples to measure outcomes for 2019-2020 programming. Data gathered from our post-surveys strongly suggest that WIC instruction helps students adopt a more positive attitude towards writing and reading over a wide variety of genres, and gain a sense of community through creative projects; as a result, they are better poised to learn in all areas.

Due to a change in leadership, Ella Austin did not send us DAP (Developmental Assets Profile) results for the 18-19 school year. Also, since the post-DAP is administered at the end of the school year, they will be unable to administer it this spring with the impact of COVID-19. We continue to stay in touch with Ella Austin about how best to collect data moving forward and are constantly refining our pre- and post-survey questions to best address the needs of this at-risk population. With the implementation of virtual offerings for youth this spring, we will generate new survey questions to assess the impact of our free YouTube videos and Zoom workshops. We aim to offer literary outreach in interactive, dynamic ways to meet the evolving needs of San Antonio youth, and the Ella Austin community we are dedicated to, and are excited about the next steps in our in-person and virtual programming.

In addition, results from aggregated school level testing showed that students who participated in programs like Gemini Ink's obtained higher reading, writing, and math test scores than those who did not. These results align with Gemini Ink's goal of empowering our community through arts education and literacy outreach, and investing in our young people to increase their future academic, professional and life success.

6: Do you plan to continue this project, and if so, how do you plan to sustain it?

Gemini Ink's partnership with Ella Austin Community Center is among our strongest and most vital literacy outreach efforts. All classes are taught by experienced and talented local writers who work with students on creative expression through models designed to nurture a love of literacy and language. The innovative approaches and increased self-esteem developed through these workshops help students feel engaged in the classroom and increase their likelihood of success during the academic school year. In a city with a 25% functional rate of illiteracy in English, this work builds the critical thinking skills essential for healthy and thriving communities.

We plan to continue the Write With Me / Read With Me project through the summer and the 2020-2021 school year, delivering our programming virtually if needed and in as accessible a way as possible for at-risk communities during this unusual period with COVID-19 in our communities. Ella Austin continues to be a type of "incubator" site in which our most experienced writer-instructors can workshop and develop new curricula to be used at other WIC sites. Thanks to generous funders like the Najim Family Foundation, the children at Ella Austin receive year-round creative writing and reading instruction on the cutting edge of literary arts education. This creative engagement is crucial to maintaining students' performance, nurturing their mental health and sense of community, and boosting their self-efficacy, opening them to new academic possibilities. Additional funding sources include Shield Ayres Foundation (\$10,000); TCA operations grant \$11,500 and The Alice Kleberg Reynolds Foundation (\$5000).

7: Please provide any other comments of information relevant to this grant.

Because of generous funder support and a strong community partnership, Ella Austin has become a beacon of WIC's literary and literacy outreach efforts with youth. The writer-instructors assigned to Ella Austin are among our most experienced and highly trained resident artists, with a particular passion for working with at-risk and underserved children. These artists connect with the children by experimenting with a variety of genres, building knowledge of figurative language, supporting students in growing their critical consciousness, and helping them develop an ability to reason and engage in abstract thinking.

Students in K-2 workshops in this year's program focused on playing with language and building vocabulary. Creative ventures expanded their knowledge of their city and of the natural world: students assisted in painting a mural at San Anto Cultural Arts; discussed life in the Amazon; and wrote about the importance of clean water and community gardens.

Students in 3-5 grades learned about storytelling by writing, revising, and acting it out their own story in a final public performance. They also designed their own e-zines.

As the shelter-in-place continues, parents are overwhelmed and youth are at home without access to full educational resources. Through our innovative--and flexible--creative writing curriculum, Gemini Ink is working to fill this literacy and educational gap. Dedicated teacher-artists are generating free virtual offerings to meet the needs of these young people. The Write With Me / Read With Me project at Ella Austin continues to help vulnerable children who often feel estranged from literary and language arts.

8: Please provide an updated detailed projected budget with expenses for the received grant. Also include the totals for the budgeted and actual amount. Explain any discrepancies between the budgeted and the actual expenses for the project.

Line Item Description	Total Project Funds Allocation	Najim Requested Funds	Project Funds Actual	Najim Funds Allocation
Artistic expenses (writers in residence, artists, etc)	\$20,550	\$9,000	\$12794	\$10043.15
Supplies	\$1,500	\$700	\$1252	\$751.85
Publications (student anthology/calendar)	\$7,025	\$2,600	\$0	\$0
Evaluation	\$1,450	\$700	\$400	\$400
Celebratory Readings	\$1,800	\$800	\$100	\$100
WIC Professional Training	\$2,700	\$0	\$1346	\$0
Admin & Overhead	\$5,955	\$1,200	\$5513	\$3705
TOTAL:	\$40,980	\$15,000	\$21,405	\$15,000

Signature

Alexandra van de Kamp