**Group Initiative Planning**

**Goals**

* Create an opportunity for every 2012 fellow to be meaningfully involved in substantive work
* Encourage writing in the schools
* Foster and recognize creativity
* Assist teachers in teaching writing
* Support the Common Core State Standards
* Promote the Boise State Writing Project

**Background Information**

The Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, identifies teenagers with exceptional artistic and literary talent and brings their remarkable work to a national audience through The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. The Awards have an impressive legacy dating back to 1923 and a noteworthy roster of past winners including Andy Warhol, Sylvia Plath, Truman Capote, Richard Avedon, Robert Redford, and Joyce Carol Oates.

The Awards are an important opportunity for students to be recognized for their creative talents. Each year, the Alliance partners with more than 100 regional affiliates across the country to bring the program to local communities. Teens in grades 7 through 12 can apply in 28 categories of art and writing for the chance to earn scholarships and have their works exhibited or published.

The Boise State Writing Project became the Idaho Affiliate of the Alliance last year. We received approximately 200 submissions from Idaho students, five of which received national medals. In addition to administering The Awards, BSWP fellows also facilitated a spring art and writing conference for students as well as a day of professional development for teachers. Students’ work was exhibited at Art Source Gallery during the month of February and in a published anthology. Students and teachers reported that participating in the program was valuable, particularly in terms of helping students identify as artists and writers. Fellows were most proud of **providing authentic audiences for students’ voices to be heard**.

After reflecting on our experiences last year, we have brainstormed ideas for reaching more students and making their experiences even more valuable. Please keep in mind that this is just a jumping off point; this is your group’s initiative and, as such, you are encouraged to make it your own.

**Suggested Committees**

1) Student and Teacher Programs

* Responsibilities:
  + Develop, manage, and run programs for students and teachers. These programs should occur in as many geographic regions throughout Idaho as possible. It is important that they occur frequently, particularly throughout the fall when students are preparing their writing for submission.
* Possibilities:
  + Student writing workshops – these could occur at schools or community programs (like the Boys & Girls Club or YMCA).
  + Writing groups – in addition to exploring the craft of writing, these groups would also focus on building a community of student writers. (Pizza & Poetry Thursdays, Middle School Writers Group, etc.)
  + Conferences and writing marathons – one-day writing conferences for students and/or teachers
  + Teacher workshops – sessions for teachers to explore new ways to teach writing and foster creativity.
  + To facilitate these workshops and groups, fellows could work with teachers who are new to teaching writing. This could be a neat professional development opportunity.

* Considerations:
  + Do we want to extend programming to K-6th graders?
  + Who will facilitate these programs? Will they be financially compensated?

2) Community Partnerships and Fundraising

* Responsibilities:
  + Build relationships with community partners and solicit funds to run the program. Develop and manage the budget.
* Possibilities:
  + Identify community organizations that we could work with to promote and run the program. Consider the Cabin, Story, Story Night, Idaho Human Rights Education Center, libraries, Idaho Humanities Council, Boise Contemporary Theater, Women of Steel Poetry Slam, and others. Find ways for the Alliance to plug into Idaho’s arts community. There are many neat ways we could partner with these organizations (BCT actors perform winning student work during the awards ceremony, the Idaho Human Rights Education Center sponsors an award for a human rights themed piece, the Cabin promotes the Awards during their summer camps, etc.).
  + Work with the other committees to determine how much financial support we need in order to run the program, including facilitating workshops and conferences, publishing the anthology, hosting the awards program, and awarding scholarships and prizes to students and teachers. Solicit donations and sponsorships from local businesses.
* Considerations:
  + There are a number of different ways we have recognized community partners and sponsors (logo on website and in anthology, name a scholarship after them, etc.). What are other possibilities that would encourage local businesses to donate?
  + Do we want to create different levels of sponsorship so a business that donates $50 is differentiated from one that donates $1000? They do this at the national level.

3) Outreach and Public Relations

* Responsibilities:
  + Encourage students from around the state to attend our workshops and conferences as well as submit their writing to The Scholastic Writing Awards. Work with BSWP fellows and other Idaho teachers to promote the program.
* Possibilities:
  + Create promotional materials.
  + Use social media to promote events and the Awards (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.).
  + Organize classroom visits to share information with students and teachers.
  + Present at local conferences.
  + Send electronic and paper mailings to teachers and students.
  + Write press releases and build relationships with the media to promote our programs and garner recognition for students.
* Considerations:
  + Social media is successful when content is frequently added. What types of content will we add to engage students and teachers?
  + Getting PR in Idaho can be a challenge. How can we build relationships with media outlets?
  + It is important to reach out to rural areas. How can we effectively do this?

4) Recognition and Publication

* Responsibilities:
  + Organize the jurying process, awards ceremony, and publication of student work.
* Possibilities:
  + The jurying process can be done digitally or in person. We can ask Idaho teachers, professional writers, or a combination to serve as jurors. Asking acclaimed Idaho writers to be involved might help build the prominence of the program. (Anthony Doerr, Kim Barnes, Brady Udall, Mary Clearman Blew, Robert Wrigley, etc.)
  + The awards ceremony can go beyond just handing out awards to also include keynote speakers, performances, and readings.
  + There are lots of different ways we could publish students’ work – printed anthology, website, displays (like Poetry in Motion), etc.
  + We can collaborate with the Idaho Art Affiliate to jointly facilitate the awards ceremony and publish student work.
* Considerations:
  + What are ways we can make all students who submit feel good about the process (and not just those who win awards)? How can we keep the focus on celebrating all student writing and creativity?
  + Do we want to present awards to K-6th graders? (Only 7-12th graders are eligible for national awards.)
  + How can we recognize teachers who are promoting writing and creativity in their classrooms?
  + What other ways can we recognize student writing and creativity?

**Suggested Timeline**

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| June | * Identify potential community partnership and financial needs (2) |
| July | * Plan and organize workshops, groups, and conferences (1) * Contact and meet with potential community partners and donors (2) * Create promotional materials (3) * Begin social media campaign and continue throughout the fall (3) * Contact potential jurors (4) |
| August | * Plan and organize workshops, groups, and conferences (1) * Secure funding and finalize 2012 – 2013 budget (2) * Develop promotional materials for fall workshops, groups, and conferences (3) * Continue social media campaign (3) * Finalize the jurying process (4) |
| September | * Facilitate workshops and groups (1) * Stay in communication with community partners and donors throughout the fall (2) * September 17: Registration opens and students can begin submitting work (3) * Conduct classroom visits (3) * Continue social media campaign (3) |
| October | * Facilitate workshops and groups (1) * Conduct classroom visits (3) * Continue social media campaign (3) * Invite teachers and/or writers to serve as jurors (4) |
| November | * Facilitate workshops and groups (1) * Host portfolio workshop for high school seniors and their teachers (1) * Continue social media campaign (3) * Confirm jurors (4) |
| December | * Facilitate workshops and groups (1) * Work with community partners to plan the Idaho Awards Ceremony (2 and 4) * December 15: Submissions due (3) * December 19 – January 18: Jury Idaho submissions (4) |
| January | * January 25: Notify Idaho winners (4) * January 25: Send letters and certificates to the principals of winning students (3) * January 31: Send gold key winners on to the national level (4) |
| February | * Finalize details for the Idaho Awards Ceremony (2 and 4) * Create anthology and/or other publications (4) |
| March | * March 7: Gallery opening at Art Source Gallery (4) * March 8: Idaho Awards Ceremony (4) * March 9: Spring Writing Conference (1) * March 15: National notification day (4) * Issue press releases about local and national winners (3) |
| April | * Work with national medalists and their teachers to arrange NYC trips (4) |
| May | * May 31: National Awards Ceremony (4) * Decide how to sustain the program in subsequent years (all) |