

Brian Klotz
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Nordson Corporation Foundation Grant Application

*(This document contains the text of the grant proposal. The actual online form is located on the Nordson Foundation's website. **(Upload)** indicates sections in which official documents must be uploaded to the site separately.)*

Please provide us with the organization's Mission Statement (2000 character max)

The mission of the Center for University, School and Community Partnerships (CUSP) is to improve student learning in the South Coast region by providing high-quality, inter-district professional development opportunities to K-12 educators.

Please provide a brief overview of the organization and evidence of its impact (1000 character max)

For over 30 years, CUSP has connected the resources of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth with the schools within the South Coast Education Compact, which includes 14 public school districts, three vocational/technical schools, and four charter schools. Among these, three school districts (New Bedford, Fall River, and Wareham) are considered "high-need." Currently, our grant-funded programs are worth about \$11 million – these include Journey into Education and Teaching (JET), Leading for Learning, and NSF TEACH! SouthCoast. CUSP and its programs have been featured on the NBC Nightly News as well as in numerous publications, including *The Boston Globe*, *The Harvard Education Letter*, *Scholastic Magazine*, *The Educator*, *Think Magazine*, and *Cape and Plymouth Business Magazine*, among others.

Type of Organization (drop-down): Education

Please list the organization's Board of Directors, key staff, and their qualifications (upload)

Please list other major donors and funding contributions (2000 character max)

This project will be entirely grant-funded. There are no other major donors or funding contributions.

Does the organization have a Non-Discrimination Policy?

Yes

Project Title: Professional Development Workshop Series for Teachers of English Language Learners

Request/Support Type (drop-down): Project Support

Requested Amount: \$23,800

Please list and describe the current project objectives (2000 characters max)

This project will train teachers and administrators in school districts throughout the South Coast area to better meet the needs of English Language Learner (ELL) students. This will give ELL students the same quality of education as their peers, which should result in increased graduation rates and higher academic performance.

Specifically, the project's objectives are to:

- help teachers to identify and address the unique needs of ELL students in the classroom.
- enhance the ability of core-content teachers (teachers of math, science, history, etc.) to effectively instruct ELL students.
- narrow the achievement gap between ELL students and the overall student population.

In addition, each team - comprised of three to five educators from the same school or school district - will form their own objective that pertains to their particular circumstances. They will then decide from that what measurable outcomes will determine their degree of success. For example, one team may choose to address sub-par math and science grades among their ELL student population. As such, that team's objective would be to increase the grades of ELL students in those subjects.

Through this method, the workshops will not only address the larger issue of poor teacher performance in regards to ELL students, but it will also allow each participating school district to apply the techniques they learn to their unique set of needs.

What problem does this project address? (2000 character max)

Students who speak limited English often struggle in English-speaking classrooms, which limits their ability to become productive members of society later in life. Ensuring that each child in our public schools receives equal educational opportunities is not only a moral obligation, but a legal one as well.

After completing a two-year investigation in July of 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) determined that Massachusetts had failed to adequately train teachers to instruct students who speak limited English. According to the DOJ, at least 45,000 teachers across the state were unprepared to meet the demands of instructing ELL students.

In the 2011-2012 school year, Massachusetts' K-12 enrollment was just over 950,000 students, and ELL students accounted for roughly 68,000 (over 7%) of them. This figure grows each year, with a 51% increase since 2000 – making ELL students the fastest-growing student group in the nation. The number of districts that enroll ELL students has also doubled in that same time period. Despite their growing numbers, however, an achievement gap exists between ELL students and their peers. The average four-year graduation rate for ELL students is 57%, compared to the statewide average of 82%.

To address this issue, in the summer of 2012 the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education mandated that all core-content K-12 teachers – as well as their school administrators – earn an official “endorsement” in ELL instruction from the state. Previously, while ESL teachers were required to be certified in teaching ELL students, content-area teachers were not.

The state’s goal is for all ELL students to be in classrooms taught by an endorsed teacher by 2016, when the training will also become a license requirement for prospective core-content teachers. However, some contend that this four-year plan is too aggressive and the state will have difficulty meeting its own deadline without help from organizations such as CUSP.

How will the project objectives be met (strategies and outcomes)? (2000 character max)

CUSP will conduct a three-day summer institute along with six follow-up workshops throughout the school year with teachers and administrators from local school districts. Three of those follow-up workshops will be full-day sessions, while three will be partial-day sessions. The entire series of workshops will be facilitated by an education professional who has direct experience working with ELL students and is knowledgeable about the most current laws, policies, and best practices of the field. In addition, CUSP will use its well-established relationship with the local educational community to bring in esteemed, highly-qualified speakers who can offer unique insight into the issue of ELL instruction.

In the summer institute, the participants will not only receive training in the best practices of teaching ELL students, but will also choose a particular ELL-related issue or question within their school to address. Throughout the year, they will collect real data from their school that pertains to this topic, then use that data to form concrete goals and action plans to meet those goals. This pragmatic, results-based methodology is known as “action research.” Each team will be given a \$1000 stipend to assist them in implementing their plan. They will also be provided with relevant books and supplementary materials to reinforce the content of the workshops.

In the six follow-up sessions, each team will report their progress towards their objective and collaborate with others on how to address any issues or problems that may have come up. The facilitator will work with the participants to ensure that they are making meaningful progress towards their objective. In the end, each team will report their results-to-date and CUSP will retain a copy of any materials they generated in this effort, such as curricula or lesson plans. CUSP will then create a report that evaluates the success of the teams as well as the workshops overall.

Why should this project be funded? What is the basis for optimism that this project can address the problem successfully? (2000 character max)

CUSP has a wealth of experience and a proven track record of using grant funds to address the needs of the South Coast educational community. Currently our grant-funded programs total roughly \$11 million, and this money has gone towards such successful programs as Leading for Learning, the Buzzards Bay Writing Project, and NSF TEACH! SouthCoast. In March of 2012, a five-year review committee praised CUSP for not only acquiring grants, but getting them re-funded or extended, “demonstrating programmatic creativity, client demand, and efficient administration.” The committee also concluded that “CUSP has made significant contributions to the systematic and comprehensive improvement of teaching and leadership in the South Coast region.”

In addition, CUSP is well-respected within the local educational community. This is particularly important since the South Coast has a high number of non-native English speakers. In the New Bedford school district, for example, 21.7% of the students have a first language other than English, compared to 16.7% for the state as a whole. Therefore CUSP's well-established ties to the South Coast region are crucial. The review committee noted that "CUSP has an admirably positive reputation among PK-12 teachers and administrators in the region."

In its over thirty years of existence, CUSP has built strong, long-term bonds with the South Coast Education Compact. We have relationships with renowned educational professionals throughout the region, so acquiring a well-qualified facilitator and relevant speakers for these workshops will not be a problem. As an organization, we have the resources to implement this program effectively and the ability to ensure that its objectives are met. A lack of funding is our only obstacle. With a grant from the Nordson Foundation, we will be able to add this project to our list of successful professional development programs that improve the quality of education in the South Coast community.

Please provide an analysis of the project's risks and limitations, including how these factors will be addressed or minimized (2000 character max)

A potential risk of this program is that core-content teachers will be hesitant to participate, since they may not view their own roles as relating to students' language issues. We plan to address this issue by introducing the concept of the workshop series with an outreach program to the local educational community. We will send CUSP administrators directly to local schools, along with representatives from community outreach programs such as the AMIGO (A Multicultural International Guidance and Outreach Services) Center. There, they will explain the importance of making sure that ELL students, while they are learning English, do not fall behind in core-content subject areas, which could make it difficult for them to "catch up" and thus widen the achievement gap.

Similarly, a potential limitation would be that some core-content teachers may not feel comfortable dealing with language-based issues, something they have likely not been previously trained in. We will minimize this problem by placing workshop participants into teams, which will then collaborate with the other teams, in addition to the facilitator, throughout the project. Participants will feel more comfortable in a welcoming, collaborative environment, in which they know they are not alone and that they will work through issues together.

Please provide a brief history of the project (2000 character max)

Once we receive funding, this will be the first time this project is implemented. It was conceived by CUSP Director Karen O' Connor to meet the needs of the local educational community, for which the issue of ELL education is all too pressing.

For example, an October 7, 2012 article in *The New Bedford Standard-Times* stated that "in New Bedford's school district, large and persistent achievement gaps exist between [English Language Learners] and the district as a whole, gaps that have only increased over the past five years." The article added that "in recent months, the district's ongoing inability to effectively reach these students has drawn increased public scrutiny and rising pressure to change the way this group of students is taught." CUSP

designs programs to address issues and fill gaps in the educational system of Southeastern Massachusetts. Clearly, the community needs for the quality of ELL students' education to be improved, and time is of the essence. From this necessity, this workshop series was born.

Please provide the organization's or program's website: cuspma.org

Please describe how the project fits within the guidelines of Nordson Corporation Foundation (2000 characters max)

Like the Nordson Corporation Foundation, CUSP is dedicated to improving the community by ensuring that students have equal access to quality educational opportunities. We at CUSP share Nordson's belief that a proper education is the key to creating productive, self-sufficient members of society. Through this project, we will be able to use our resources and experience to improve the quality of the educational experience throughout the South Coast region of Massachusetts.

English Language Learners comprise a large number of the students in our community, and they are the fastest-growing student population in not only the state but the entire country. These students come from a variety of ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds, but each deserve an equal opportunity to receive a quality education and become productive citizens later in life. Unfortunately, while these students are in the process of learning English, it is easy for them to fall behind in core-content subjects. The more momentum they lose early in their educational careers, the more they will struggle as the content becomes more advanced with each passing year. This is reflected in the lower four-year graduation rates for ELL students.

Both CUSP and the Nordson Foundation are committed to improving the long-term quality of life in the communities in which we live and work by improving educational outcomes. Training teachers to better address the unique needs of the growing population of ELL students will therefore benefit not only the individual students, but the community at large as well.

Total annual organizational operating budget: (To be provided by University prior to submitting)

Operating Budget File
(upload)

Please provide the organization's IRS 501(c)(3) or 509(a)(1),(2),(3) tax designation
(upload)

Please provide the organization's 990 or 990-PF federal tax return, or the organization's current audited financial statement
(upload)

Program Type (drop-down): Education K-12

Geographic Impact (drop-down): RI & Southeastern MA

Ethnicity Served (by percent)

All –

African American –

Hispanic –

Minorities in General – 100%

Native American –

Caucasian –

Total – 100%

Gender Served (by percent)

All – 100%

Female –

Male –

Total – 100%

Target Age (by percent)

All –

Infant –

Children – 33.3%

Adolescence – 33.4%

Young Adult – 33.3%

Adult –

Elderly –

Total – 100%

If previously funded by Nordson Corporation Foundation please provide a brief report on the results of the grant (i.e., amount of funding, what was accomplished, challenges encountered, and corrective actions taken) (2000 characters max)

The Center for University, School, and Community Partnerships (CUSP) at UMass Dartmouth has never received funds from the Nordson Corporation Foundation.

Please describe the project deliverables and outcomes (2000 characters max)

The overall outcome of this workshop series will be a higher quality of ELL education in South Coast schools, which will narrow the achievement gap between ELL students and their peers. In addition, the participant teams will each have generated a product to help them achieve their objective. These could include lesson plans, curricula, or projects that will help their school improve ELL student learning. These

products will then be placed online to serve as resources for other educators or schools, which will serve the dual purpose of improving the quality of education for ELL students beyond the scope of the workshop participants as well as increasing the visibility of the program itself.

After the series has concluded, CUSP will produce a comprehensive report that will contain the results of the program. This will explain what happened in the workshops, what the results were, and suggestions for how to further improve the program in the future. The report will contain both qualitative and quantitative data that speaks to what the participants learned and how effective the workshops were. Examples of this data would include the results of the pre- and post-program questionnaires, the information collected by each group as part of the “action research” method, and the results-to-date of their action plans.

Explain the assessment strategies that will be used to define and measure the program’s success (2000 characters max)

Prior to participation in the program, each participant will fill out a questionnaire that will measure their opinions, attitudes, and level of comfort (among other factors) as it relates to teaching ELL students. A post-program questionnaire will ask these questions again to determine if and to what degree a positive change was made. It will also collect the participants’ impressions on how effective the workshops were, both as a whole and broken down by element, so that we can determine what lessons, activities, speakers, etc. were most and least effective, enabling us to evaluate the success of the program and refine it for possible future use.

Workshop participants will be organized into groups of three to five educators or administrators from the same school or school district. As part of the action research methodology, they will each determine – with the guidance of the facilitator – their own measurable outcomes by which their success will be measured. These outcomes must be tied to a pressing ELL-related issue or question within their school.

For example, one group may decide to address a below-average graduation rate for ELL students in their school. Therefore, that particular group’s success will be assessed in terms of that metric – after applying the methods learned in the workshops, do the affected students ultimately have a higher graduation rate?

We at CUSP will then record, measure, and assess the success of each participant group in terms of the goal they established. This data will then be used in our final report to help measure the success of the workshop series overall, ensuring that the program is making significant progress in improving the quality of education for ELL students in the South Coast region of Massachusetts.

Please describe the involvement of stakeholders (e.g. Board, Target Population, Community Members) (2000 characters max)

Educators (teachers and administrators) in Southeastern Massachusetts: They will be directly involved as the participants of the workshops. By improving their ability to effectively teach ELL students, they will develop professionally and be able to share their knowledge with their peers.

English Language Learners: As the target population, these students will benefit the most from this workshop series. The end goal of this project is to improve the state of ELL education and narrow the achievement gap between ELL students and their peers.

The Center for University, School and Community Partnerships (CUSP): We will be conducting the workshops, using our experience and resources to fulfill a pressing need in the community.

The Massachusetts State Government: In response to the Department of Justice's report that MA teachers are largely unprepared to teach ELL students, the state government set new criteria for core-content teachers, all of whom must meet this new standard by 2016. This workshop series will help them meet that goal.

The AMIGO Center (A Multicultural International Guidance and Outreach Service): A community outreach center overseen by the Immigrant's Assistance Center of New Bedford, the AMIGO Center works to support non-English speaking families in the New Bedford Public School system. They will partner with CUSP on this project, helping to publicize and generate support for the workshop series.

Other Community Outreach Agencies: Since this project would benefit minority populations across Southeastern Massachusetts, many public outreach agencies would benefit from and openly support such an endeavor. These could include Child and Family Services, the New Bedford Community Connections Coalition Family Center, and the North Star Learning Center.

Please provide a sustainability plan. What steps will your organization take to ensure the future success of the proposed project beyond completion of Nordson Corporation Foundation funding (i.e. future financial support, staff requirements, continued community interest)? (2000 characters max)

Since teacher buy-in is an inherent part of this workshop series, sustainability is built in to the program. Educators will apply the lessons they learn and the results of their action research to their respective schools, ensuring that the program's success extends beyond those directly involved to permeate throughout the region. Another way this will occur is through the South Coast Education Compact. The superintendents of the schools that comprise the Compact meet on a regular basis to discuss problem areas that need to be addressed and initiatives to do so – often professional development programs with organizations such as CUSP.

Since the quality of ELL education is such a pressing issue, this workshop series has the potential to become a model for the entire region and beyond. This will not only maximize the number of teachers who improve their skills in working with ELL students, but will in turn maximize the number of ELL students who benefit from an improved quality of education.

Community interest in the workshop series will be sustained through publication of its results. They will of course be published on our own website, which is connected to the overall University of Massachusetts Dartmouth site. Beyond that, however, the program will be in publications such as *The New Bedford Standard-Times*, both in its traditional print format and its online version at SouthCoastToday.com. CUSP programs are routinely featured in that publication, which serves fourteen cities and towns throughout the South Coast region, and we have an established relationship with their editorial staff.

If this workshop series is successful, we plan to seek further grant funding to make it an annual program. We have a strong history of success in doing so. For example, Journey into Education and Teaching (JET), the Buzzards Bay Writing Project, and Leading for Learning are all programs that continue to this day, extending well beyond their initial grant funding.