PART I – INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW:

WRITING PARTNERS @ SAC STATE IS A PROGRAM OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CENTER AND A SERVICE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

WRITING PARTNERS @ SAC STATE:

• promote social and civic responsibility by relating service to learning in the classroom; and
• engage students in reflection and critical thinking that link hands-on service in the community; and
• provide service that benefits the community partner and the student;
• enable students to enhance their learning while engaging in letter exchange with students from elementary schools in the Sacramento region;
• encourage elementary-school students to begin to prepare for college and see themselves as college eligible.
• encourage elementary-school students visiting Sac State to see what life in the community is like.
• help Sac State students articulate their goals and what they want to do in life.
• provide opportunities for students to learn about more than just the basic letter format and to consider how they might apply these skills in the future.
• help students understand how they might incorporate learning outcomes in your course syllabus.
• the ability to use various writing strategies in terms of drafting a letter that is appropriate for a specific audience.
• the ability to analyze the audience;
• the ability to compose, draft and write letters;
• encouraging elementary-school students to begin to prepare for college and see themselves as college eligible.
• building relationships through writing; and
• using this letter exchange to help Sac State students articulate their goals and what they want to do in life.
• make connections across communities and within their community.
• the understanding of their participation in this activity as having a real audience;
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• knowing about more than just the basic letter format and to consider how they might apply these skills in the future.
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PART I – INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW:

Writing Partners @ Sac State (WP) is a program of the Community Engagement Center and a service learning experience that provides Sac State students an opportunity to teach and learn through a letter exchange with students from elementary schools in the Sacramento region. Service Learning engages students and faculty in experiences that:

- enable students to enhance their learning while engaging in hands-on service in the community;
- provide service that benefits the community partner and the student;
- engage students in reflection and critical thinking that link learning from service to learning in the classroom; and
- promote social and civic responsibility by relating service experiences to issues of public concern and to the responsibilities of citizens in a democracy.

Since 2005, Sac State students have participated in the Writing Partners letter exchange program that culminates in their elementary-school students visiting Sac State to see what life is like on a college campus. More than 3,000 university and elementary-school students have participated in the program since it began.

Writing Partners @ Sac State is designed to foster mentor-like relationships between college and elementary-school students through literacy and it was created from Write to Succeed, Inc., a program designed by graduate students in Rhetoric and Composition and an elementary-school teacher.

WRITING PARTNERS @ SAC STATE:

Writing Partners @ Sac State began in the summer of 2005 in conjunction with the Community Engagement Center. Former English Department faculty member Dr. Catherine Gabor, also a co-creator of the original Writing Partners Program, piloted WP with one of her classes, and the CEC has since been involved by facilitating partnerships between Sac State faculty and elementary-school teachers. For the past 10 years, faculty across campus – Nursing, Teacher Education, EOP, First Year Experience (FYE) Seminars, Composition – have incorporated this pedagogical tool into their courses. Many First Year Experience (FYE) faculty have included WP because it works well with the overall FYE curriculum that focuses on “becoming an educated person.” WP is also a great first “Service Learning” experience for college students because it introduces them to the idea of working in the community and participating in a reciprocal activity – a letter exchange – that results in enhancing the literacy skills of both college and elementary-school students.

GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:

We encourage you to include information about “what” the Writing Partners program is all about and also include these goals and learning outcomes in your course syllabus.

The overall goals of Writing Partners @ Sac State include:

- building and/or strengthening literacy;
- enhancing knowledge of writing through a letter exchange with a real audience;
- connecting Sacramento State students with students in K-12 in the Sacramento region;
- using this letter exchange to help Sac State students articulate and reinforce their identities as ‘college students’;
- building relationships through writing; and
- encouraging elementary-school students to begin to prepare for college and see themselves as college eligible.

BY THE END OF THE SEMESTER, SACRAMENTO STATE STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE:

- the ability to compose, draft and write letters;
- the ability to analyze the audience;
- the importance of tone and “voice” as a writer;
- the ability to use various writing strategies in terms of drafting a letter (e.g., use of analogy, amplification, hyperbole, metaphor, etc.); and
- the understanding of their participation in this activity as having an impact on young people in their community.

HOW DOES WRITING PARTNERS WORK?

Writing Partners matches university-student writers with elementary-school student writers in a collaborative letter exchange. Through Writing Partners, students learn that writing has the power to help them understand of their participation in this activity as having an impact on young people in their community.

Unlike pen pals, Writing Partners incorporates academic and social learning goals, and intentionally helps foster literacy skills. Both university and elementary-school students are asked to think about more than just the basic letter format and to consider how to build relationships through writing, basic document design, and the nature of the audience. Writing Partners enhances creative and critical thinking skills and fosters a sense of authority in students as writers and as members of the campus community.
PART II -- WRITING PARTNERS PLANNING LOGISTICS OUTLINE:

STEP 1: AFTER CEC HAS FACILITATED AN INTRODUCTION WITH A PARTNER TEACHER, FACULTY WILL NEED TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Share contact information (email addresses, phone numbers, best mailing address for letter exchange).
- Review academic year calendars.
- Exchange roster of student names (first names only - if there are duplicate first names, include first initial of last name).
- Share course outlines and/or syllabi.

STEP 2: SCHEDULE A TIME TO MEET IN PERSON TO DISCUSS:

- The purpose(s) of letters and the extent to which you will both be talking about the process of writing.
- Which class will write the initial letters?
- How to synchronize dates (letter exchanges, end of semester celebration, etc.).
- A system for the letter exchanges.
- Options for an end-of-semester celebration that will allow the Writing Partners to meet.
- How to keep in touch throughout the semester.

STEP 3: IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elementary-School Teachers</th>
<th>University Faculty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce students to the project and assign each student a writing partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model letter-writing techniques and discuss aspects of a typical letter</td>
<td>Clarify for students the degree to which the Writing Partners assignments will count toward students' grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish ground rules</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have students begin drafting letters to college writing partners in order to meet deadline for first letter exchange</td>
<td>Have students draft initial letters integrating information about themselves and about the course (if relevant). (e.g., I'm taking a science class or an English class, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>After collecting and reading student letters, make copies to create a record of student correspondence and review to ensure that content is appropriate</td>
<td>Have students turn in their original letter plus one copy, unsealed and unfolded. You will review to ensure appropriate content, and then forward the originals and grade copies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>End of semester event</td>
<td>End of semester event</td>
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### Elementary-School Teachers

- **Introduce students to the project and announce who their Writing Partners will be.**
  - Emphasize their very important role as both authors and readers. If these will be graded assignments, clarify for students what the criteria will be for compliance.

- **Model letter-writing techniques and discuss aspects of a typical letter.**
  - Salutation, date, body paragraphs, conclusion, name and signature; might also discuss visual components and effects of stationary versus lined paper, graphics and drawings versus white space.
  - As the correspondence progresses, sometimes students become excited and include drawings and illustrations in their letters.

- **Establish ground rules.**
  - Students should not share email addresses or attempt to meet each other outside of class. The relationship should remain solely through writing.
  - Because of liability concerns, no photographs should be exchanged.
  - Students should not make any attempts to connect through Social Media — FaceBook, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.

- **Have students begin drafting letters to college writing partner in order to meet deadline for first letter exchange.**
  - Prompt students to draft initial letters integrating information from their interests and inspirations.

- **After collecting and reading student letters, make copies to create a record of student correspondences.**
  - Be sure to read all the letters before forwarding them to the college students. Please note any inappropriate language and/or content. You will want to have the student revise his or her letter before sending.
  - It is an interesting and worthwhile opportunity to see student interest and writing enthusiasm grow over the course of the correspondence.
  - These files are also helpful as assessment tools.

- **End of semester event.**
  - Once end of semester date is set, confirm bus reservations, coordinate field trip forms and chaperones, etc. Please let the Community Engagement Center know at least two weeks prior to your event if you will need parking permits for the bus and/or chaperones.
  - Please note that college students cannot be left alone with elementary-school students at any time. Teacher and/or chaperone must be present.
  - In terms of food, students are encouraged to bring their lunch since no food will be provided for health (potential allergies) and safety reasons (legal liability).

### University Faculty

- **Introduce students to the project and announce who their Writing Partners will be.**
  - Emphasize their very important role as both authors and readers.
  - Be sure to talk with your students about the elementary school (e.g., location, socioeconomic status, its history, etc.); and also the potential impact that your students have as role models.
  - Engage in audience analysis as a class and determine what is appropriate tone, voice and subject matter for the age group with which they will be corresponding.
  - Have students brainstorm topics for the letters. Depending on content, students can write about their experiences regarding the major and/or college life.

- **Clarify for students the degree to which the Writing Partners assignments will count toward students’ grade.**
  - You may choose to grade the letters individually or as part of a larger writing portfolio.
  - In general, we recommend that these be graded assignments with clear goals and evaluation criteria.

- **Establish ground rules.**
  - Students should not trade email addresses or attempt to meet each other outside of class.
  - Because of liability concerns, no photographs should be exchanged and students should not make any attempts to connect through Social Media — FaceBook, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.

- **Have students draft response to initial letters.**
  - Encourage students to share their letters (and their partners’ letters in class) to heighten class enthusiasm and provide for revision strategies and audience analysis skills to be practiced.
  - Clarify if letters must be a specific length. For example, requiring 8.5 x 11 size paper, two pages typed and double-spaced of text (not including visuals) or 3 pages if handwritten.

- **Have student turn in their original letter plus one copy, unsealed and unfolded. You will forward the originals and use the copies to grade from.**
  - Be sure to read all the letters before forwarding them to the elementary-school students. Please note any inappropriate language and/or content. You will want to have the student revise his or her letter before sending.
  - Set clear deadlines so if there are revisions needed, it will not delay the letter exchange process.

- **End of semester event.**
  - Once end of semester date is set, reserve room(s) at University Union or The WELL as early as possible. Room availability toward the end of the semester can be challenging due to a high number of events.
  - No photography of their elementary-school partners is allowed. Selfies with students are also prohibited.
  - Students are encouraged to bring their lunch since no food will be provided for health (potential allergies) and safety reasons (legal liability).
PART III – WRITING PARTNERS: GOALS, SUGGESTIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Remember your audience—you are writing to a fifth or sixth grade student. Your subject matter and language should be appropriate to your reader.
- In participating in this project, you represent Sacramento State.
- Your purpose in writing is to get to know your writing partner and to model some of the academic and personal behaviors that are appropriate to becoming an educated person and a college graduate.
- No contact between you and your fifth grade writing partner outside of the project is permitted. Please do not exchange phone numbers, email addresses, or social media information, e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.

SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

All letters should be 1-2 pages long. They may be hand-written or typed.

- Your first letter will be a letter of introduction. You may also share some of your experiences and reflections about Sacramento State with your writing partner. If you are starting the conversation, feel free to ask questions to which your partner might respond.
- You may decorate the letter and the envelope. Be creative.
- In writing about your experiences or interests, develop your ideas fully. Talk about “why” and “how.” Move beyond simple statements like “I recently saw the ‘The Lego Movie,’ and thought it was good.” Tell your writing partner a little bit about the movie and explain why you thought it was good.
- Be responsive in your second and third letters to what your writing partner has written to you. Ask follow-up questions, offer words of encouragement, recall similar situations from your elementary years, etc.
- One of your last letters should include an invitation to the Writing Partners @ Sac State culminating event.

TIPS FOR WRITING TO THE ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL STUDENTS

You will be writing to fifth and sixth graders, some of whom may have challenges with reading and writing. They are 10 to 12 years old and they enjoy reading and writing about their favorite things. Some ideas of what they like to talk about include:

- Sports, especially basketball and football (Kings and Raiders)
- Music
- TV shows and movies
- Animals
- Food and candy
- Games, especially cards, bingo, kickball, basketball, recess games and video games

- Clothes, mostly sports related
- Books, easy to read like Diary of a Wimpy Kid, or Goosebumps
- Drawing, mostly cars and cartoon characters
- Celebrities – they LOVE anything to do with celebrities

*Please remember to be age-appropriate in your discussions of entertainment – music, celebrities, TV, and movies.
WRITING PARTNERS PROGRAM PLANNING PROCESS

Please note that college students cannot be left alone with elementary-school students. Please note any inappropriate language and content, students can write about their experiences regarding the elementary-school students. Please note any inappropriate language and content. Students are encouraged to bring their lunch since no food will be provided for health (potential allergies) and safety reasons (legal liability).

General Guidelines

- Be alone with your elementary-school partner.
- Do not exchange phone numbers, email addresses, or social media information, e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.
- Please do not exchange pictures or videos.
- Games, especially cards, bingo, kickball, basketball, recess games like “I recently saw the ‘The Lego Movie,’ and thought it was good.”
- Drawing, mostly cars and cartoon characters
- Books, easy to read like Diary of a Wimpy Kid, or Goosebumps

Do’s and Don’ts

**DO**

- Use simple print to write the letters.
- Draw pictures, use colors, attach stickers to the letters.
- Talk about your transition to college and what you want to be.
- Encourage studying, especially reading and math. Remind them how important these skills are.
- Make sure to be present during the end of semester visit.

**DON’T**

- Share your home address or private information about yourself (ALL letters will be reviewed by your professor and the elementary-school teacher before your elementary-school partner receives them).
- Talk about mature topics (e.g., movies with a PG rating, dangerous activities, foul language). This rule also applies if the student brings up these topics.
- Write in cursive, or use complex wording.
- Be alone with your elementary-school Writing Partner. On field trip day, stay in a group.

On a personal note, the students would like to hear about you.

- What kinds of movies, sports, TV shows, games and books do you like?
- Ask the students lots of questions so that they can use these questions as guidelines in writing their own letters to you.

**WRITING PARTNERS @ SAC STATE REFLECTION**

**IDEAS TO WRITE ABOUT:**

Tell them about your college experience so far, especially your first day or first week experiences.

- Did you have first day jitters?
- Tell them about the process of applying for college and remind them that you had to start thinking about applying for college while still in high school.
- Talk about your favorite classes in high school, what led you to choose Sac State, what you are interested in studying at Sac State, and tell about your professors.
- You may want to talk about what you wanted to grow up to be when you were a child, and how college is going to make that dream a reality.
- Talk about your job if you have one, and how you get to campus.
- How much time do you spend in class?
- If you attend summer school, talk about that.

**On a personal note, the students would like to hear about you.**

- What kinds of movies, sports, TV shows, games and books do you like?
- Ask the students lots of questions so that they can use these questions as guidelines in writing their own letters to you.

1. Thanks for participating in Writing Partners @ Sac State! We would like to know more about your experiences with Writing Partners. Please write 1 paragraph reflecting on your overall experience with this program:

2. Please take a moment to respond to these questions:

   a. What do you now think about your ability to analyze the audience through letter writing? How might this skill help you in the future?
   b. What do you now think about your ability to use tone and voice as a writer? How might this skill help you in the future?
   c. What do you now understand about your participation in this activity as having an impact on young people in their community?

3. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience?
Please note that college students cannot be left alone with elementary-school students. After collecting and reading student letters, make copies to create a larger writing portfolio. Because of liability concerns, no photographs should be exchanged. Salutations, dates, body paragraphs, conclusions, names and signatures; they will need parking permits for the bus and/or chaperones. Engage in audience analysis as a class and determine what is appropriate tone, voice and subject matter for the age group with potential impact that your students have as role models.

Students are encouraged to bring their lunch since no food will be provided for health (potential allergies) and safety reasons (legal liability). Selfies with students are also prohibited. Students should not trade email addresses or attempt to meet each other. The relationship should remain solely through writing.

Students should not make any attempts to connect through outside of class. The relationship should remain solely through writing.

Students are encouraged to share their letters (and their partners’ letters) with classmates to heighten class enthusiasm and provide for revision. In writing about your experiences or interests, develop your ideas fully. Talk about “why” and “how.” Move beyond simple statements of encouragement, recall similar situations from your elementary-school teacher before your current position. One of your last letters should include an invitation to the Writing Partners culminating event.

Food and candy: animals, books, easy to read like Diary of a Wimpy Kid, or Goosebumps games and books do you like? Drawing, mostly cars and cartoon characters.

Draw pictures, use colors, attach stickers. In writing about your experiences or interests, develop your ideas fully. Talk about “why” and “how.” Move beyond simple statements of encouragement, recall similar situations from your elementary-school teacher before your current position. Ask the students lots of questions so that they wanted to grow up to be when you were a child. Did you have first day jitters? Tell them about your college experience during the first few weeks, etc. The 5th graders were inspired and hopeful about attending college and the college students were inspired about paying forward these skills are.

The kids really applied their communication skills to an authentic audience. They seemed to better understand how letter writing works. They did hand written letters and now they have a tangible record of the experience. You may want to talk about what you did this summer, what you did this summer, what you want to do this summer. Students should not make any attempts to connect through outside of class. The relationship should remain solely through writing.

You may decorate the letter and the envelope. Be creative. Writing is a skill that can be developed in the classroom. One of your last letters should include an invitation to the Writing Partners culminating event.

For more information about Writing Partners @ Sac State, please contact: cec@csus.edu

QUOTES FROM TEACHERS AND STUDENTS:

ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL TEACHERS:

“I enjoyed seeing my students read closely and want to write. This enthusiasm for writing carried over to our classwork, so our collective writing improved as a result of our participation in the Writing Partners program.”

“The kids really applied their communication skills to an authentic audience. They seemed to better understand how letter writing works. They did hand written letters and now they have a tangible record of the experience.”

SACRAMENTO STATE FACULTY:

“I noticed that my Sac State students really got excited when they received their letters from the 5th graders – more than I expected. I think they felt like they were really making a difference with prospective students.”

“My students always bond quickly with their writing partners. They greatly enjoy the program and the 5th graders love it too, especially meeting their partners and touring the campus.”

According to one Sac State faculty, the students enjoyed “the satisfaction of giving something back, of facilitating an extremely life changing program for all involved. I could see the light in the eyes of my students and the 5th graders. I am proud to be involved.”

“I can’t say enough about the impact of the program on both populations. The 5th graders were inspired and hopeful about attending college and the college students were inspired about paying forward their own experiences. This encouraged them to reflect on their own successes and the pride they felt by all was very valuable.”

SACRAMENTO STATE STUDENTS:

“Because of my service learning experience in the Writing Partners program, I am much more open-minded to becoming a teacher - it has been something that has always been in the back of my head but this has really opened my eyes and is a possible career field option. This program was really fun and exciting to get to know the future of this world and society. I am very happy that I did do this because this experience will be one for the books and I learned that service learning can be just as easy as guiding another student and mentoring and answering questions and it turned out to be a lot of fun. I would do this again. It was a great experience.”

“Because of my service learning experience in the Writing Partners program, I am a better person. [After] giving a tour to the kids, it has made me think of being an orientation leader. I really enjoyed my time. Being able to send and receive cards from the fifth graders has given me the opportunity to sit back and think of my dreams and goals. If anything, I learned so much with the kids, and I truly would do this again.”

According to two students, they are now “aware of inner city school students and their struggles in nearby areas” and “more confident with working with people. Not only did I make connections with kids, but they really made me feel good within myself. Their letters were very inspiring, both my writing partners had big dreams and goals.”

For more information about Writing Partners @ Sac State, please contact: cec@csus.edu
HISTORY OF THE CEC

- Since 1996, approximately 20,000+ students have worked with the CEC to contribute at least 1 million hours of volunteer work at more than 300 community partner sites.
- In a typical year, more than 60+ campus classes incorporate a Service Learning component.
- More than 2,000 students participate in service-related activities and contribute approximately 50,000 hours of service each year.
- The economic impact of this labor over the past 20 years is valued at close to $25 million. Yet, the impact of this work on the students who engaged in it, and whose agency or organization benefited from it, is priceless.

MISSION:
To engage members of the Sacramento State campus through their educational experiences to become aware of and respond to local and global community concerns through Service Learning, Volunteerism and Academic Internships.

VISION:
To create a campus climate that promotes community awareness and involvement and supports students to become civically minded graduates who are actively engaged in making a difference both locally and globally.