

## PowerUP Jax Fall 2016 Grant Winner

12. **Mary Elizabeth Ballentine**  
**Oceanway Middle School**  
**Subject/Grade: 8<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts and Enrichment Reading Classes**  
**Project Title: Postcrossing: Making Global Connections**

### **Summary of Project:**

Postcrossing.com is a website that allows people from all over the world to send postcards to each other and get a snapshot of life in other places. As a first-year teacher, I used postcrossing.com in the classroom. Students wrote rough drafts of their postcards, edited and revised them, and then wrote the final draft in ink on a Florida postcard. These were sent to countries all over the world. Once our postcard was received, the recipient logged it online and we were eligible to receive a postcard of our own. By the end of the year, an entire wall of our classroom was covered in postcards from all over the world. The students were always excited to receive mail and read the messages from across the globe (places like Singapore, Russia, Denmark, and Japan). The students had a clear motivation to excel in the writing process, and they took the revision phase very seriously, as this was not just for a grade, but a reflection on them and their country. It also provided an opportunity to discuss geography and current international events. When students showed their parents around the classroom during open houses, they always pointed out our postcard wall with pride. We need PowerUP Jax because the cost of international stamps is \$1.15 per postcard and postcards are about \$0.60/each. My first year, I paid for these out of pocket because I taught at a small school and had only 25 students. Now, I have 140 students and the cost is exponentially increased.

### **How many students will be directly involved? Explain any further impact on other students, teachers, the school as a whole, and/or the community.**

I will involve all 140 of my students in both Reading and English classes. This project will benefit my students via increased exposure to the world and the real-life relevance of Language Arts. This exposure will benefit other classes, especially Social Studies and Foreign Language as students will have context and connections to people living in other places who view the world from different perspectives. It will also give the students an appreciation for learning a second language as most of the senders from other countries are writing in their second or third language (English).

### **How will the project specifically increase student learning? Be sure to explain the project's connections to existing learning standards. Be clear about what new skills, knowledge, and/or dispositions the students will acquire.**

This project aligns to Common Core standards of Language Conventions and Writing for real-world situations. The writing process (drafting, editing, revising, publishing) is practiced and the students learn - for what is new to most of them as part of the texting-generation - how to properly address a card and format a letter.

### **What is your plan for evaluating the success of your project? What artifacts (photographs, samples of student work, testimonials, etc...) would you use to demonstrate the effectiveness of the project?**

I plan to survey the students in May to evaluate what went well with the project, what they learned from it, and what can be improved upon for the next year. I will have student drafts and photos of their completed postcards to demonstrate their growth throughout the writing process as well as the postcards we receive.