



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 30, 2006
NO 358

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Minnesota Teacher Is Recipient of First Bob Costas Grant for the Teaching of Writing, Announced by the College Board

NEW YORK—Jennifer Budenski, language arts teacher at the Hopkins Alternative Program Off-Campus Pavilion in Hopkins, Minnesota, is one of six teachers in the nation who have been awarded the first College Board Bob Costas Grants for the Teaching of Writing, the College Board announced today. The grants are in recognition of the innovative methods these teachers use to inspire and develop their students' writing skills. The award was named for Bob Costas, the Emmy Award-winning broadcaster and author, due to his dedication to the craft of writing and his generous public service work on behalf of the National Commission on Writing. Each teacher will receive a grant of \$2,000.

"The honorees are remarkable teachers who are creative and successful in their approach to get young people excited about writing and learning," said Costas. "Their commitment is clearly reflected in the confidence they are building in their students, who are developing lifelong skills of incredible value. I'm honored to be associated with this national program recognizing such noble work."

One grant recipient was selected from each of the College Board's six regions. Budenski will be honored at the College Board's Midwestern Regional Forum on February 26, 2006, at the Renaissance Chicago Hotel in Chicago, Illinois.

Jennifer Budenski

Students participating in the Artful Writing program at the Hopkins Alternative Program are building their literacy skills by visiting a local museum and responding to art. Jennifer Budenski, teacher and co-creator of the program, works with at-risk students who have been asked to leave a mainstream high school or those who require a smaller setting. The Weisman Art Museum is housed in a stainless-steel and brick building designed by Frank Gehry and features contemporary art from paintings to sculptures to installations. Visiting an art museum is unfamiliar to most of Budenski's students. One objective, she said, is to build bridges from their current experiences to the world of art.

Many of Budenski's students are acquiring basic literacy skills. Others have stronger writing skills, but have not felt motivated to demonstrate them in school.

“I’ve tried begging them to write and read, bribing them to write and read, showing them the practical applications of writing and reading,” writes Budenski. “Only when I have provided them with the same opportunity, expected of them the same degree of transformation that I expect in my AP classes . . . have I witnessed lasting learning.”

Students visit the museum with members of Teens Rock the Mic, a group of young spoken-word artists. There they participate in writing activities that are triggered by their reaction to the artwork. The goal, Budenski says, is to translate literacy skills from visual, to written, to spoken.

One student wrote: “The real thing that gets me through is we just don’t write in class, we go to all walks of life for art, from sculpting, to music, to painting. . . . When you’re in a room in which everyone is so into the class and assignments, that truly is a moment of peace and utter learning.”

Gaston Caperton, president of the College Board, said: “These winners, along with many of the other highly qualified applicants, are doing critical work. To succeed in the classroom and later in life, students need to acquire strong writing skills. We were heartened by the overwhelming response we received in the first year of this program and to learn about so many great efforts being made across the country to inspire students to write well.”

The College Board established the National Commission on Writing in 2002 to create more national support for the teaching of writing. Bob Costas, a *New York Times* best-selling author, has received numerous Emmy Awards, including two for writing, and has been honored as Sportscaster of the Year a record eight times by the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association. He has supported the Commission’s work by producing a national public service announcement encouraging young people to develop strong writing skills for success in the classroom and the workplace.

Teachers of grades 6–12 from any discipline, in both public and nonpublic schools, are eligible for the Bob Costas Grants, as are writing programs that take place within schools or the community. For more details about the award and the other honorees, visit www.collegeboard.com/costasgrants.

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 5,000 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT[®], the PSAT/NMSQT[®], and the Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®]). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns.

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