



# Press Release

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

**NEW YORK**—Mary Beth Britton, language arts teacher and National Honor Society sponsor at Pecos High School in Pecos, New Mexico, 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. Britton will be honored at the College Board Southwestern Regional Forum on February 2, 2006, at The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel in The Woodlands, Texas.

**Mary Beth Britton**

Two Sunday afternoons a month, students from Pecos High School travel 60 miles round-trip to the Kingston Residence of Santa Fe to meet with senior citizens and record their life stories. The students conduct interviews, discuss drafts of their work with the seniors, and collaborate on a book of life stories. Students and seniors perform together at the end of each school year with a reading of the finished product. Over the past three years, students have met and written about a fascinating array of people, including Albert Einstein's former secretary, a scientist who participated in the Manhattan Project, and a woman who had tea with Indira Gandhi.

Mary Beth Britton leads the program with fellow teacher Susan Miera. A former student made the link between Britton's successful writing instruction and her own aspirations for college: "Growing up in a place where many students dropped out of high school . . . made it tough not to fall into the same dilemma," wrote University of New Mexico student Cristal Vasquez. "Had I not had the guidance of Mrs. Britton and learned how to strengthen my writing skills, I do not trust that I would have had the confidence to pursue a high school diploma and a collegiate education."

Britton explained: "Oral history projects reinforce the need for diligent practice in each phase of the writing process. Students recording the memories of others develop a thorough understanding of the importance of revising and editing their work." Once limited to members of the school's National Honor Society, the program is now open to all students at Pecos High and welcomes students from Pojoaque High School, north of Santa Fe.

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](http://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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