**TASL Innovative Library media Award Application**

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***The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* All Upper School/Faculty Reading Program**

Last year I read *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope*, and as I shut the book, I became wholly committed to getting the story into as many hands as possible. Seriously, it’s that good. It’s inspirational, it’s funny, it’s heartbreaking. It gives us a global perspective; it touches on all things STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). This was a must-read for my Girls Preparatory School community and I knew that I had to come up with a program that would do just that: one that would get William Kamkwamba’s story out there, one that would inspire others as it had inspired me, one that could convince all of us that “if William can do it, so can I.”

My school is all girls, grades 6-12. Several years ago we changed our school’s mission statement to reflect the emphasis that we place on giving our students not just a top quality education, but a global education as well. Our mission now reads “Girls Preparatory School creates leaders by engaging the mind, stimulating the spirit, instilling values and self confidence, and challenging girls to recognize their membership in the global community.” I believe that reading *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* addresses nearly every one of those objectives set forth in our mission statement.

As a college prep school, girls in grades 9-12 are well versed in juggling so many things it would make most adults’ heads spin. Many of them take multiple AP classes, play sports, participate in school musicals and plays, all of them participate in clubs, some have after school jobs to go to; it seems that few have a lot of extra time on their hands for pleasure reading. This goes against our mission in the library: to create lifelong lovers of reading. If they do have time (or make time), few of our students look for non-fiction as understandably, they are entrenched in learning all day long and they simply want an escape when they read! I get that! Another hope for this reading program was to show them that non-fiction can be so well written that it actually is a pleasurable learning experience. Because aspects of this book relate to so many different parts of our curriculum (math, science, history, global cultures, and English), I saw an opportunity to get many different faculty members tied into the program. Therefore, I decided to create an opportunity for all upper school students and faculty to participate on a voluntary basis.

After getting administration’s approval, I began by making a book trailer to show at a faculty meeting. Once complete, I began to look for ways to promote the program. First and foremost, I attempted to bring windmills to our campus. I contacted TVA’s green energy program administrator and secured the loan of a 6 ft. battery operated turbine to place in the front of the library to accompany my program promotion for the 6 weeks preceding the book discussion. Boy, that got people talking and coming into the library! I also contacted a smaller green energy company, *Signal Energy*, which is located on nearby Signal Mountain, and found that a GPS father is actually the Vice President of the company! Not only did he loan us several small metal turbines to scatter around campus along with program fliers, he also volunteered to come to campus to do a talk about the mega-windmills that his company installs around the world as compared to the one that William Kamkwamba was able to build using homemade tools and scrap parts from his village’s junkyard. On October 14th, 2010 I opened all school assembly with my book trailer and then introduced our speaker, Robbin Russell of Signal Energy, who gave an awesome presentation about the power and potential of wind energy and tied it all in beautifully to my upcoming reading program.

I attended a fine arts department meeting and again showed my book trailer. I invited them to tie their curriculum into the book and hoped to get some 3-D objects to display in the library. Several art teachers agreed to participate. The middle school art teacher asked for me to come do a booktalk for each of her classes and she then incorporated the story into her curriculum and assigned each class to come up with one *moving* windmill structure which represented ideas taken from the book (created using recycled objects, signifying hope, persistence, renewable energy, etc.). The resulting 4 ft. sculptures and accompanying write-ups still stand in the library today. They are simply amazing. I also contacted the fine arts department head of McCallie, our brother school, to see if he might be interested in participating. He had spent some time traveling in Africa and had heard about the book, but hadn’t actually read it yet. He did see some tie-in to his welding sculpture class and offered the windmill as inspiration to his students. Two boys went with it and created some really cool windmill sculptures (one abstract, one literal) for us to use in the library as well.

In November I was invited by the editor of our school newspaper to write an article about why students should voluntarily give up time over their holiday break to read *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*. I emailed reminders to faculty and students, put up program fliers, and even contracted with Barnes & Noble to sell discounted paperback copies of the book in the library to encourage participation. With this program being voluntary, all I could do as we went into break that December was wait and see…

On January 4th, our first day back from break, I opened up the library conference room for our lunchtime book discussion. Faculty began arriving. Students began arriving. Twice I had to go out for more chairs!!!! In all, we had 26 participants, 15 students and 11 faculty members from all across the curriculum. This is approximately 12.5% participation and I was **thrilled** at the level of discussion that this number allowed us to have. In addition to the discussion, I showed the group two short documentaries about William and his windmill. The program had such a positive response that I have been asked to propose another one for next year.

On the enclosed cd, please find my book trailer, images of the turbine lent by TVA, images of the 7th grade art classes’ windmills with accompanying write-ups.