

# Grant Proposal for *Letters alive* acquisition

[Date]

[Addressee]

[Title]

[Organization]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

RE: LETTERS ALIVE READING PROJECT

Dear [Mr./Ms. Addressee],

[Your School Name Here] is pleased to present this proposal for your review. We look forward to partnering with you to purchase a supplemental reading program called *Letters alive* to help our students improve their reading skills. [Your School Name Here] has [fill in the number of Pre-K and/or kindergarten students who will benefit from *Letters alive*] Pre-K/Kindergarten students and [fill in the number of at risk students if you will be extending the *Letters alive* program to them] at risk students with a reading performance of at least two years behind their current grade level. If these students are not given an opportunity to improve their reading skills, they are at greater risk of falling further behind their classroom making truancy and dropping out of school more likely.

The objective of our *Letters alive* Program is to help beginning and at-risk students improve their literacy skills so they can learn to read at grade level and increase their reading comprehension, and reading attention span. We expect to see dramatic improvements with most of the students increasing their reading ability significantly. The *Letters alive* Program provides students with access to the advanced technology of augmented reality.

Our proposal requests [fill in the amount needed] in funding to obtain the software and hardware necessary to equip the [Your School Name Here] with the *Letters alive* reading system, including a computer, document camera, software, and a digital curriculum manual aligned to State Standards [and training if this is included in your plans/budget].

We appreciate you taking an interest in helping our students develop their reading skills through our new reading program! Please give me a call at [your phone number] if you require any further information or have any questions concerning this proposal.

Thank you,

[Your name]

[Your title]

## ***Letters alive* Reading Program: Improving Reading Performance for Beginning and At Risk Students**

**Submitted to:** *[Name of Granting Organization]*

**Date:** *[Date of Grant Request]*

*[Your Name]*

*[Your title]*

*[Your School Name Here]*

# **Letters alive Reading Program: Improving Reading Performance for Beginning and At Risk Students**

## **Project Overview**

The *[Your School Name Here]* in *[your city and state]* is seeking a grant to purchase the *Letters alive* Reading Program with the objective of helping our beginning and at risk students increase their reading skills and to read at grade level using the same classroom textbooks and materials as their peers. The objective is that by the end of the year the students will have greater gains in emergent literacy skill development than students using no part of the *Letters alive* curriculum. The *Letters alive* program is aligned with State Standards and is based on the latest research on effective reading instruction. Funding in the amount of \$*[fill in the amount needed]* is requested to purchase the required software and hardware.

## **Statement of Need**

*[Your School Name Here]* has *[number]* Pre-k and Kindergarten students for whom the *Letters alive* Program is ideally suited. In addition another *[[fill in the number of at risk students if you will be extending the Letters alive program to them – delete this sentence if you will not be extending the program to other at-risk students]* students in grades 1 through 5 have been determined to be at risk in their reading performance for a variety of reasons including learning disabilities, such as attention deficit disorder (ADD) and dyslexia, or other economic and language-based difficulties. If these students are not given an opportunity to improve their reading skills they are, as studies show, more likely to be truant and drop out of school.

## **Program Description**

The *[Your School Name Here]* *Letters alive* program will enable Pre-K, Kindergarten, and at risk *[adjust included student groups as needed]* students to improve their reading skills through utilization of a computer equipped with a document camera, reading software, and cards that spring to life in 3D through the advanced technology of augmented reality. Students using this innovative reading system will be able to improve their use of existing classroom materials, including textbooks, providing them access to the general curriculum. The students will increase their reading speed and comprehension, which will help them obtain classroom subject proficiency.

## ***Letters alive Supplemental Reading Program***

*Letters alive* software, from Alive Studios, uses augmented reality to provide a multi-sensory approach to help students learn early literacy skills. The *Letters alive* program was initially developed for people with reading difficulties caused by learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, attention deficit disorder (ADD) and other language based difficulties. The Letters Alive program, aligned with Kindergarten State standards, is a supplemental reading program that utilizes research-based best practices to teach early literacy skills.

The curriculum's 26 alphabet cards spring to life in 3D through the advanced technology of augmented reality. Each card features an animal that corresponds to a letter in the alphabet, and seem intelligent as they amazingly respond to the questions and sentences that the students build. Even reluctant learners enthusiastically respond to the animals, sounds, and interactive learning.

*Letters alive* builds students' phonemic awareness and phonics skills, presenting the sounds of letters and connecting those sounds to the letter itself. In addition, the lesson plans utilize 97 vocabulary cards (Dolch sight words) to strengthen comprehension and reinforce concepts of print through sentence-building exercises.

The Building Words module of the curriculum teaches letter recognition and phonics while strengthening phonemic awareness through word building. Augmented reality allows students to use the alphabet cards, along with 84 word family cards, to hear the sounds represented by each letter, blend, digraph, and rime to assemble words phonetically.

*Letters alive* includes a digital teacher's manual that includes daily lesson plans as well as student activities to cover a full school year of reading instruction. Over 200 activity sheets reinforce the skills students learn, and assessments are provided for teachers to measure students' progress. The lesson plans are mapped directly to State Standards for Language Arts at the kindergarten level. A curriculum map is provided identifying the particular standards that are covered in each daily lesson.

The *Letters alive* program has been shown (e.g. Ogletree & Allen, Submitted for publication in 2014, see attached) to positively impact students' early literacy skills.

## **Goals & Objectives**

The goal of the [Your School Name Here] *Letters alive* implementation is to enable Pre-K, kindergarten students and students with learning and reading disabilities [adjust included student groups as needed] to improve their reading skills to the point where they can succeed in school and develop the reading skills that will prepare them for high school and post secondary education.

Studies have shown that poor readers, who are reading at a grade level or more behind, are more likely to be disruptive in the classroom, truant from school, and at risk of dropping out of high school.

### **The main objectives include:**

1. Providing a measurable increase in reading comprehension and phonemic awareness, and reading attention span. The objective is that struggling students will significantly increase their reading speed and reading skills by one to two grade levels by the end of the school year.
2. Enabling poor readers to access the general curriculum through strengthened English vocabulary and a better understanding of word order in sentences.

3. Providing all students with a multi-sensory reading alternative that will help them increase their reading speed to the point they can read on their own.
4. Helping learning and reading disabled students stay in their regular classroom with their peers, so they can continue learning in a least restrictive environment.

**Timeline**

[Add or delete steps as may be appropriate for your circumstances]

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Submit Grant Proposal	
Expected Grant Notification	
Purchase and Deploy Letters alive Kits	
Teacher Orientation (or training, if included in budget)	
Student Introduction	
Test Initial Reading Comprehension	
Begin 12 Week Phase	
Test Reading Improvement	
Prepare Results Report	

**Budget**

*[Include in the budget all expenses for your project, including necessary training costs. Mention any co-funding that you are using from other sources. You may want to include a brief narrative of expenses along with a table of individual cost components.]*

The budget includes funds for the *Letters alive* system containing the software, cards, and curriculum along with *[include “with a dedicated computer and document camera” and “along with a teacher cart” these accessories will be included in your proposal].*

<b>Price</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total</b>		

*[Fill in the appropriate Letters alive product descriptions, quantities and prices in this table]*

**Total \$[Fill in the total amount requested]**

## **Evaluation**

Standardized reading tests will be conducted at the start of the Letters alive project and again at the end of the school year to determine increases in reading speed and comprehension.

## ***Staff and Organizational Information***

*[Include the staff qualifications, certifications, and skills. Describe the organization and include information indicating the organization's capacity to implement and sustain the program.]*

## **Appendix**

*[[Include any relevant items in the Appendix including letters of support, the attached research report, and product literature.]]*

**Mix Methods Research**  
**“Findings Report”**  
**Letters Alive: Case Study**

**Executive Summary**

The evaluation of the Letters alive® curriculum was designed by Dr. Tamra W. Ogletree and Jennifer K. Allen. The Letters alive® curriculum goals for children who participate in the program in grades pre-K and kindergarten include acquiring an awareness of the letters in the alphabet, learning the specific sounds that letters make, understanding that letters are the building blocks for words and that words form sentences, and recognizing pre-k and kindergarten sight words. The research project was conducted at an elementary school in the southeast and utilized a case study approach to collect data across three pre-K and three kindergarten classes over a three month period. The researchers used mixed methods in order to obtain the most accurate and meaningful data possible, so quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. Guiding questions for the study included the following: a.) How effectively does the program operate to its intentions and goals? b.) To what extent does the program influence positive student outcomes?

**Evaluation Methodology**

For this particular study, pre-K and kindergarten teachers implemented the Letters alive® curriculum with their students at an elementary school in the Southeastern part of the United States. Permission to work within the school was granted by the school principal and school system superintendent. Because the study involved research with human subjects, all Institutional Review Board requirements were followed. In order for students to participate in the study, parents had to read, sign, and return the informed consent form on behalf of their child, and students had to give their assent to participate. Teachers and paraprofessionals also had to sign informed consent forms.

The study's design was carefully and systematically planned. To focus on objectivity, accuracy, and validity, the researchers used a case study approach yielding three comparison groups within each grade level (a full-implementation treatment group, a partial implementation treatment group, and a control group). The researchers used random purposeful sampling to assign classrooms to groups. The full-implementation classrooms utilized the augmented reality/three-dimensional aspects of the curriculum, the partial-implementation classrooms used the letter cards and word cards without the augmented reality/three-dimensional features, and the control group classrooms used no parts of the program. Researchers collected data from these three pre-K classrooms and three kindergarten classrooms over a three month period. Mixed methods for collecting and analyzing data were used, with qualitative and quantitative data sets. Qualitative data included teacher and student interviews along with classroom observations, while quantitative data consisted of results from the AIMSweb® (2003) pre- and post-assessments for early literacy skills (letter recognition and letter-sound fluency).

To obtain quantitative data, the researchers used the AIMSweb® Benchmark Assessments for Letter Naming Fluency and Letter Sound Fluency (2003). After careful consideration of other evaluation instruments, this assessment measure was chosen by the researchers for several reasons. First, the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) had recently awarded the AIMSweb

assessment system the highest possible rating for validity and reliability among progress monitoring tools, making AIMSweb a leading assessment tool for assessing early literacy skills (PRWeb, 2009). Additionally, the AIMSweb® assessments were already being used by the school for all benchmark testing and progress monitoring in grades K-5, which made the assessments familiar and readily accessible. Furthermore, these assessments measured letter recognition and the ability to relate letters and sounds, which are two of the key emergent literacy skills addressed by the Letters alive® Curriculum.

Since the initial assessments were administered in early February, the kindergarten pre-assessment data came from the Kindergarten Winter Benchmark, and the post-assessment data came from the Kindergarten Spring Benchmark, which was administered in mid-May. Both the pre- and post-assessments were administered by the kindergarten testing coordinators, of which there were two, and scores of participating students were reported directly to the researchers. Since there are no pre-K evaluation tools included in the AIMSweb® materials, the researchers used the Kindergarten Fall Benchmark for the pre-K pre-assessment data, which was also administered in early February, and they used the Kindergarten Winter Benchmark for the post-assessment data, which was administered in mid-May. Both the pre- and post-assessments were administered to participating pre-K students by the researchers.

## **Findings**

The pre-K quantitative data sets reveal that students in the full implementation classroom of Letters alive experienced greater gains in emergent literacy skill development than the students in the partial implementation classroom, and students in both the full and partial implementation classrooms experienced greater growth than the students in the classroom using no parts of the Letters alive® curriculum. The following data tables show that students in the full implementation classroom experienced the greatest gains on both the Letter Naming and Letter Sound Fluency assessments, and the average increase for the class was +14.76 letters named correctly and +13.93 letter sounds given correctly. In the partial implementation class, all but three students made gains on the Letter Naming Fluency Assessment, with a class average gain of +8.89 letters named accurately. Additionally, all students made gains on the Letter Sound Fluency Assessment, with a class average gain of +8 letter sounds produced correctly. For the class with no implementation, gains were far less notable, with class average gains of +7.31 for Letter Naming Fluency and +3.5 for Letter Sound Fluency. In this class, fewer children made sizable gains and more children made no gains with four students showing decreased ability to produce letter sounds correctly at the end of the study period. Because the students in the full implementation classroom experienced greater growth than the students in the partial implementation classroom, and the students in the partial implementation classroom experienced more growth than the students in the classroom with no implementation, the researchers concluded that the Letters alive® does yield positive outcomes for students.

The pre-K teachers reported considerable use of the Letters alive® materials as their only additional supplemental emergent literacy curriculum consisted of Animated Literacy™, which is a program these teachers had used for several years and were already very familiar with. The full-implementation classroom used the materials (including the 3-D components) almost daily during

the three month period, and the partial implementation classroom used the letter cards and sight word cards to the same degree. The full-implementation classroom teacher used the materials mostly during whole group reading sessions (because she said it was nearly impossible to utilize the 3-D features without catching the attention of all students), while the partial implementation classroom teacher used the materials with whole group, small group, and individualized instruction.

The pre-K teachers provided valuable qualitative data through their interview responses and during the classroom observation. Both the full implementation and the partial implementation teachers noted that the Letters alive® curriculum perfectly targeted their students' emergent literacy needs. Many students still needed reinforcements for learning letters, sounds, and sight words, while some needed the challenge of building sentences. They also noted that while their students were used to the Animated Literacy™ curriculum for learning letters and sounds, some students seemed to connect better with the Letters alive® materials, especially those students in the full-implementation classroom. The teachers believed that this, perhaps, may have been due to the multi-sensory aspects of the program.

The pre-K teachers discussed many advantages to using the Letters alive® curriculum. During our interviews, the full implementation classroom teacher stated that her students loved when the animals came to life and that they were "engaged with them." She remarked that even students who typically had attention difficulties were engrossed during the Letters alive® lessons. She added that a few of her students "really, really responded to it because of the sound and the visual stimulation." Of all of her students, she said, "They like hearing the computer-generated sounds of a letter. Like the letter E is 'eh.' They like hearing it come from the computer. . .they seem to hear that more than they do just me saying it. . .they love the visuals, love the visuals." In addition to seeing the animals come to life, she also reported that her students loved seeing the video clips she showed that accompanied each animal because they enjoyed seeing each animal in its authentic habitat. The partial implementation classroom teacher discussed the fact that the letter cards and sight word cards seemed somewhat confusing and disconnected without the technological component at first, but she could see how adding the technological piece could really be a wonderful added resource for her classroom literacy program because she thought her students would really be enticed by seeing "the visual animals come to life." She also noted that the repetitiveness of using the letter cards on a daily basis and giving her students consistent exposure to them really helped familiarize her students with the letters and sounds. She liked the sight word cards as well, and she reported that a few of her students were already reading and the sight word cards had helped them recognize more words in context.

The kindergarten teachers discussed advantages of the Letters alive® curriculum with the researchers. The full implementation teacher noted that her students really seemed to connect with the animals theme because animals are something that young children "can relate to." She also added that the program exposes children to new animals they might not yet know about and that this was a great unexpected outcome of the curriculum. The partial implementation kindergarten teacher added that even though she wasn't able to use the technological aspects of the program, she had watched the videos about the 3-D features, and she was excited about having the "added resource" for the following school year because she thought it would really captivate the students and get them interested in learning because it was multi-sensory with sights, sounds, movements,

etc.

The project manager conducted student interviews with the students in the full implementation classroom throughout the study process to gather data on the students' experiences with the Letters alive® curriculum. One student said that her favorite part of the program was "when the animals pop out," and she also added that she loved it when the animals moved and made sounds. Additionally, when she discussed the previous lesson when the animals would not move or make sounds, she thought that the animals were just sleepy and that was why they wouldn't cooperate. Another student stated that he liked learning about animals and that it was fun when the animals made sounds and moved. He noted that the dolphin was the coolest animal because "she can do back flips." Another student first answered that she didn't like learning about letters and sounds with the animals, but then she said, "Actually, I like the crocodile...because he scares us." Another student mentioned that the animals scared some of the students when they came out, but in a fun way. She talked about how the animals reminded her of going to the zoo with her mother.

### **Student Outcomes for Letter Naming Fluency and Letter Sound Fluency**

The scores from the AIMSweb® Letter Naming and Letter Sound Fluency Assessments (the quantitative data from this study) suggest that the Letters alive® curriculum positively impacts students' early literacy skills. 100% of students in the full implementation classroom experienced gains on the Letter Naming Fluency Assessment, while 84.2% of students in the partial implementation classroom experienced gains on that assessment, followed by only 78.6% of students in the classroom with no exposure who experienced gains on the Letter Naming Fluency test. Additionally, 100% of students in the full implementation classroom and the partial implementation classroom experienced gains on the Letter Sound Fluency Assessment, while only 64.3% of students in the classroom with no exposure experienced gains. Additionally, greater average gains were achieved in the classrooms with full or partial exposure than were made in the classroom with no exposure. While it would be risky to conclude that this same data stratification would result from students in other classroom settings, it is likely that, all things equal, students who receive full exposure to the Letters Alive curriculum will benefit more than those students who receive no exposure. Additionally, it must be noted that this study spanned only a three month period, even though the Letters alive® curriculum is meant to last a full school year. This suggests that even greater gains could be achieved when the curriculum is implemented over the course of a full academic school year.

#### Credentials:

Tamra Ogletree has a PH.D. in Language and Literacy and a Certificate in Interdisciplinary Qualitative Research from the University of Georgia. She holds an L-7 certificate in Educational Leadership and a M.Ed. in Early Childhood and Middle Grades Education with an emphasis in Language Arts and Science education. She currently is an Associate Professor of Reading at the University of West Georgia. She is also the Regional Site Director of the GA Girl's STEM Collaborative Project, Director of the Cherokee Rose Writing Project which is part of the National Writing Project, and leader researcher of the Applied Research Team for the U-Lead endeavor of the University of West Georgia. She has presented at regional, state, national, and international conferences. Tamra has experience

evaluating programs that fall under the umbrella of K-12 curricula, educational leadership, literacy initiatives and school-corporation partnerships.

Jennifer Allen has a B.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education from the University of Georgia and a M.Ed. in Reading Instruction from the University of West Georgia. She also holds an in-field endorsement for Gifted Education and an ESOL endorsement. Jennifer has taught elementary school students for ten years, working in second, fourth, and fifth grade classrooms and in the gifted resource setting. She is currently a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Reading, Writing, Children's Literature, and Digital Literacies program at the University of Georgia where she is working on her PhD. She is a Teaching Consultant and Legislative Advocate for the Cherokee Rose Writing Project, and was an invited consultant for the Just Write Writing Academy and Camp Kudzu Writing Academy at the University of West Georgia.

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