# Project Summary

**Title:** Assessing Teacher Candidates’ Professional Growth during an After-School Writers Workshop  

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Kids 4 Kids Publishing, a Writers Workshop at Kutztown Elementary School, provides opportunities for teacher candidates from Kutztown University’s College of Education to gain teaching experience. Over twenty sessions held during the 2012-2013 school term, ten teacher candidates (mostly freshmen and sophomores) served as teachers for the 27 elementary students enrolled in the program. The Assessment Grant provided support for examining the experience’s impact on teacher candidates’ improvement in teaching ability, writing interests and skills, and growth and development of critical teacher dispositions. Interviews with teacher candidates, examination of teacher candidates’ journal entries, and observations from workshop sessions provided documentation for the study.

Findings indicate the program provided valuable opportunities for teacher candidates to gain hands-on experience with students. Managing small group activities, learning to redirect off-task behaviors, and providing motivation for writing challenged teacher candidates to fine-tune their skills. Opportunities to teach “mini-lessons” to the full group produced additional challenges to newly developing teaching skills. For most teacher candidates, the experience increased excitement about becoming a teacher. For one; however, it provided evidence that teaching was not her desired direction. Teacher candidates discussed their growth in management of student behavior, the ability to explain specific concepts related to writing improvement, and their confidence as a teacher.

Teacher candidates also became aware of the need to improve their own writing. They reported increased time revising college papers, dictionary use, and use of the writing process. They also reported a greater desire to be creative in their writing. Mini lessons taught during Writers’ Workshop sessions stuck in the minds of the teacher candidates when completing assignments for their college classes. One teacher candidate became so interested in the way children were writing stories she requested and completed two honors courses to help her write and publish a children’s book.

Overall, this study suggests involvement in Writers’ Workshop provides teacher candidates with valuable experiences for improving their teaching ability, expanding their writing interests and skills, and further developing critical teacher dispositions.

Interested readers are invited to visit the program’s website, [http://k4kpublishing.org/](http://k4kpublishing.org/). Additional information about the project can be obtained by contacting Dr. Cardenuto ([cardenut@kutztown.edu](mailto:cardenut@kutztown.edu)).