

## Dieterich CU #30 (Dieterich, IL)

**Library type:** School library

**Topic:** Social emotional health

**Funds used for:** Collection materials and parent resources

**What the reviewers liked about this proposal:** Applicant notes specific ideas about how information from conversations will be utilized and several outlets to share outcomes

### Community and Library Information

**Describe your library and the community it serves, including demographics, dynamics and key issues or challenges it faces. What should reviewers know about your library and community in order to understand your proposed community engagement project?**

Dieterich CUSD #30 does more than educate its students; the school is the epicenter of our 600 person village. For example, our school district provides services normally furnished by public health offices and a town library to 558 students who live not only in the village but also out in the country. Dieterich School does this because our village does not have a local public health department or a public library. We consider our ability to provide more than a standard education to our students our strong suit. We also acknowledge that our small rural school and school library struggle to provide necessary resources our school community needs to assist our students' social emotional development, growth and learning. Recognizing the need for more mental health resources, Dieterich School recently added a second guidance counselor to assist with the increasing needs of our student body at all grade levels. The counseling staff has an established social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum that is aligned with the Illinois Social Emotional Learning Standards. However, additional support and resources are needed in our school library to best reach all students. Funding to provide additional resources in the library at Dieterich Schools is limited. Dieterich Schools allocate a budget of \$3,500 for materials, databases and supplies. After paying for databases and supplies, our library has \$1.41 per student to spend on new books for our library. Additional purchases outside of the planned yearly acquisitions are not likely to happen without additional funding. This school year has proven to be more of a challenge than any in recent history. The mental health of our students has suffered in response to a myriad of events, including the coronavirus pandemic and a tumultuous political environment, which have taken a toll on our entire school community. When stress affects our school community, the students lacking the support needed to cope suffer most. We are seeing more negative behaviors such as aggression towards others, anxiety and self harm. We must provide more classroom and library resources that can assist our teachers and students address these issues in order to build up our school community and return it to a community of kindness.

### Conversation Topic or Issue\*

**Describe the topic or issue that your community engagement project will focus on. Why is it important for your library or community to discuss this particular issue/topic? How did you arrive at this particular topic/subject (e.g. did you talk with library patrons, reach out to other area organizations? Dig into data about your community)? How will your library and/or community benefit from having this/these discussion(s)?**

Our community conversation will focus on the need for our school district to address the social emotional development, growth and learning for all of our students. Through our community's conversation, we will develop a plan that provides a curriculum with supporting materials and activities that address six areas of concern throughout the school year. These content areas include: empathy, relationships, diversity, emotions, self-esteem and bullying. By addressing these areas of concern, we

will empower our students to build a better kinder world not only for themselves but also those around them here at school, at home and beyond. Bringing awareness of this topic to our community members helps our school community become more versatile in using our local resources and capabilities to help our students. During the past school year, our guidance counselor, Mrs. Kreke, tracked her caseload and relayed her concerns to our district administration regarding the increasing need for counseling services at all grade levels. She has noticed an uptick in referral numbers for a variety of social emotional issues that proved problematic with limited local resources and no public health support services. Dieterich CU #30 administration added a guidance counselor to our elementary school staff at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. The new counselor, Mrs. Fowler, will focus on working with students in Pre-K through 8th grade. In response to the uptick in counseling referrals, Mrs. Fowler approached the school librarian with four book lists geared toward differing grade levels provided by Classrooms in Action ([ilclassroomsinaction.org](http://ilclassroomsinaction.org)). She believes having these books easily accessed by students and staff will support the social emotional well being of our school and community. A list of materials that provides information and support for the parents and teachers of our community was also submitted for possible procurement. These volumes will be used to support the results and ensuing programming that are the outcome of our community's conversation. Mrs. Mary Richards was contacted by a librarian from the Effingham Public Library (EPL) who made her aware of this grant. After reading the grant information, Mrs. Richards approached the school counselors regarding starting a conversation within our school community that addresses the social emotional well being, growth and learning of our students. Both counselors agreed that our students deserve to have our community invest in this conversation and open a discussion about our school community's social and emotional well being.

### Conversation Goals\*

**Describe the library's goal or purpose of your project plan. What are you aiming to accomplish? (e.g. enhance library resources based on community input; explore a topic and/or build understanding of others' experiences; generate ideas, explore options, and make a decision; discuss an issue and collaboratively determine next steps, etc.)**

The goal of the Dieterich CU #30 library's participation in this project is to enhance our library collection while utilizing our school community's expertise to have a conversation regarding the social emotional development, growth and learning of all our students. Our conversation will be with school community stakeholders including: teachers, school counselors, the school nurse, the school resource officer, PTO officers, parents and school administration. This conversation will be the basis for establishing monthly social emotional themed units that are aligned with the Illinois Social Emotional Learning Standards. These units will address our students' social emotional needs while utilizing the new library materials acquired with grant funds. Our stakeholders will explore a variety of options that provide library resources, information and programming with maximum impact in the areas of empathy, relationships, diversity, emotions, self-esteem and bullying. Using these topics as the basis for our conversation, our program will emphasize the recognition of personal qualities while acknowledging the feelings and perspectives of others. One conversation goal is to decide what activities and information will be contained in the standards aligned curriculum packet prepared for teachers. Our intent is to have a packet for each grade level that contains three lesson plans linked to the month's social emotional learning topic. Teachers will be able to utilize the books purchased with grant funding and prepared programming to bolster their existing curriculum. Teachers will share the stories that display the emotions and behaviors of characters that our students can use to help understand their own behaviors and emotions. Students will have a variety of activities that will include constructing posters and displays to uplift each other. An example would be uplifting secret pal messages that are left in book bags, desks

and lockers. Students would also create colorful uplifting posters for display in school or around town. Students will also have access to stories with characters that mimic their own emotions and behaviors to discuss rather than focusing on themselves. While our focus will be mainly on our students, another conversation goal will be to keep our extended community informed of our program as well. Our conversation will need to address how best to communicate our goals and objectives with our parents and guardians. Possible communication channels include monthly email blasts regarding the SEL topic. These emails will contain topic information, suggested family activities, descriptions of library resources available to be checked out for home use, and links to mental health websites. Our school would utilize our school's app and social media as an outlet for our grant project information. As materials and programming are utilized, we will continue our conversation with feedback from teachers and students in order to evaluate the new library resources and programming effectiveness in assisting our community's ability to demonstrate responsible behaviors in personal, school and extended community context. All library materials will be cataloged in the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) online public access catalog and available for use by all IHLS patrons through interlibrary loan.

### Conversation Planning\*

**How do you envision your conversation taking place? (e.g. virtual book club discussion, socially-distanced conversation outdoors at the library using the National Issues Forum Model, etc.) Do you feel you are able to describe how you envision your conversation(s) will take place? Or are you new to this and planning to learn these skills through the online course? What kind of marketing/outreach do you plan to do for the conversation? How are you planning to share the content/outcomes of the conversation? (e.g. writing an article for the local newspaper, creating a video about what was discussed for the library's social media, etc.)**

We envision our community taking part in a socially distanced meeting in our school's library.

Community members that cannot be in person will join virtually through Google meet. Mrs. Richards was part of the Dieterich Education Association contract negotiations team and utilized a framework similar to the LTC: leading conversations in small and rural libraries facilitation guide. Mrs. Richards is new to The Leading Conversations format though and will be learning skills through the online course and applying those skills to developing a successful conversation structure. School community stakeholders will follow a conversation format that provides for a structured conversation resulting in exploring new avenues of helping our community provide an environment that supports our students' social emotional well being and growth. We will be reaching out by phone, email and direct conversation to stakeholders.

Community members requesting more information before participating and those wishing to participate in our conversation will be provided with information packets containing an explanation of the grant opportunity, the topics and goals of our conversation and a suggestion form the community member may submit with topics they feel are relevant to our goal. Email reminders for upcoming conversations will be sent out one week prior to meeting dates and then again the day before the meeting. As our conversation progresses, we will provide copies of meeting information gathered and results via online shared documents, slides, etc. to the conversation stakeholders. They will be asked to review the information for corrections and additions that are needed. Once the conversation has taken place and its goals are met, local news outlets including radio and newspaper will be asked to announce or publish provided articles that inform the public about our conversation, its progress and results. Posts will also be made through the Dieterich School social media accounts. These posts and articles will share with the public the result of our conversation and how grant funded materials are being used within our school community.

## Budget\*

**Describe your plans for the grant funds. What will you use the funding to purchase or support? Please be specific (e.g. \$1,000 will be spent on staff time to support the development and implementation of the project, \$200 will be used to purchase a Zoom Business license in order for us to virtually host our conversation). The total amount of your proposed budget plan should add up to \$3,000. Note: If you are unable to spend the entire grant down by July 31, 2021, you may accrue funds to spend through February 28, 2022. If you anticipate needing to accrue funds, please note this in your response and include your plans for spending it down.**

\$2700 will be spent on library collection materials for Pre-K through 12th grade readers. These materials will be curated utilizing the leveled social emotional book lists provided by Classrooms in Action ([ilclassroomsinaction.org](http://ilclassroomsinaction.org)). Classrooms in Action is a resource collaboration between the Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois State University. Illinois Educators utilize this website and its contents to support instruction of the Illinois Learning Standards. The library collection materials contained in the multi-level book lists have been specifically chosen to ensure that the SEL Learning Standards in Pre-K through 12th grade are more readily addressed whether in a classroom setting or as a casual library book check out. \$150 will be spent on Mind Brain parenting card decks and the materials utilized for grant displays that inform the school and public about our conversation. These displays may include posters and flyers for each monthly theme. \$150 will be spent to purchase the parent resources suggested through the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). CASEL defined social emotional learning (SEL) more than two decades ago. Today, CASEL supports state, districts and schools nationwide and convenes leading thinkers to ensure SEL is a priority in every school nationwide. Any expenses for personal protection equipment (PPE), supplies and refreshments for the conversation meetings will be absorbed by the Dieterich school district. Mrs. Richards, Mrs. Kreke, and Mrs. Fowler have agreed to participate after contract hours at no cost to the school or grant. They will be allowed to use available time within their daily work schedules to create programming, materials and displays to meet the goals set forth from the community conversations. All grant funds will be expended before July 31, 2021.