

NOVEL/BOOK-LENGTH WORK (Fiction, Non-Fiction, Drama) PROPOSAL

Proposal Request Information

Prior to filling out this form, please read the [Novel Adoption Proposal Checklist](#) (scroll down to novel section) with pertinent policies regarding novel selection and adoption.

FOR DISTRICT USE ONLY FINAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED APPROVAL GRADE LEVELS:	7th and up
---	------------

Section I

To be filled out by requesting educator:

Ia. REQUESTOR AND REVIEW TEAM INFORMATION

School	ThunderRidge HS	
Date	5/19/23	
Requesting Educator Name	Tatum Sullivan	
Requesting Educator Email	tsullivan@dcsdk12.org	
Novel Adoption School Process Manager Name	Stephanie Sjoland	
Novel Adoption School Process Manager Email	smsjoland@dcsdk12.org	
Proposal Review Team Member	Reviewer's Name	Contact Information - email
District Coordinator	Debra Yarcho	dyarcho@dcsdk12.org
Colleague	Anthonette Klinkerman	akklinkerman@dcsdk12.org
Parent #1	Shayna Clemmons	shaynaclemmons@hotmail.com
Parent #2	Amy Powalish	Powalishamyl@gmail.com

Ib. BOOK INFORMATION

Title of proposed book	I Will Always Write Back
Author (s)	Caitlin Alifirenka & Martin Ganda with Liz Welch
Publisher	Little, Brown Books for Young Readers
Edition	

ISBN number	978-0316241311
Copyright date	2015
Course and/or subject area in which work will be used	English
Grade level(s)	7-12
Lexil Level Score (If you are unsure, please visit https://hub.lexile.com/fina-a-boo k/search)	790L
Dates the book information was displayed at the school and posted on the school’s website (2 week min.)	8/23/2023
Date the book was communicated to the School Accountability Committee?	8/23/2023

Ic. NOVEL DESCRIPTION

Please write a brief description of the novel in your own words and how it relates to the content and age group of students using this proposed book.

This novel is a story about a pen pal relationship between a young girl from Pennsylvania and a young boy from Zimbabwe. Each chapter is from a different perspective and is both of them telling their story through their letters with each other. It begins with them being young, naive kids writing to each other, but grows into a deep friendship as they learn the realities of each other’s situations. It is very eye opening for Caitlin who comes from a middle class, American, place as she starts to learn of the realities of Martin’s life. Martin's dream is to come to America and be able to help his family financially. This is a beautiful story about how two kids change each other's life and build a lifelong friendship over the years.

The age group of these students relate to middle/high school students because they are the same age, and I think our students can relate to Caitlin and how they don’t completely understand what kids the same age in other parts of the country/world’s life is like. The Junior curriculum is “world literature” and we want students exposed to stories from around the world. It also fits into the memoir genre we study and analyze.

Id. ALIGNMENT WITH DCSD’S CURRICULUM

Please write a detailed description of how the novel **aligns to DCSD's Curriculum - Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) and Essential Skills:**

(Please cite the specific CAS Grade Level Expectations and if applicable, the Evidence Outcomes (EOs) the novel will help address).

I Will Always Write Back aligns to our curriculum in many ways. The first is that it allows students to access a diverse perspective of a true story. The story also encompasses the connection to a student who fits the demographic to many of our students, and they get to experience how she grows and matures, but how she also follows her gut and wants to help Martin. This fits with following standard:

RW H2.1.1 Follow collaborative guidelines to ensure a hearing of a full range of positions on a topic or issue, and evaluate responses.

- b. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (for example: visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data. (CCSS: SL.11-12.2)
 - i. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task. (CCSS: SL.11-12.1d)

As an English teacher, we are also using reading strategies to help improve students' literacy. While this does have a lower lexile, there are two perspectives and stories students have to follow, which can pose to be complicated. The lexile of the text also allows students to dive deeper into the evidence and make more inferences about these two characters' stories. They can also begin to examine how all literary elements build on each other to make a good story. This fits with the standards:

RW H2.2.1 Interpret and evaluate complex literature using various critical reading strategies.

- i. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. (CCSS: RL.11-12.2)

Students need to read a variety of literature in English. While this is in narrative form, it will also be combined with informational texts to give students background on what they are reading:

RW H2.2.3 Understand how language influences the comprehension of narrative, argumentative, and informational texts.

- a. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. (CCSS: L.11-12.5)

Ie. RECOMMENDATIONS

Three recommendations, referrals or reviews must be included. Please use professional reviews (reviews from the School Library Journal, Kirkus, Booklist, Publisher's weekly etc.). The District Library Media Center will be happy to direct you to these sources. List the sources of the reviews below and attach copies of all reviews.

Review #1

Kirkus Reviews (February 1, 2015)

A pen-pal correspondence between an American girl and a Zimbabwean boy blossoms into a lifelong friendship. In alternating chapters, the authors relate their story, which begins in 1997 when 12-year-old Caitlin chooses a boy in Zimbabwe for a pen-pal assignment. Caitlin's privileged life in Pennsylvania differs tremendously from Martin's hardscrabble life in millworkers' housing, where his family shares one room with another one. The top student in his class, Martin dreams of studying at an American university, but even just continuing high school in Zimbabwe seems like a long shot. Caitlin, not recognizing the extent of Martin's poverty, sends some of her babysitting money with her letters, and Martin's family uses it for food. Eventually, Caitlin and her parents become Martin's sponsors for his studies and help him obtain a scholarship to Villanova University in 2003. Written with journalist Welch, the heartfelt recollections read like an overlong magazine article. The early chapters in particular have the inauthentic feel of sentimentalized adult reminiscence, and they accentuate the difference between an American whose eyes are open to the value of international friendship and her less-enlightened classmates. The action builds toward the happy climax of Martin's arrival in the United States, but at the same time, it conveys a sense of the power of do-gooder, take-charge Americans to effect change. A feel-good, message-driven book that may appeal to adults more than teens. (photographs) (Memoir. 12 & up)

Review #2

School Library Journal (February 1, 2015)

Gr 6 Up-The true story of two young pen pals who forge a life-altering connection. In 1997, Caitlin, a typical 12-year-old girl from a middle class American family, began writing to Martin, a studious 14-year-old from a Zimbabwe slum. In her letters, Caitlin described her life, which consisted of shopping trips, quarrels with friends, and problems at school. Martin was initially far more circumspect in his responses. Inflation had rocketed in Zimbabwe, and even finding money for postage was a struggle for the boy. Staying in school, which required paying costly fees, became merely a dream. Eventually, Martin revealed the harsh realities of his life to Caitlin, who began sending money and gifts. What started as chatty letters turned into a lifeline for Martin and his family, as Caitlin and her parents helped the boy stay in school and achieve his goal of studying at an American university. This is a well-written, accessible story that will open Western adolescents' eyes to life in developing countries. Told in the first person, with chapters alternating between Caitlin's and Martin's points of view, this title effectively conveys both of these young people's perspectives. Caitlin's early chapters, however, in which she discusses friendship and boyfriend woes, feel somewhat superficial compared with Martin's genuinely troubled life. While these chapters provide an effective contrast between the two teens' lives, they may discourage some readers from continuing with what becomes a strong and inspiring story. VERDICT A useful addition to most collections and an eye-opening look at life in another culture.-Michelle Anderson, Tauranga City Libraries, New Zealand (c) Copyright 2015. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Review #3

Publishers Weekly Annex (March 16, 2015)

In 1997, a 12-year old girl from Hatfield, Pa., and a 14-year-old boy from Mutare, Zimbabwe, began a pen-pal relationship. In alternating chapters, Alifirenka and Ganda recount how their mutual curiosity led to an increasingly honest, generous correspondence. Martin loves receiving Caitlin's photo, but when she requests one in return, "My heart went from sprinting to a standstill." He sends her the only photo his family owns. Hearing BBC accounts of Zimbabwe's political and economic turmoil alarms Caitlin, but a letter written on a popsicle wrapper shocks her: "I gasped. My friend was writing me on trash." She begins to send him her babysitting money-which Martin's family uses to buy food and to pay school fees and rent-and Caitlin's family eventually decides to sponsor Martin's education. Sensitively and candidly demonstrating how small actions can result in enormous change, this memoir of two families' transformation through the commitment and affection of long-distance friends will humble and inspire. Ages 12-up. Agent: (for Alifirenka and Ganda) Sarah Burnes, Gernert Company; (for Welch) Brettne Bloom, Kneerim, Williams & Bloom. (Apr.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

SECTION II: Review Team Information

Each review team member will complete an individual section for a formal review of the book based on your stakeholder perspective. All members of the site review team **MUST read** the proposed novel/book **prior submission to the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Director.**

IIa. EVALUATION of Book (to be completed by requesting educator) Tatum Sullivan

The proposed novel...	Y/N	Examples/Justification Please be specific and give examples when applicable
is appropriate for the following grade level(s)	Y	This is more than appropriate for 7-12 grade. The content is clean. There is no language in it, and it just tells the innocent story of two friends. All students can relate and benefit from this.
requires parent permission for students to read the book?	N	There is nothing in the book that would require permission. There is no language or controversial topics.
allows students to create meaning and make relevant connections to other knowledge and experience	Y	Will need some background knowledge for Martin’s story, but students can make connections to their friendship. This could be paired with other memoir stories, videos or articles about life in Zimbabwe, and what life is like for people who live in poverty there.
actively engages students through the text	Y	The novel has chapters from different perspectives of each character, and it allows them to really connect to these two people and create empathy for their stories. I believe our students can relate to how Caitlyn feels so naive before she realizes the circumstances of Martin’s life.
Gives an opportunity for all students to access	Y	It has a fairly easy Lexile, and allows students to really engage with the story. It is a very engaging and moving story.
Is in alignment with Board File ADB on Education Equity , AND contributes to an inclusive culture for all students?	Y	
Recommend novel for adoption	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Iib. EVALUATION of Book (to be completed by District Coordinator) Debra Yarcho

The proposed novel...	Y/N	Examples/Justification Please be specific and give examples when applicable
is appropriate for the following grade level(s)	Y	The content is more than appropriate for students in grades 7-12.
requires parent permission for students to read the book?	N	There are no reasons to have parent permission for this book.
allows students to create meaning and make relevant connections to other knowledge and experience	Y	The friendship that develops will inspire high school students and they will be able to connect with similar aged main characters.
actively engages students through the text	Y	The back-and-forth letter writing between the two main characters is definitely engaging and students will be able to relate to Caitlin.
Gives an opportunity for all students to access	Y	Students will be able to access this material.
Is in alignment with Board File ADB on Education Equity , AND contributes to an inclusive culture for all students?	Y	This is a culturally relevant memoir for all students.
Recommend novel for adoption		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Iic. EVALUATION of Book (to be completed by a colleague)

The proposed novel...	Y/N	Examples/Justification Please be specific and give examples when applicable
is appropriate for the following grade level(s)	7-12	Multiple levels of student readers can easily comprehend the story through the use of duet between the two authors.
requires parent permission for students to read the book?	No	There is extreme poverty in the book, but nothing that would require parent permission for a student to be able to read as described.
allows students to create meaning and make relevant connections to other knowledge and experience	Yes	The story between the two authors shows incredible juxtaposition of wealth and poverty, as well as the differences in educational systems between two differing countries. Students can easily connect and build empathy through the contrast.
actively engages students through the text	Yes	The story being told between the two voices of the two different authors is highly engaging as students of this era are used to multiple sources of information coming through the same medium. The voices are those of the authors as students themselves so students are further able to connect with the same events (tests, dances, clothing, etc.) as your typical high school student experiences.
Gives an opportunity for all students to access	Yes	The language is not so difficult as to be inaccessible for readers from 9th to 12th grade. It is told in a very straight-forward fashion, so even strong readers will still remain engaged due to the descriptions of each of the authors' experiences.
Is in alignment with Board File ADB on Education Equity , AND contributes to an inclusive culture for all students?	Yes	Considering the authors are an American caucasian female and a black Zimbabwean boy is highly inclusive of race, class, gender, and educational opportunities. The dual storytelling is highly reflective of the cognitive and instrumental diversity outlined in the Equity Policy.
Recommend novel for adoption	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

IId. EVALUATION of Book (to be completed by Parent #1)

The proposed novel...	Y/N	Examples/Justification Please be specific and give examples when applicable
is appropriate for the following grade level(s)	y	There is no bad language in this book nor are there controversial topics.
requires parent permission for students to read the book?		No. This does not cover any controversial topics. It is just a story that covers the lives of two pen pals and the everyday occurrences in their lives. One teen living in a shanty town in Zimbabwe and one teen living in a Pennsylvania suburb.
allows students to create meaning and make relevant connections to other knowledge and experience		Anyone from middle school or high school would find a connection to this book. This book would be perfect when paired with a world history or US history perspective because it is a true story that occurs from 1997 to 2003. Students will connect because it shows two completely different ways of life. They will be able to see the motivation and grit that was required for Martin to just fight to attend school due to poverty and how he successfully overcame the many challenges presented to him. His unique perspective that school is a privilege and he works hard to succeed will be a theme worth discussing with American students that take school for granted and actively try to get out of school work. These themes can be eye opening and widen students' global and American perspectives. They will also connect to the college application process and how difficult it is waiting on news. They will broaden their horizons with a global perspective juxtaposed with a typical American teen's perspective on life.
actively engages students through the text		The text will be very engaging and students should find the themes engaging.
Gives an opportunity for all students to access		There will not be any barriers for kids to read this novel.
Recommend novel for adoption		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Iie. EVALUATION of Book (to be completed by Parent #2)

The proposed novel...	Y/N	Examples/Justification Please be specific and give examples when applicable
is appropriate for the following grade level(s)	Y	This book is appealing and relatable for grades 7-12. Easy to follow story between two friends living in two different environments, their experiences with friends while going through school and sharing information about each other's families and home life.
requires parent permission for students to read the book?	N	No, parental permission is not necessary.
allows students to create meaning and make relevant connections to other knowledge and experience	Y	Relatable for 7-12 grade students. It touches on creating meaningful friendships near or far, finding purpose/helping others and working hard toward future goals (getting accepted to college). This book will also open up curiosity to other parts of the world (Zimbabwe) and how others live from day to day.
actively engages students through the text	Y	The text goes back and forth between Martin and Caitlin over several years and will be very engaging and relatable to students. They will want to keep reading!
Gives an opportunity for all students to access	Y	Text in this book is very easy to follow and comprehend.
Recommend novel for adoption	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

SECTION III: Requestor/Educator & District Coordinator Level Process Review

IIIa. Grade Level Recommendations (to be collaborated on between Requesting Educator & District Coordinator based on recommendations made by the review team)

Place initials in the columns indicating level of recommendation. Complete by initialing for every grade level indicated on the chart below. Please include justification if necessary for the level(s) of recommendation below the chart.

Note: If approved by the Board of Education, this novel can be used by all educators in DCSD. Please consider the use of this book for all PK-12 grades, not just the grade or content you teach.

Grade level	Recommended	Recommended: Requires parent notification and consent: The novel/book may contain some mature content and themes	Not Recommended: Content inappropriate for grade level(s)
PK/K			TS, DY
1			TS, DY
2			TS, DY
3			TS, DY
4			TS, DY
5			TS, DY
6			TS, DY
7	TS, DY		
8	TS, DY		
9	TS, DY		
10	TS, DY		
11	TS, DY		
12	TS, DY		

SECTION V: Signatures/Approvals

Va.

Does the evaluating Educator recommend adoption of this book?	YES	NO
Date <u>Oct 10 2023</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluating Educator Signature <u>Jatum Sullivan</u>		

Vb.

Does the evaluating Colleague recommend adoption of this book?	YES	NO
Date <u>Oct 10 2023</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluating Colleague Signature <u>Anthonyette Klinkerman</u>		

Vc.

Does the evaluating Parent #1 recommend adoption of this book?	YES	NO
Date <u>Oct 10 2023</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluating Parent (#1) Signature <u>Shayna Clemmons</u>		

Vd.

Does the evaluating Parent (#2) recommend adoption of this book?	YES	NO
Date <u>Oct 10 2023</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluating Parent (#2) Signature <u>Amy Powalish</u>		

Ve.

Does the evaluating educator's Administrator recommend adoption of this book?	YES	NO
Date <u>Oct 11 2023</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administrator Signature <u>Sean Patterson</u>		

Vf.

Does the District Coordinator certify that the information on this form accurately reflects the process followed at the site.	YES	NO
Date <u>Oct 11 2023</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
District Coordinator Signature <u>Debra Yarcho</u>		

Vg.

Does the Director of Library Programming support adoption of this book?	YES	NO
Date <u>Oct 11 2023</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Director of Library Programming Signature <u>Tracie King</u>		

Vh.

Does the DCSD Cabinet Member support adoption of this book?	YES	NO
Date <u>Oct 11 2023</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DCSD Cabinet Member Signature <u>Matt Reynolds</u>		