



THE
RIVER
SCHOOL

September 7, 2012

The Beacon Society
c/o Elaine Coppola
103 Kenny St.
Fayetteville, NY 13066

Email: emcoppol@syr.edu

Dear Ms. Coppola:

With this letter, we wish to express our sincere gratitude for the River School's Beacon Society's 2012 Jan Stauber's Grant Program award.

The River School offers inclusive and developmentally appropriate educational programs for children with and without hearing loss from birth through 3rd grade. Children acquire skills and content through an integrated, theme-based curriculum with a focus on science, math, language and literacy. Daily, children walk into a thematic "world" that they help construct. Themes support a progressive, conceptual and developmental curriculum that allows for individualization; specific skills and content are embedded into each theme. Our inclusive setting provides children with hearing loss access to hearing peers. We view social interaction between individuals as the fundamental stimulus for the development of spoken language, social development and cognitive growth. Listening and speaking provide the foundation for social interaction, literacy, and academic success. Fostering the development of spoken language is where we begin. By the time children can listen, speak, and function successfully within the classroom, the second level of program implementation is already underway: establishing the funds of knowledge across all academic areas that children experience and master.

"Sleuthing Through Books", funded generously by your organization, offered the children the opportunity to learn about Sherlock Holmes and this genre of literature. The proposed goals were achieved during our "Sleuthing" theme. The children worked with the teachers to create a thematic unit on Sherlock Holmes' books. These books were related directly to a popular children's book series, Geronimo Stilton, a detective mouse, who uses Sherlock's strategies to solve crimes. The classroom was converted into the setting of the book and the events of the story were physically set up through dramatic play. The children helped build dramatic play areas, which were then used during our Holmes' scenes. This opportunity made the stories come alive and solidified the

children's understanding of Sherlock Holmes. The children acted out and solved the crimes using forensics. This experience incorporated science, literature, math and writing. This exploratory experience allowed the children to experiment in our classroom.

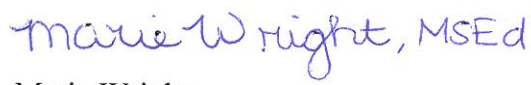
Overall, this experience enhanced our understanding that children learn best when it is meaningful, hands-on, authentic and interactive, developing their life-long love of reading and learning. The funding provided allowed us to achieve our goals of teaching the children about the genre introduced, along with the concepts of problem-solving and teamwork. Generous funding provided the children with hands-on materials, such as magnifying glasses, caution tape, dramatic play disguises and chapter books for every child. It truly made a lasting impression on the children and helped developed language that they would not have otherwise been exposed to. For this, we are incredibly grateful.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, faculty and staff but, most importantly, our young students with hearing loss and their families, we thank you for this generous gift.

Sincerely,


Nancy Mellon
Executive Director

Sincerely,


Marie Wright
Project Coordinator

Below please find photos of our "Sleuthing Through Books" theme in action!

