

Drew Winslett  
April 29, 2016

### Textbooks for Ingram Pye Elementary School

#### **Abstract:**

For my Service Scholars senior project, I will be purchasing textbooks for the entire 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Ingram Pye Elementary School here in Macon. As our school system has become more test oriented, schools need greater resources to help prepare their students for these standardized exams. Title One schools, such as Ingram Pye, do not have the necessary resources to prepare their students for these exams. Ingram Pye has consistently ranked at the bottom of the list for test scores in the state of Georgia, with only 7.5% of students scoring proficient or higher. By providing updated textbooks, instead of the 2005 versions that many classrooms still use today, students can be exposed to the types of questions that they will see on current tests. The companies that produce the textbooks are also responsible for writing the questions on the standardized tests, so exposure to this material is crucial for students to perform well on the tests. I will be purchasing 80 textbooks from Houghton-Mifflin's *Read 180* program to provide every 4<sup>th</sup> grade student a brand new, updated textbook for the 2017 school year and testing season.

#### **Support:**

I have received support from numerous individuals and various organizations for my project. Individuals include the following:

- Dr. Sybil Keesbury: Professional Development Coordinator for Ingram Pye
- Dr. Quentin Green: Principal of Ingram Pye Elementary
- Tracey Muff: Academic Coach at Ingram Pye Elementary
- Camisha Sneed: Academic Coach at Ingram Pye Elementary
- Morgan Mitchell: Student Teacher from Mercer University
- Mike Winslett: CEO of DTH Expeditors, INC.

**Target Community:**

The target community for my project are the students at Ingram Pye Elementary School, more specifically, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students for the next school year. There are three 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms at Ingram Pye, each comprised of about 20-25 students each. While 3<sup>rd</sup> graders begin standardized testing, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade students prepare for the statewide exams they will take before transitioning to middle school. These exams are often a more comprehensive examination of what these students have learned throughout their elementary years. Because of this exam, students need more preparation and a better understanding of the material covered than that of the initial testing conducted at the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level. That is not to say that the 5<sup>th</sup> grade test is more important than the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade test, but once students transition into middle school they are far less likely to learn the critical information they require before beginning the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Research:**

Ingram Pye is not a very successful school in terms of standardized testing. The school has consistently scored below proficient, with only 7.5% of the school scoring at proficient or above in 2014.<sup>1</sup> This is below Bibb County's district average and well below the state average. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) places scores into four different categories. Advanced represents a superior level of academic performance, and usually only 3-8% of students reach that level across the nation.<sup>2</sup> The next three levels, proficient, basic, and below basic categorize students by sufficient understanding, partial understanding, and a weak understanding of the knowledge and skills being assessed. So why does Ingram Pye consistently perform so poorly?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.schooldigger.com/go/GA/schools/0042000226/school.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Ravitch, 2014

The answer does not lie within the school, but rather from factors that affect the students who attend Ingram Pye. Over 99% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Many students live in the local government housing that surrounds the school. Because of their close proximity, many of these students walk to and from school on a daily basis.<sup>3</sup> The parents of these children often work two or three jobs and do not have the luxury of dropping off or picking up their children from school. These students come from low-income homes and often do not have necessary school supplies at the beginning of each academic year. Therefore, most of the school's Title I funding is distributed among school supplies for students and to the school's two curriculum coordinators, who are more commonly known as Academic Coaches. The school lacks the resources that many other successful public schools would normally acquire through organizations like Parent-Teacher Organizations or school fundraisers organized by the community. The school has received aid in the form of federal grants; the last grant provided a medical clinic on Ingram Pye's campus. This clinic has offered free medical services, such as treating colds, fevers, and headaches for students who may not receive any treatment otherwise for lack of insurance or money required for doctor's fees. The clinic has worked to help keep sick students from missing so much class time and has offered medical care to the surrounding community for people who could not afford other clinics or doctors' offices.

Another key factor in understanding Ingram Pye's community is the racial and ethnic makeup of their student population. The neighborhood that feeds into Ingram Pye is approximately 98.3% African American.<sup>4</sup> For 2014, of the 668 students enrolled at Ingram Pye, 639 were African American, with another eight students identifying as Hispanic.<sup>5</sup> Because of

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<sup>3</sup> Keesbury, 2016

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.schooldigger.com/go/GA/schools/0042000226/school.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

this neighborhood ethnic makeup, their minority enrollment is 97%. For the entirety of the school, that is Pre-Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, there were only 16 white students enrolled. That amounts to less than 3% of student population. This is a revealing statistic because it blatantly demonstrates racial segregation within Macon-Bibb's public schools. This is an issue that surpasses the objectives of my project, but nonetheless, should be acknowledged.

Providing updated textbooks to classrooms is one method of alleviating the standardized test problem, especially in a low-income school that does not have the financial resources to do so. The standardized tests that these students take are derived from the same companies that author the textbooks used in public school. Meredith Broussard, a contributor to *The Atlantic*, writes, “[a]cross the nation, standardized tests comes from one of three companies: CTB McGraw Hill, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, or Pearson. These corporations write the tests, grade the tests, and publish the books that students use to prepare for the tests”.<sup>6</sup> Essentially, for students to succeed and score above a basic understanding of the material must be taught from a textbook published by one of the three big companies. And in order for students to truly be successful, they must each have their own copy of the textbook that they can use individually. Most classrooms, especially in low-income school districts, only have classroom sets that are not allowed to leave the room. Also, these classroom sets do not have enough copies for every student in the class, so students must share with one another when reading or doing assignments. When textbooks are actually provided for each student, then “even a third grader can see that many of the questions on the test are similar to the questions in the book”.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Broussard, 2014

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

**Project Objectives:**

The objective for my project is to supply each 4<sup>th</sup> grade student at Ingram Pye Elementary with an updated copy of their curriculum's textbook for Reading/Writing. The school uses textbooks from Houghton-Mifflin Harcourt for their curriculum, specifically the program *Read 180*. My goal is to fundraise through a raffle and GoFundMe account during the fall semester of 2016. My goal is to raise \$3,600 in order to purchase 80 individual textbooks and three copies of the teacher edition.

The fundraiser will be in the form of a raffle. Prizes for the raffle include the following: a Fitbit, camera, printer, wireless speaker, Beats headphones, four Brave's tickets to a game in the new stadium, and various gift cards to multiple restaurants. Raffle tickets will be sold for \$5 at three home football games at Mercer University, as well as at tables inside the Connell Student Center and University Center for Mercer students. The GoFundMe page will be active until mid-November in order to collect any additional funds to reach the overall goal of \$3,600.

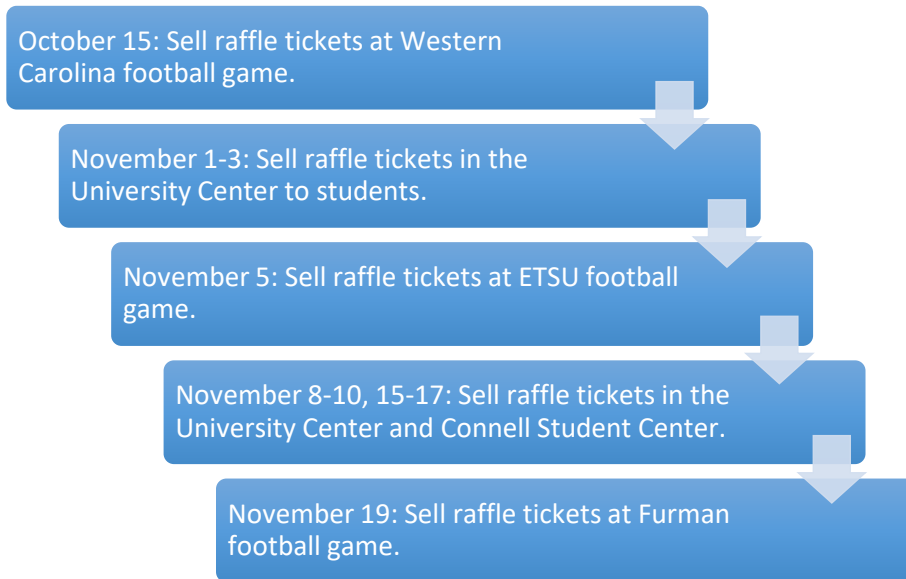
**Implementation Plan:**

As of now, I have been collaborating with Dr. Sybil Keesbury in the Tift College of Education to get this project started. Dr. Keesbury works with Ingram Pye Elementary as a site coordinator, where she places Mercer students in classrooms for their classroom placements. Dr. Keesbury was also instrumental in creating the professional development relationship that Mercer University has with Ingram Pye Elementary. She has put me into contact with the two Academic Coaches and the administration at the school. I have been in communication with them and identified their need for textbooks.

I have also been in contact with Mercer's Athletic Department, and they have agreed to meet with me about tabling at some of the home football games this season. Tabling would

happen at the following three home games: Saturday, October 15 vs. Western Carolina; Saturday, November 5 vs. ETSU; Saturday, November 19 vs. Furman.

**Future Timeline:**



Following the raffle, I will meet with Dr. Keesbury and the Academic Coaches from Ingram Pye to purchase the textbooks. I will be purchasing 80 copies of the student edition and three copies of the teacher edition of *Read 180*. When the books arrive, I will formally present the books to the school. My goal is to have the books at the school before Ingram Pye starts the spring term in January, 2017.

**Challenges:**

The main challenge for my project is reaching \$3,600 in order to purchase all of the textbooks needed. I have talked with students who have conducted raffles on campus before, and on average they have raised between \$2,500-\$3,000. It will be difficult to raise this money, but I already have been in contact with businesses who are willing to donate items for the raffle. I have received donations from the following businesses and individuals:

- DTH Expeditors has donated a printer, wireless speaker, Beats headphones, and a Fitbit;

- Mike Winslett has donated four Brave's tickets for the 2017 season at the new stadium;
- Dick's Sporting Goods has donated a gift card;
- Multiple restaurants have agreed to donate gift cards.

Although raising this large amount of money will certainly be my biggest challenge, I am confident that I will still be able to purchase most, if not all, of the textbooks for Ingram Pye.

**Evaluation:**

Measuring success on standardized tests is not immediately possible for me.

Unfortunately, to know whether these new textbooks will improve test scores could take multiple years to determine. However, the immediate effect of having updated textbooks does provide students with better resources in understanding new material and prepares students for future tests. While gauging student's perception of success is possible, I believe that a questionnaire for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers would be more beneficial. Dr. Keesbury has agreed to help draft a questionnaire and arrange an interview with the teachers and academic coaches to receive additional feedback.

While I would like to see this project continue, I do not think that it will necessarily be sustainable. Fundraising such a large amount of money from year to year is certainly difficult, but not impossible. This project works to fit a current need at Ingram Pye, but with current trends, this problem will likely occur again within 4-5 years.

**Conclusion:**

Seven years ago, Ingram Pye Elementary was the lowest performing school in the state of Georgia.<sup>8</sup> Since 2009, Ingram Pye has taken several steps to foster a better learning environment. They have entered into a professional development relationship with Mercer University, a program that sends student teachers enrolled in the College of Education into classrooms to do

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<sup>8</sup> Keesbury, 2016

their assistant teaching. This professional development is about to enter into its fourth year and has already done wonderful things for Ingram Pye. However, there are still great needs within the school. Providing updated textbooks is just one of the ways that can help students achieve a better understanding of material and, ultimately, raise test scores for students before they enter middle school. I am excited to work with Ingram Pye next year and I am hopeful to raise enough money to put a textbook in every 4<sup>th</sup> grader's hands.



Works Cited

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