



Ventura Girl Scout Launches Creative Writing Initiative

*Brynne Stevens earns her Girl Scout Gold Award
with the project, "Passion for Writing Initiative"*

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Brynne has always had a passion for writing and even completed writing her own full-length novel last summer. A current Ambassador Girl Scout, Brynne is part of Troop 60252 in Ventura. While brainstorming ideas for her Girl Scout Gold Award project, she reflected on the fact that most of her creative writing took place outside of the classroom environment. Brynne had previously attended a Young Writers' Camp at Ventura College and the experience had an incredibly positive influence on her creative process. She wanted to provide a similar opportunity for other budding writers, and so she created the Passion for Writing Initiative, a free lesson plan for fourth and fifth-grade students.

"My English classes had some opportunities to write freely, but I believe that there should be more opportunities that allow students to experiment with their writing imagination," Brynne said. "The education system in America discourages creativity by design. Why is it that math and science classes are required, but creative classes are just electives? This creates an offset in the skill levels of students from the beginning. Those who feel that they aren't as adept in STEM subjects may feel inferior simply because being talented in the arts isn't seen as important or valuable. Encouraging creativity and the arts in school will create more well-rounded, skilled individuals who aren't afraid to try new things and step out of their comfort zones."

Brynne began by outlining a 5-day lesson plan that all fourth and fifth-grade students could participate in, accessible on a free sourcing website called [teacherspayteachers.com](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com). By researching and referencing other writing lesson plans for this age group, she was able to create her drafts. Each day, students were expected to respond to a prompt, theme, or genre of writing and create something entirely their own. At the end of the week, students would choose their favorite composition from the program for the teacher to assemble into a classroom anthology. Brynne designed the lessons to be adaptable to the teacher's instruction style and easy to access.

To test her program structure, Brynne began enlisting volunteers for virtual "camp sessions." She would be instructing the students herself while combining the lesson plans with fun



activities and games to keep students engaged. After seeing how her Passion for Writing Initiative played out, she planned to iron out the final details before publishing it for public access. She created a Facebook page to begin outreach, sharing the Initiative in various Ventura parent groups during the school closures. Brynne also contacted the fourth and fifth-grade teachers in her school district to help spread the word to parents. She opened up registration with two different time slots, and the course began on August 3, 2020.

"Facilitating an experience such as this matters to me because even at my age, I know plenty of people who hate having to write or are afraid of writing assignments," Brynne said. "Earlier exposure to the concepts of writing structure could greatly benefit students' writing proficiency and enjoyment, and open their eyes to writing as a field of art as well as a practical skill."

Throughout the course held on Zoom, students produced at least one piece of work each day, and each student shared at least once per session. They all compiled three of their favorite pieces into a class anthology, which Brynne printed through an independent website and sent each student a personal copy to enjoy. Following the session, anonymous survey forms were sent to both students and parents, which allowed Brynne to review feedback on the student's confidence in writing, their desire to see the curriculum in their schools, and how they would like to see the program improve. Every student voted that they would like to continue writing entirely for fun and that they want to see this program implemented in their schools.

"My goals were incredibly exceeded when enrollment hit 15 students, and again when all of the positive reinforcement I received from parents and students motivated me to continue the program and writing aid throughout the school year," Brynne said. "It was amazing to see appointments booked with parents who didn't participate in the session but found out about it by word of mouth. I have future group sessions and private lessons booked already with three groups and one student. I even received an appointment from a mother who has a son with a generalized anxiety disorder that impacts his ability to write, and I look forward to working with him and hopefully aid him towards a stress-free writing experience."

"My session had participation from writers of all confidence and skill levels. Those who already loved it reported feeling more confident at the end of the week, and those who hated writing ended up feeling stronger and happier with their work. The students learned new tools to make their writing more exciting, learned to write without restricting themselves and to share their words with pride. They gave each other valuable feedback and never undermined their own work or that of others. They became trusting of each other enough to read their works and supported other people's work."

Brynne plans on adding more writing time, feedback, and teacher interaction into her lesson plans since the students had no trouble filling up the original one-hour time block. In the future, when any school accesses the resources available on [her website](#), teachers will fill out a brief form so that she can track the locations and scale of those that use her lesson plans. They can choose whether or not to receive feedback through student feedback forms, and if they do, Brynne will feed that information into a spreadsheet that details past users, comments from



students and teachers, and the general success of her project in terms of total usage and positive response.

"I feel as if I've made a tangible impact on the students, especially those who came into it by their parent's direction but ended up loving their work and the process. These students will continue to write and may end up loving it so much that they become authors, share their passion with other people, or become English teachers. There are so many possibilities that form after their confidence grows."

To learn more about the incredible ways Girl Scouts are bringing positive change to your community, visit [here](#).

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About Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast

Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast serves over 8,800 girls across six counties and is committed to making the Girl Scout Leadership Experience available to girls in ways that impact their lives both in the moment and into the future. Girls participate in troops, individual projects, council events, day camps, resident camps and more. A variety of leadership, outdoor skills, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) based programs and events provide girls with opportunities to learn and explore in fun and informative ways. To join or volunteer in Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara or Ventura County, visit: <http://www.girlscoutscoc.org>.