

**Marketing Your Children's Book to Teachers**  
**or**  
**Getting That Class Act Together**



by

Kathe Gogolewski

Copyright July 2006

**CONTENTS:**

**Introduction: page 3**

**Writing simple lesson plans or a Teacher's Guide for your book: page 3**

**Ideas for lesson plans to go with your book: page 4**

**A word about the types of questions to ask students: page 6**

**Vocabulary games: page 6**

**Websites with sample lesson plans: page 7**

**Finding grants to pay for you and your books: page 8**

**Sample teacher mini-grants: page 9**

**A completed mini-grant: page 10**

**Approaching teachers or administrators: page 12**

**A word to the shy: page 13**

**Creating your presentation for the students: page 13**

**Website with sample school presentations: page 14**

**Author Biography: page 15**

At the time of this presentation, all online links in this text have been tested and are active.

## **Marketing Your Children's Book to Teachers or Getting That Class Act Together**

by Kathe Gogolewski

As a retired classroom teacher, I found myself gravitating toward the classroom for sales of my book, *Tato*, a fantasy adventure for middle grade readers. I had already experienced selling my book to one person at a time, branding myself in slow motion. I wanted to see if I could step up that process and still have fun. Schools are a wonderful market for sales of children's books, especially when sales involve class sets. Public and private elementary schools have teachers who are eager to buy what you have, if you understand their needs and know how to approach them.

I worked for nearly 20 years as an elementary school teacher in the West Contra Costa Unified School District located in California. I taught mainly 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade, but over the years, I taught every grade except kindergarten. I used my knowledge of what would appeal to busy teachers and created a teacher-friendly lesson guide to supplement the book. I threw myself into the package by agreeing to demonstrate a few of the lessons. In addition, I understood that while state funds for schools can be tight, grants for teachers are plentiful. If I could find and ghostwrite a grant, I would be able to pay for myself, a class set of books, the guide, and educational materials to boot. This, I reasoned, would be an irresistible package for teachers.

It proved to be just that. Seven teachers in the San Francisco Bay Area bought the program, and I spent three exciting weeks visiting their classrooms earlier this year.

In this presentation, I will outline four components that can help you complete a successful sale of your program to a school or teachers. They are: 1) Writing simple lesson plans or a Teacher's Guide for your book, 2) Finding grants to pay for you, your books, and possibly educational materials, 3) Approaching teachers or administrators, and 4) Creating your presentation for the students. Feel free to absorb all or part of the sections. For the more ambitious, the sections can help you realize your goals when worked together, but each section will work alone, to the exclusion of the others. Feel free to use this guide in either capacity.

### **1) Writing simple lesson plans or a Teacher's Guide for your book**

Whereas a Teachers' Guide is not necessary to get teachers to buy class sets of your book, they are likely to buy only one book and read it to their students without one. Providing lessons in supplemental material will make teaching from your book worthwhile. In that case, of course, each child will need his or her own book.

Don't expect teachers to write their own lessons for your book. They are far too busy, and would have to be inordinately attracted to it before they would engage in writing lessons for it. There's enough curriculum already published for their favorite children's literature books, so it's wise to think about the competition.

You may think that since you are not a teacher, you do not have the qualifications to create a curriculum or lesson plans. If so, please believe me, you're thinking too hard. You can tap the same creativity that you used to write your book, and there are many samples and examples of lessons connected with children's literature on the web to use as models. Your curriculum does not need to be long and complicated, unless you decide to be carried away. A few simple good ideas can sway a teacher toward purchasing your program. I will get you started with some ideas, and I'll include websites that contain excellent lesson plans for different children's books. You can use the latter as models to provide inspiration for creating your own student worksheets for the teacher guides.

#### **Ideas for lesson plans to go with your book:**

1. Tell students they are reporters assigned to interview the main characters. Allow them to develop interview questions, and then pair them up with partners. They will take turns pretending to be the character and the reporter asking the questions. When they are finished, they can write an article for the imaginary newspaper based on their partner's answers.
2. Students may create a Wanted Poster of the Villain.
3. Students may fill out a Character Report Card. The teacher brainstorms with them for different character traits, such as bravery, honesty, hostility, intelligence—any number of traits—then select a few favorites. Ask them to grade each main character from A to F for the selected traits and explain why. Ask them to use examples from the book.
4. Create a writing assignment. If your story has a grandparent in it for example, you might ask students to write about a special time they remember having with their own grandparents.
5. Students may describe something about the character that may not be covered in the book, such as the characters' rooms or houses, what they like to eat, where they like to vacation, their friends, family, parents, hobbies, etc. Ask them to explain their choices.
6. Ask students to create a map of the town or the setting for your book. Tell them to include cardinal directions (north, south, east, west).

7. Have students predict what happens after the story ends. Create a writing assignment where students will outline a sequel for the book.
8. Ask them to compare and contrast: does the story remind them of other books? How are they alike and different?
9. Students may create a poster advertising the book.
10. Students may create a bookmark for the book.
11. Have students create a TV commercial or an ad for the book.
12. Ask students to write an obituary for one of the characters.
13. Have students make a crossword puzzle using key words from the book.
14. Ask students to describe problems for the main characters.
15. Ask students to research a topic in the story and create a report for the class.
16. Ask students what they would say or tell a character in the story if they could talk to them.
17. Have students plan a theme party for one of the characters.
18. Ask students to fill out a Character Emotion Chart for key events in the story. Brainstorm different emotions and choose one, such as fear. Map the intensity of the emotion for different characters during different key events or turning points. Ask them to compare the emotions of different characters during the same event.
19. Have students create a product inspired by your book. In the example about the Ohlone Indians, students can make shell necklaces or acorn bread.
20. Ask students to rewrite a portion of your book into a script for a play. Students can perform for each other when finished.
21. If your characters travel, have students create passports for them.
22. Develop discussion questions around the setting, the people and their culture, or the time period of your book.

### **A word about the types of questions to ask students:**

There are different kinds of questions, which include *fact* questions, *why* questions and *imagine* questions. *Fact* questions merely require the extraction of information from the text or story, and do not work as well as the others for the purpose of discussion.

*Why* questions ask the student to make inferences or consider cause and effect. For example, if your story is about an Ohlone Indian in the San Francisco Bay Area during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, you can ask a why question such as: There were many Ohlone coastal tribes, yet they rarely fought each other. Food and game were plentiful in the area. Do you think one has anything to do with the other?

*Imagine* questions ask the student to consider something that has not happened or to pretend they are involved in an imaginary event, illustrated by this question: To the Ohlones, wealth was measured not by the possessions they owned, but by what they could share with others. If you were an Ohlone Indian girl making a necklace for your mother, or a boy making an arrow for your father, and a friend admired it, what would you do and why?

*Why* and *Imagine* questions can be combined. An example would include offering students a list of plant foods eaten by the Ohlones, and asking them to pretend they are scientists classifying the different food into groups, then asking them to explain their choices.

23. Create a game for students to play with selected vocabulary words from your book. I'll include some suggestions for games.

#### **Vocabulary games:**

a) **Guess it!** Have students write down their predictions for the definition of a word based on context clues, and then have them look up the word. They score two points if they're definitions are accurate, and one point if they are close. Students may score themselves.

b) **Word Bingo!** This is a good game to play to review vocabulary. Have students fold an 8 ½ by 11 inch paper in half four times. When they open the paper, they will have sixteen equal folded sections. Instruct them to write a vocabulary word in each section. Then read the definitions of the words while students mark off the words by covering them with chips for a game of bingo. Four in a row wins. This can be played several times.

c) **Pick it Apart** vocabulary game: Allow students to find as many words as they can from the letters in the vocabulary word. This gives them

familiarity with the word. Emphatically contains the words hate, hat, tea, call, lame, etc

d) **Word Search!** Pass out math paper that shows a grid. Have students write their vocabulary words, in patterns that move across the page from left to right and down the page from top to bottom, and on a diagonal from left to right again. They should *not* write words from the bottom up or from right to left. Instruct them to use one letter per box. When they are done, tell them to fill in all the empty boxes with other letters of the alphabet to create a word search. They may trade papers and have a contest to see who finishes first.

Several lessons are enough to create a companion packet for teachers. If you have the time and inclination, more is better because teachers love having many choices. In addition, once you get rolling with an idea or two, you'll likely find that more are on the way!

The lesson plans should include background information for the teacher. In other words, if you have created a math lesson that involves different kinds of triangles, make sure you define the triangles in your material. If your lesson involves lots of materials, it's a good idea to include instructions for the teacher on how to proceed, though this is not necessary. Most teachers are happy with the student worksheets and can figure out the rest. If you have more than a few lessons, a table of contents helps.

The following websites include many examples of curricula and lesson plan ideas for different children's books. The first, Sleeping Bear Press, provides some excellent examples of student-friendly worksheets for the primary grades. All sites have interesting examples, though it's necessary to sift through some of them to find the lessons.

### **Websites with sample lesson plans:**

#### **Sleeping Bear Press:**

<http://www.sleepingbearpress.com/educators/>

#### **Other sites:**

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/rteacher.html>

<http://members.aol.com/DonnAnCiv/Literature.html>

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/%7Eeramseyil/tradless.htm>

<http://www.arthurdorros.com/escape/activities-abuela.html>

#### **Geography and economics lesson plans:**

[http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/socialstd/Econ\\_Geog.html](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/socialstd/Econ_Geog.html)

Depending on the length of your Teacher's Guide, you can charge for it, but do not try to make it a big profit venture. Keep in mind its purpose: to sell class sets of your book. For example, I wrote a language arts and science curriculum with

student worksheets and a chapter-by-chapter guide for teachers. It includes lessons for English Language Learners (ELL), objectives for teachers, and a matrix of California Content Standards covered by the lessons. It costs me \$15 to print one 8 ½ by 11 book with 95 pages with cover, so I merely cover my costs. If you're interested in seeing the lessons (there are about 62), I will send you one for the same price plus postage. My email: [kgogolewski@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kgogolewski@sbcglobal.net)

## **2) Finding grants to pay for you, your books (and possibly some educational materials)**

Next, I had to locate grants. I knew that once I greased this wheel, the rest would be easy. These wonderful gems are called Teacher Mini-Grants, and they are all over the USA. Probably they exist everywhere there are teachers and student needs, so if you are outside the USA, I suggest you contact your local school district to ask what grants are available to teachers. The mini-grants are usually awarded for \$500, though finding one that exceeds \$1,000 is not difficult. Even \$500 can be enough for a class set of books and an honorarium. And the beauty of these little grants: they are usually only a two or three page form requesting basic information about the project and proposed budget. I will include a completed sample grant at the end of this section.

I chose the San Francisco Bay Area, my former stomping grounds, to start my search for grants. I knew they were plentiful there. Sure enough, I locked into the East Bay Community Foundation and the Palo Alto Partners in Education (PIE). Both are private grants. The East Bay Foundation awards \$500 per teacher, and PIE awards up to \$1,500. I have written about twenty educational grants in my career, and so far, I'm batting a thousand. The applications are simple forms because the people that offer them know that teachers are busy, usually too busy to fill out forms that require time-consuming research. Many teachers are too busy to investigate available grants, so the competition is often light. Most school districts have grants available for their teachers. In addition, school districts or schools that have a significant number of children with free or reduced lunches will have Title I funds. Both funding opportunities may be accessed through the school district, and the teachers should know about them. Some districts provide extra grant money for their new teachers ("new" usually means up to three years), so this is a great target group.

You may also consider private grants. Google for "Teacher Mini-Grants" in your area and see what you can find. Also, look for industries, banks or other organizations. Companies such as Kaiser, Chevron, banks, credit unions, and organizations such as women's clubs, Rotary or Lions' Clubs, are all great candidates. Many of them award yearly grants to teachers. To give you the idea, I will list a few grants that I found instantly by Googling Teacher Mini-Grants. You need to find one of these in your area.

**Sample teacher mini-grants:**

Kids in Need: up to \$500:

[http://www.shopa.org/shopa\\_foundation/teacher\\_programs.php](http://www.shopa.org/shopa_foundation/teacher_programs.php)

East Bay Community Foundation: up to \$500 for San Francisco East Bay teachers - <http://www.eastbaycf.org/>

The Education Fund: up to \$500 for Dade County

<http://www.educationfund.org/mini.html>

Visalia Education Foundation Mini-Grants: up to \$500 for Visalia, CA school district teachers:

<http://www2.visalia.k12.ca.us/foundation/minigrants.htm>

I wrote four grants for seven teachers after each teacher had given me the input I needed to complete the grants. Each interview with the teachers lasted no more than ten minutes. A curriculum focus is needed when writing the grants, and an author visit to the classroom to read with the children and engage them in a writing activity will do nicely, as an example. After I'd finished writing the grants, I sent them back to the teachers, who signed and submitted them.

I was relatively confident that they would come through, because teachers rarely get turned down for these grants. If necessary, I was prepared to write new ones from new sources. However, they all came through. Class sets of my book were ordered for each classroom, plus a Teachers' Guide for every teacher, and an honorarium from each class for me. Two classes also received science materials for the science experiments. For the other classes, I brought non-consumables with me, so that the children could perform the experiments under my direction. Afterwards, I collected the materials to use again. By the time I finished performing for each class, the teachers had made my book part of their core curriculum, and those who did not have the science materials were ordering them. I also now have letters from many of the children, plus class books of stories that they wrote while I was with them. That feedback alone made it all worthwhile.

The following is a grant I wrote to accommodate one classroom of 33 students. I have eliminated the first page, which asks for names and addresses of participants and contact people.

**A completed mini-grant:**

1. Describe the students who will be served.

a/ Number of children to be served 33

b/ Age range OR grade level 5<sup>th</sup> grade

c/ Estimate percentage of (i) very low and low-income 40% and/or (ii) middle income or above 60%

d/ Other characteristics (gender, ethnicity, disabilities, special needs, etc.)

Girls = 16 Boys = 17

English Language Learners = 8

Low comprehension = 50%

Visually Impaired = 1

Asian = 4

African American = 4

East Indian = 2

Caucasian = 15

Hispanic = 8

2. Describe the project for which funds are being requested. What activities or procedures will be employed?

This is an integrated science and literature project. Kathe Gogolewski, a retired teacher and author of *Tato*, a fantasy adventure for middle grade readers, will demonstrate a series of science and language arts activities with my students for one period a day for several days. Since there is magic in the story, she will perform science activities with mirrors to explain some of the illusions in the story. She has also written a Teacher's Edition, which I will receive as part of this grant. It has around 30 science experiments and 30 language arts activities that tie in with events in the story. She has incorporated lessons for English Language Learners throughout.

3. How will this project relate to or enhance your regular program?

This will enhance my regular curriculum by integrating scientific investigation and inquiry with literature. The children will learn about the connections between subjects in the regular program. The Teacher's Edition ties in all activities with California Content Standards.

## 4. How will you assess the impact on your students?

Each activity comes with a student worksheet that includes student evaluation of concepts presented. I will use these to evaluate their understanding. I will also assess student involvement through observation and by assessing oral presentations.

EAST BAY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

EDUCATION MIN-GRANT APPLICATION /

page 2 of 3

BUDGET INFORMATIONTOTAL AGENCY BUDGET/ (nonprofit only)\$TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET /AMOUNT REQUESTED FROM EBCF / \$which is 100% of the projectbudget*Maximum \$500)**(divide amount requested by total project budget**amount)*

Below, present a full project budget, indicating expenses and revenue (sources and amounts).

Specify how EBCF grant funds will be used (itemize expenditures). Total expenses should equal total revenue.

ITEMIZED PROJECT EXPENSES	PROJECT REVENUE
<p>1. Class set of books TATO by Kathe Gogolewski 33 + teacher copy = 34 @ 9.95 each = \$338.30 Shipping + Handling = \$14.00 TOTAL = \$352.30</p> <p>Order from Wings Press at: <a href="http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/netcart.asp?MerchantID=19895&amp;ProductID=2571398">http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/netcart.asp?MerchantID=19895&amp;ProductID=2571398</a></p> <p>2. SK Science Kit &amp; Boreal Laboratories 1-800-828-7777 Mirrors for science experiments: <a href="http://sciencekit.com/category.asp_Q_c_E_533604">http://sciencekit.com/category.asp_Q_c_E_533604</a> Class set – 2 kits at \$19.95 = \$39.90 Shipping = \$7.00 TOTAL=\$46.90</p> <p>3. Author Honorarium = \$100.00</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TOTAL for Project = \$499.20</b></p>	<p><i>(Indicate other funding sources for the project. Include the amount requested from EBCF)</i></p> <p>There are no other funding sources.</p> <p>Amount requested from EBCF = \$499.20</p>

### 3) Approaching teachers or administrators

After I found grants that I liked, I approached teachers in two school districts, and instantly found seven takers. That was the easiest part of this whole venture. I dare anyone to find many teachers to say “no” to this: “I will come into your classroom and demonstrate a lesson with your students from my students’ guide while you observe. I will present lessons that will engage and motivate your students. I will also write the grant that will pay for me and a class set of books for your kids!”

In one school district, the teachers felt confident about purchasing the program and informing their administrators about it. In another school district, the teachers wanted to have my book approved first, so I approached the Elementary Education Director for the district. She approved the book and the Teachers’ Guide, which meant that it was okay for me to approach any principal in the district with a request to meet with their teachers.

These districts are 500 miles from my home. Since then, I have started exploring school districts around where I live. I decided to eliminate any concerns about my book being appropriate for classrooms, and began all new searches at the top: I contacted the Elementary Education Directors for two school districts in my area. First, I sent a letter detailing who I was and what I had accomplished in the other school districts. Then, after waiting a few days, I phoned, introduced myself, and asked for an appointment. I had created a portfolio of pictures from my trip, as well as student work, teacher evaluations, sample grants, and student letters to the author. I used this portfolio to guide my interviews with the directors, showing pages and discussing the program. I left the portfolio, my book and Teacher’s Guide with them for a few days.

This approach was easier than my debut approach to the districts up north when I didn’t have a portfolio. It was pretty much a “trust me” venture, but ‘trust me’ they did. I think having the Teacher’s Guide and not gouging for my services helped to sway them. As the program grows in popularity, I can charge more for my appearances. Also, agreeing to visit classrooms sounds attractive to teachers. They have administrators constantly telling them what to do with their students, and it’s extremely refreshing to have someone offer to show them.

Before approaching the teachers, have a grant in mind to use for the project. This is also highly appealing. You can discuss the grant with the teacher, and ask about options in case it does not come through. The teacher may offer to use some of their own classroom funds available from their district or the Parent’s Club.

In my case, the book and guide were approved in both school districts in my area, and I now have at least six more classrooms to work with in the Fall or Winter. In

addition, one of the interested principals is moving north to accept a new position as superintendent of a small school district. He will present my program to the teachers there, so I may be traveling north again. Strike where the iron's hot, right?

**A word to the shy:** I have always been a shy person, though not while I'm writing or teaching children. I borrow from the confidence that I have in my writing and teaching ability to pull me through these interviews. I have found that it is enough to present my material without any extra flourish. I present what I know, and I do not need to act like anyone else. That may sound obvious to some people, but I used to talk louder and faster thinking it made me sound more confident. I think now that it just made me sound louder and faster. Hope Clark has written an excellent book called *The Shy Writer*, which I highly recommend for getting through some of these rough spots. Here is a link to find out more about her book: <http://www.theshywriter.com/main.htm>

#### **4) Creating your presentation for the students:**

Many authors present their program during a school assembly, which is usually divided into one for the primary students (1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup>), and one for upper grade students (4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup>). This option is open to you, of course, and personally, I wouldn't turn it down. However, taking this route does not ensure sales of your book. Undoubtedly, some students and teachers will buy, but the numbers will likely be small. Instead, authors charge for their presentation, and that can be a lot more than book sales will bring in for you...anywhere from \$200 to \$900 for half a day (about two-three hours), and \$700 to \$2,000 for a full day (about 5 hours). This does not include hotel and other travel expenses. As an unknown author however, it would probably be a good idea to charge less and target your local schools to eliminate travel expenses. Plus, local schools are often interested in local (and relatively unknown) authors.

Personally, I love working with smaller groups in the classroom, because I get more interaction from the children, and I sell more books. For me, I want to see my book in children's hands, so selling class sets is very satisfying.

Whether you want to present to students in the classroom as I did, or to an assembly, there are many ideas for presentations. I will include some here to get you started:

- 1) Perform one of the lessons from your Teachers' Guide.
- 2) Do a How-To, such as:

How to show, not tell. Give examples of each, then present sentences that “tell”, and give students the opportunity to transform it into a sentence that “shows.”

Discuss different points of view. Allow students to play different characters in a favorite story that everyone knows, and let each character tell the story differently. Allow a student to demonstrate the narrator to illustrate the omniscient point of view.

Teach turning points in a story or plot development, as articulated by screenwriting guru, Syd Field. To introduce the concept, tell students a short oral story and ask them to raise their hands whenever they think the story is changing. Then define first turning point, mid-point, and final turning point.

- 3) Discuss where your ideas come from and how they turn into stories. Ask students where or how they get their ideas. Brainstorm with them different topics that can generate ideas, such as the scariest, funniest, happiest, saddest etc. thing that ever happened to them, their favorite animal or pet and why, an instructional piece describing how to do something, describing their best friend – the list is endless. Write their responses on the board or on card stock to post in the room.
- 4) Do a reading from your book, of course. Wear an authentic period costume if it's applicable.
- 5) Give a talk about yourself as a young writer. Describe how you learned to write.
- 6) Give a slide show about you and your books.

Here is a website featuring authors and their programs for visiting schools. You need to scroll down to “Presentations” to read the descriptions of their school programs. This can give you an idea of the range of topics for a presentation, as well as a range for pricing.

**Website with sample school presentations:**

<http://www.webcom.com/poughton/>

It works to be as flexible as possible. If you can, develop several presentations and allow the school administrators or teachers to choose the ones that best fit the needs of their students.

Whatever you decide to do, remember to enjoy yourself. Children respond best to a happy attitude, and if you make a game out of whatever you're doing, you're bound to capture their attention.

### Author Biography

Kathe Gogolewski is the award-winning author of *TATO*, a fantasy adventure for middle grade readers available from Wings Press, and *A Promise to Keep* written under her pen name, Ann Durand. She has contributed to two anthologies this year: *The Muse on Writing* is available from Double Dragon Publishing and *Spiritual Visitations* is due from Zumaya Publications in 2008. She has a third book, *Flight of the Gryphon*, a paranormal sci fi, that is due for release from Double Dragon Publishing in December, 2006.

*Tato* won third place in the Preditors and Editors Readers Poll 2006 in the mainstream novel category and was the number one best seller for her publisher in February, 2006. *Tato* also received the Golden Wings award in May 2006, presented twice each year to the one book that the Senior Editor of the department at Wings Press feels “best exemplifies wonderful story telling ability, great characterization and exceptional writing skills”. *A Promise to Keep* won fifth place in the Preditors and Editors Readers Poll 2006 for the romance category. She has won awards for her short stories and poetry with *Storyteller Magazine*, *The Writers’ Journal*, *the Complete Writers’ Magazine*, *The Museitup Club*, and has published with *Penwomanship*, *Jacobyte Books*, *Ranch and Coast*, *San Diego Lifestyle Magazine*, and *The Muse Marquee*. She is currently co-producing 30 audio classes for writers with fellow authors Carolyn Howard-Johnson, Allyn Evans, Marilyn Peake, and Joyce Faulkner. The classes are available from Double Dragon Publishing.

You can find out more about Kathe and her books by visiting TRI Studio Authors at <http://www.TRI-Studio.com>.