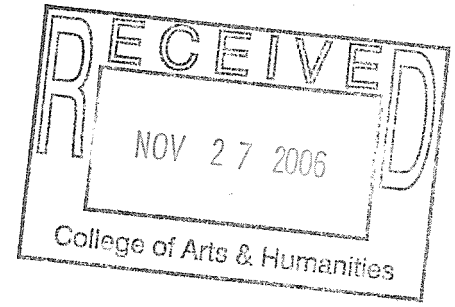




**IPESL Grant Application**  
 (Initiative to Promote Excellence in Student Learning)  
 Minnesota State University, Mankato



**PROPOSAL COVER PAGE**

Title of Project: Increasing critical thinking among future ESL teachers

Name: Nancy Drescher

Are you full-time faculty in 2006-2007?  
 (fixed-term faculty are not eligible to apply)

Yes     No

Do you plan to return to MSU in 2007-2008?

Yes     No

e-mail: [nancy.drescher@mnsu.edu](mailto:nancy.drescher@mnsu.edu)

Campus Address: AH230, English Department

Campus Phone: 5504

College: Arts and Humanities

Department: English

Spring Semester Schedule:

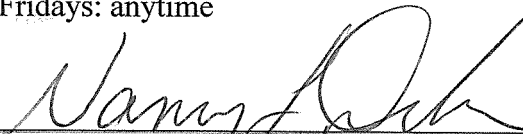
Mondays: before 5 pm

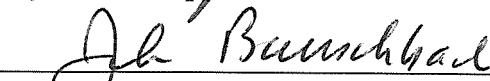
Tuesdays: X


Wednesdays: after 10

Thursdays: X

Fridays: anytime

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Applicant

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Department Chair/Director/Supervisor

  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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**IPESL Grant Application**  
(Initiative to Promote Excellence in Student Learning)  
Minnesota State University, Mankato

**PROPOSAL COVER PAGE**

Title of Project: Increasing critical thinking among future ESL teachers.

Name: Nancy Drescher (English) and Jessica Schomberg (Library Services)

Are you full-time faculty in 2006-2007?  
(fixed-term faculty are not eligible to apply)       Yes    No

Do you plan to return to MSU in 2007-2008?       Yes    No

e-mail: [nancy.drescher@mnsu.edu](mailto:nancy.drescher@mnsu.edu) and [jessica.schomberg@mnsu.edu](mailto:jessica.schomberg@mnsu.edu)

Campus Address: AH230 and ML3097

Campus Phone: x5504 and x2155

College: Arts & Humanities and Library Services

Department: English and Library Services

Spring Semester Schedule:

List times when available to participate in Learning Communities and workshops.

Mondays:	_____	any time (js)
Tuesdays:	_____	
Wednesdays:	_____	any time (js)
Thursdays:	_____	
Fridays:	_____	afternoon (js)

 \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Applicant

*Beverly Schwartz*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Department Chair/Director/Supervisor

*Joan Rowley*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of College Dean/Vice President

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## Proposal Details

[Please do not use your name(s) in the proposal for purposes of blind review.]

**Please address the following in your proposal:**

1. Title of Project: Increasing critical thinking among future ESL teachers.
2. Explain the purpose of your project (e.g., need, project goals or outcomes, significance, affected student population) and include a definition of “critical thinking” as appropriate to your project.  
(maximum 250 words)

It has long been recognized in education in general and in the teaching of English language learners in specific, that methods and approaches to teaching must continually be examined in relation to the context within which one teaches. When beginning teachers or pre-service teachers take a methods class, the expectation is that they will receive a formula. But as Bowen and Marks (1994) suggest, “we should be wary of embracing any of these ideas wholesale and assuming that by implementing them we absolve ourselves of responsibility for further critical thought and decision-making. Above all, we should be careful not to assume that one set of recipes will work for all learners, all teachers, all contexts” (p. 12). By including a more specific focus on teaching critical thinking to our teachers, we are not only increasing their ability to use the eight basic structures of thought (Elder & Paul, 2004) including: purpose, problem solving, assumptions, point of view, examination of data, expression of ideas, inferences, and implications, they will also be able to help further their students’ abilities to use these structures. This is particularly important for ESL teachers to realize because often the curriculum for struggling students (including language learners) is reduced to the lowest common denominator (memorization and recall).

Bowen, T. & Marks, J. (1994). *Inside teaching: Options for English language learners*. Oxford: Heinemann.

National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking. (2004). *The critical thinking community*. Retrieved November 27, 2006, from <http://www.criticalthinking.org/about/nationalCouncil.shtml>

3. Describe your project and how it will enhance students’ critical thinking through one or more of the following activities:  
(maximum of 250 words)
  - development, implementation, and assessment of new instructional or curriculum materials
  - development, implementation, and assessment of new support mechanisms
  - development and implementation of new assessments

We plan to alter the material taught in Theory & Methods II (spring semester) to expand on critical thinking concepts in terms of finding and evaluating information and, subsequently, incorporating what students have learned into their own teaching and research worldview. In addition to receiving instruction on the theories and methods of teaching ESL from an English faculty member, students in the Methods course will be provided instruction in how to conduct library and internet research by a Library faculty member. Throughout the semester, they will be asked to internalize what they have learned about the teaching ESL to critically evaluate the research done by others and to locate, obtain, and critically evaluate the research that they wish to do themselves. We will also include problem solving based on case studies in the course and in some of the quizzes to determine the increased level from the beginning of the semester to the end.

The final project in the course is to collaboratively write an article which they will be encouraged to submit to a relevant journal. After the conclusion of the course, we will examine the students' final research papers and compare them to papers from previous years to evaluate whether and how their research has improved.

4. How will you assess the results of your completed project?  
(maximum of 150 words)

The results will be assessed in at least two ways. We will conduct a pre and post survey of students in the course to examine their attitudes and preconceptions especially as related to the "inner voice" of students and how they reason their way through problems. We expect that students in the beginning of the course will have various problems solving techniques based on their previous experience. By the end of the course, we expect to see the following words related to thinking processes: clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic (Elder & Paul, 2004). In addition to the student self-assessment, we will include problem solving based on case studies in the course and in the quizzes to determine the increased level from the beginning of the semester to the end. The final project in the course is to collaboratively write an article which they will be encouraged to submit to a relevant journal. After the conclusion of the course, we will examine the students' final research papers and compare them to papers from previous years to evaluate whether and how their research has improved.

National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking. (2004). The critical thinking community. Retrieved November 27, 2006, from <http://www.criticalthinking.org/about/nationalCouncil.shtml>

5. How will you disseminate your project and its results? (e.g., department colloquium, professional conference, college colloquium, university-wide colloquium, publication, IPESL website)  
(maximum of 100 words)

The final results of the project will be disseminated within both the professional TESL and librarian communities. An abstract will be submitted to CARLA, MinneTESOL, international TESOL, and LOEX for professional presentation. Local university-wide colloquium and/or IPESL website would also be utilized for dissemination. Furthermore,

the two faculty member will collaboratively write an article for submission to the regional TESOL publication.

6. How will your project support department/university goals?  
(maximum of 50 words)

This project supports the university goal of investing in the “professional development of all members of the University Community ... to achieve excellence in learning through teaching, research, and service”, the English department’s goal to train “professionals ...capable of functioning effectively within a broad range of linguistic, cultural, and discourse communities”, and Library Services goal to educate students “in the identification, location, evaluation, and use of information resources.”

**Submit proposals no later than noon, Monday, November 27, 2006, to**

Stewart Ross  
MH 267  
IPESL Project Manager  
Mankato, MN 56001

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**Questions? Contact:**

- Dan Cronin-Mitts, IPESL Steering Committee, Chair
- John Banschbach, IPESL Steering Committee
- Candace Black, IPESL Steering Committee
- Brandon Cooke, IPESL Steering Committee
- James Rife, IPESL Steering Committee
- Stewart Ross, IPESL Project Manager for Learning Communities
- Tracy Pellett, IPESL Project Manager for Assessment
- Wayne Sharp, IPESL Project Manager for Technology
- Brenda Plumery, IPESL Project Manager