

March 9, 2005

Ms. Beverly A. Cooper
Vice President
The Reginald F. Lewis Foundation
115 East 57th Street, Suite 1430
New York, New York 10022

Dear Ms. Cooper,

On behalf of Norbel School, we enthusiastically request funding support from The Reginald F. Lewis Foundation in the amount of \$75,000. Your assistance will enable Norbel School to continue to offer tuition assistance to low to moderate-income families who so desperately need the school's unique educational services for their learning-disabled children. We are specifically asking your foundation to help us fund financial aid for students from Baltimore City.

Celebrating 25 years of educational excellence, Norbel School provides successful educational alternatives for children of average to gifted intelligence who face a plethora of learning challenges—Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), language delays/learning disorders, Dyslexia, Dyscalcula, Dysgraphia, Asperger's Syndrome (a mild form of Autism), and others. Norbel School is a Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) approved nonpublic school for grades Pre-first through high school and an accredited member of the Association of Independent Maryland Schools (AIMS). Also, Norbel School holds a 501(c) 3 status with the Internal Revenue Service.

The only school of its kind in the nation, Norbel utilizes a uniquely effective educational model that places equal emphasis upon academic learning and social skills development. By individualizing instruction, maintaining a low teacher-to-student ratio of 1:6, using multiple teaching methods, and integrating a critical interpersonal skills curriculum, Norbel maximizes the academic achievement of each student. Through ongoing research, Norbel defines best practices for educating children and offers many of our students their first taste of true academic and social success. For these students and their families, Norbel has been, and continues to be, the answer.

Many children with learning challenges cannot learn in traditional academic environments. Research proves that all children learn best through individualized curriculums, but this is especially true for children who learn and process information differently. In fact, this is the ONLY way these children can successfully learn. Tragically, today's public schools cannot accommodate this unique approach to teaching, simply due to limited resources.

Studies show that children with learning challenges are at risk of more than just a lower quality of life. Without our services, future prospects for those students are grim at best, including increases in the incidence of problems commonly faced by children with learning disabilities. They are much more likely than non-learning disabled students to drop out of school, become teen parents, engage in gang activity, remain unemployed as adults, become incarcerated, struggle with depression and other mental health problems, suffer from alcohol and substance abuse issues, be stifled by devastatingly low self-esteem, emotionally "check out," and lead lives filled with social isolation.

At Norbel, children quickly discover that they most certainly *can* learn, and that prior academic failure was not an indication of lack of ability or intelligence. Norbel students flourish as they gain new confidence and skills through our uniquely supportive environment geared toward each child's individual needs and style of learning. Parents repeatedly discover the emergence of a "different child"—one that before was buried by the overwhelming challenges of the most basic of tasks in the absence of proper supports and teaching methodologies.

Norbel School, clearly the answer for so many of these children, does not receive federal or state support. As a result of this, tuitions, donations, grants, and fundraising are the only means to address this critical need for such children. A child from a family with limited financial resources is too often unable to attend Norbel School unless the school can provide substantial tuition assistance. Even though the school offers help to 30% of our students' families, it is not enough—and Norbel seeks a remedy to this crisis.

Norbel School is so committed to helping ensure that learning-disabled students from needy families are able to attend the school that the school designated and allocated over \$150,000 in financial aid funds in anticipation of funding the need. The Norbel School Student Access Project is unusual in that the school provides capable, low-income learning-disabled students with financial assistance before the funds are available and then seeks funding throughout that fiscal year.

The Project implies a high degree of risk for the school since Norbel School is nearly completely tuition driven, and a shortfall in this area can be devastating. Nonetheless, Norbel School has an obligation to support all parents of learning-disabled students as much as possible. Each year, Norbel School demonstrates its commitment to learning-disabled students and their families, but in order to continue to extend this assistance to families, we need your help.

We ask at this time for your invitation to submit a full grant proposal outlining our program, goals, and current needs. We are eager to tell you more about our proud history and significant accomplishments, as well as stories of the lives forever changed as a result of our work. We remain confident that upon review of our materials you will gain a better understanding of what makes Norbel School so unique and why our educational services are so crucial for learning-disabled students who are appropriate for the exceptional services we offer.

You can reach me at 410-796-6700 or at mcostello@norbelschool.org. We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience and invite you to visit Norbel School! Like many before you, sometimes it simply takes walking through that door—meeting our staff, faculty, and students—to fully understand the magic that is Norbel. We would like to welcome you to the Norbel School community and look forward to the day we can include you in our list of partners, as we together pave the way to brighter futures for children with learning differences.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Costello
Grant Writer/Fundraiser