

The Wilmington Community Digital Storytelling Collaboration seeks to ensure that the stories kids tell in the future include high school graduation. 21<sup>st</sup> Century students need 21<sup>st</sup> Century interventions in order to keep them engaged in meaningful academic pursuits. Our digital storytelling program is designed to enhance reading and writing skills in middle grades students through the use of emerging technologies such as computers, digital voice recorders, digital cameras, and iPads. These items will be on loan to us from the University of North Carolina Watson School of Education Technology Loan Program.

We will invite 25 students to UNCW for an intensive two week digital storytelling summer program. Students will work with a UNCW mentor who will help them choose a picture book. Upon mastering the picture book, the program participants will read the book aloud to elementary-aged children at the local county library. Our goal is to establish these young readers as role models and successful contributors to their community. In addition, students will choose a topic and either create their own book or produce their own video. The two week program will culminate with a red carpet event to which local celebrities, family members, and community leaders will be invited.

We will follow up with students each month at their schools through mini technology workshops and one on one mentoring with a UNCW student leader. By meeting kids on their level with the types of technologies that interest them and through sustained mentoring, we are confident that the re-engagement will have long-lasting positive effects on student attitudes towards school.

One of the key aspects that will make this program successful is that we are collaborating with individuals who are already doing similar work or who have already become an advocate for dropout prevention interventions. We believe that this program can be duplicated in other communities in North Carolina by encouraging University/School/Business and Community partnerships in which resources and man-power are shared. Within this framework, not only do the students benefit by having a greater opportunity to graduate from high school, but the community benefits as well by mentoring our future leaders and ensuring that they are placed on a path that leads to success.