



Milwaukee Public Schools  
FOUNDATION, INC.

## Teacher EXCEL Grants

### “Excellence in the Classroom” Teacher Mini-Grant Program

The Milwaukee Public Schools Foundation, Inc. sponsors a mini-grant program for teachers to fund creative classroom projects or activities that enrich student learning experiences.

Grants are for up to \$750 each. This is the seventh year of the program. About 353 grants have been awarded to date totaling nearly \$258,000. This year, 53 grants were awarded.

The Teacher EXCEL Grant program is supported by:

- ❖ A grant from the TRIFECTA Foundation which was established by Mark Tauscher of the Green Bay Packers to support education and literacy of children in Wisconsin. TRIFECTA is an acronym for *Tauscher's Reading Initiative For Every Child To Achieve*.
- ❖ Generous donations of MPS employees through the annual Employee Combined Giving Campaign. Employees may designate their contribution to the MPS Foundation.
- ❖ Contributions made in memory of Ann Shansky, who was an elementary teacher in MPS for 34 years. Ms. Shansky was an advocate of early childhood education and dedicated her life's work to education and development of children.

If you have any questions, call Kathleen Kirchhoff at 475-8853 or by e-mail [kirchhcx@mail.milwaukee.k12.wi.us](mailto:kirchhcx@mail.milwaukee.k12.wi.us)  
Visit the MPS Foundation website: [www.mpsfoundation.net](http://www.mpsfoundation.net)

## 2006 - 2007 Grant Winners

**Allen Field Elementary School**  
**Ann Marie Nelson & Patricia Herrera**  
**“Strengthening our At-Risk 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Bilingual Readers” - \$750**

Allen Field Elementary will be purchasing bilingual supplemental materials for their Harcourt Brace reading series, *Trofeos*, in order to offer small-group targeted instruction in vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension building skills. These supplemental literacy materials will help the school's at-risk bilingual students become confident and proficient readers.

**Bruce Elementary School**  
**Debbie Wienke**  
**“II Unique Girls Club” - \$750**

*II Unique Girls Club* is a new after-school club designed to enhance girls, ages 8-12, with positive self-esteem and emotional and physical well being. The club will help girls to make healthier choices, become positive role models, and will also teach them how to build strong communities. The girls club's activities will include, cooking, creative, art, community service, and, most importantly, interaction between the girls themselves.

**Brown Street Academy**  
**Anne Grimes, Todel Hartwig, Thomas Campbell,**  
**Joanne Schilz, & Laura Morgan**  
**“In the Eye of the Beholder” - \$750**

The third grade students of Brown Street Academy will participate in a photography project, using digital cameras to capture images of everyday experiences that they find beautiful. The students will use photo editing software to create presentations for a gallery at the end of the year. The most creative projects will be uploaded for podcasting on the school and district websites.

**Luther Burbank School**  
**Angela Van Kley**  
**“Making Kindergarten Connections” - \$500**

*Making Kindergarten “Connections”* will provide Burbank students with the opportunity to “connect” key literacy concepts that are learned in school to situations and events at home. Students will be able to take home backpacks containing activities to complete with their families.

**Carleton Elementary School  
Diane Johnson  
"Bringing History to Life  
Under African Skies" – \$750**

*Bringing History to Life Under African Skies* is a multicultural project that will engage students in hands on experiences in reading, writing, and language. Students will read, interpret, and study actual African American slave narratives and artifacts. The students will also take a virtual tour of Colonial America from the beginning of slavery through the turn of the century. The project will culminate with a field trip to the Black Holocaust Museum.

**Cass Street School  
Dave Dulmes & Dave Kahn-Pettigrew  
"Rolling with Newton" – \$740**

Grade three students will explore force and motion through the purchase of 'marble run' kits. These kits consist of small interlocking plastic pieces that can be linked together to allow a marble to run a sequence of chutes, bridges, and columns. The students will learn about principles such as gravity, inertia, speed, and simple machines.

**Clarke Street School  
Stefanie Miller-Ahmed & Carrie Kelly  
"Magic Tree House Club" – \$750**

Students in third and sixth grades will read Magic Tree House books at home and then share them together during the school's Book Buddies Program. Students in third grade will use the books to learn new vocabulary and phonological awareness. The sixth grade students will build fluency and expression.

**Clement Avenue School  
Barbara Silvernail, Pam Kotecki,  
& Kris Carstens  
"Under the Sea" – \$750**

*Under the Sea* will help Clement Avenue's kindergarten students develop understanding of sea animals and their habitats through the use of fiction and non-fiction literature, music, science, dance, and art. At the end of the unit, students will publish a class book and perform a program of dance, music, and visual arts for the entire school community.

**Cooper Elementary School  
Mary Widen, Mary Jakubiak, & Kathy Masch  
"The Cougar's Mother-Daughter  
Literature Circle" – \$750**

This after-school club will provide an opportunity for Cooper's sixth through eighth grade female students to bond with their mothers or other special adult in their lives. The club will provide a platform for the girls to talk and discuss various aspects of life and literature. In addition, it will promote lifelong habits and a love for reading and books.

**Dover Street School  
Mary Healy & Molli Jo Latin-Kasper  
"Water Safety is a Splash" – \$525**

*Water Safety is a Splash* will develop the water safety skills of students with special education needs. The students will participate in four swimming sessions of the "Splash" program at the Southshore YMCA. In addition to swim instruction, the class will listen and discuss related literature about water safety facts, biographies of famous swimmers, and fictional stories. As a school service project, the students will collaborate with the school's common council to plan and implement activities for a "Water Safety Awareness Week."

**Edison Middle & High School  
Lisa Sanford  
"Books of Hope – Connecting Students of the  
World through Reading" - \$ 750**

*Books of Hope* is a project that originated in Madison, Wisconsin to provide student-made books to children in countries where knowledge of the English language is critical to advancing their educational opportunities. Through this service-learning project, students will strengthen their reading and writing skills. The project will also raise students' awareness of the lives of other students in another country.

**Elm Creative Arts School  
Jennifer Vitrano  
"Playwrights in the Rainforest" - \$750**

Third grade students will be making their way through a study of the rainforest as playwrights and storytellers. In cooperation with the education department at the Skylight Opera Theater, the students will be exploring facts and stories about the rainforest, while composing their own scripts and dramatizing them along the way. This project-based learning experience will incorporate science, art, music, language arts, and reading.

**Emerson Elementary School  
Elnore McKinley-Seward & Sara Wisniewski  
“Multicultural Fair” – \$750**

Third grade students will investigate and learn about the similarities and differences found within Milwaukee’s diverse cultural makeup. Parents will be invited into the classrooms to discuss their cultural backgrounds, histories, and traditions, as well as the educational goals and practices from their cultural backgrounds. The project will enhance language arts and social studies learning.

**Fairview Charter School  
Laura Yale & Danielle Hassforth  
“Making Connections From Civilizations to  
Communities”– \$750**

Second and sixth grade students will work cooperatively as learning partners in the creation of a mosaic timeline featuring communities. The communities depicted will range from the ancient civilizations of Rome, Egypt, China, and Greece to the communities where we live today. Students will research various aspects of communities including architecture, landmarks, cultural events, communication, and influential people. The project will teach the students how civilizations of the past have influenced modern day communities.

**Fernwood Montessori School  
Paul Buckholt  
“Plants to People: The Composting  
Cycle”– \$750**

A team of fourth through eighth grade students with special needs will learn about composting and design a system to convert elements of waste from the school’s lunch program into compost for the school’s gardens. The group will then provide leadership and training for a school-wide composting project. The project will encompass learning in the areas of science, mathematics, technology, and language arts.

**Fifty-Third Street School  
Cindy Stott & Nancy Reuter  
“Lunch Bunch Book Club”- \$750**

The Book Club is designed to provide fifth through eighth grade students with an opportunity to get together and socialize by discussing books read by the group. The club will build social skills while increasing reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. This lunch-time club will provide time for students to talk about books, what the stories remind them of, or what the themes inspire them to do as a result.

**Foster & Williams High School of Visual  
Arts & Communications  
Sharon Ebel & Kevin McDonough  
“Molding a Language” – \$750**

Students in the American Sign Language and the arts/crafts classes will create models of hands depicting the hand signals that create the alphabet. Foster and Williams has an emphasis on visual learning. The three-dimensional models will provide a better image for students to see the actual form of the hand and position of the fingers. After studying the sculptures of Duane Hansen, students will finish the hand sculptures using paint, clothing, jewelry, nail polish, and other real items.

**La Escuela Fratney  
Carmen Reyes  
“Reading Buddies” – \$750**

*Reading Buddies* develops a relationship between middle school students and a K4 classroom. The middle school students use their literacy skills to help the K4 students practice using specific reading skills. The program also has a parent connection where the parents are given weekly letters explaining what skills/strategies the students are learning, thus encouraging the parents to work on the same skills at home.

**Gaenslen School  
Jill Delie  
“Emergent Literacy & Pre-Writing  
Curriculum Project” – \$750**

Children in a self-contained early childhood special education classroom will improve their emergent literacy and pre-writing skills, build their vocabulary, and develop speech/language skills through a variety of different activities which will be adapted to meet each child’s individual needs and learning goals. The first part of the project is literacy based, focusing on letter recognition, letter sounds, and vocabulary development. Other components will develop pre-writing skills and provide families with take-home activities and ideas so that they will be able to continue the development of skills with their children in the home environment.

**U.S. Grant School  
Carolyn Johnejack  
“Making Birdhouses” - \$325**

Fourth and fifth students will construct birdhouses transferring their knowledge in reading, math, science, and art to the construction of the birdhouses. They will also be visiting the Reiman Visitor Center in order to study the variety of media and aesthetic results used in the birdhouses that are showcased there. This trip will inspire the student to decide how to personalize his/her own birdhouse.

**Hampton School  
Amelia Emmerich  
“Learning from the Past” – \$750**

Sixty first grade students will design and create quilt squares using a computer program. The project integrates reading, language arts, math, and social studies activities reflective of the learning from the past theme. Students will also visit Old World Wisconsin.

**Hartford University School  
Kelleah Lewis  
“Urban Garden Project” - \$750**

Fourth and fifth grade students will research, plan, design, and maintain an urban garden. The garden will enrich student learning by allowing the students to make connections to science, math, economics, and literacy. It will also provide a forum for the discussion of social justice issues related to poverty and hunger throughout the world. Lastly, the garden will foster partnerships between families, staff, and other community members.

**Humboldt Park K-8 School  
Roberta Wilson  
“Discovering Ourselves Through Literature:  
a Fifth Grade Girls’ Book Club – \$500**

This fifth grade girls’ book club will explore literature and increase self-awareness through discussion and journal writing. These discussions and journal writings will be for each girl to reflect upon her life and ponder her connection to the novel’s heroine. The club will also allow the girls to learn about one another and form deeper friendships.

**Kluge School  
Patricia Winter  
“Exploring African Animals” - \$750**

Second graders will take part in a two week, ten day cross-curricular unit on African animals. The students will create three-dimensional art pieces to enhance the unit, which will then be displayed at the Milwaukee County Zoo. They will also be reading, researching, and writing, about the animals as well as taking a “Virtual field trip” to Africa. The project will culminate with a field trip to the Milwaukee County Zoo.

**Lincoln Avenue School  
Deborah Bruno  
“Get the Scoop” – \$750**

Fourth and fifth grade students will work together to design a school newspaper. They will be using technology and other media sources to develop the format, learn the writing techniques of journalism, and edit their own student led newspaper. The newspaper club will meet during recess time.

**Lloyd Street Global Elementary School  
Melissa Ruck  
“By Working Together,  
Our Children Will Succeed” – \$750**

*By Working Together*, is a workshop to educate families of first grade students about the “5 Big Ideas of Reading” that Lloyd Street focuses on daily in their classrooms. These activities focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. The workshop will explain each component and show families various activities they can do at home that will reinforce what is taught in the classroom.

**Lowell School  
Jeff Slawson & Diane Piedt  
“Game Pals” – \$700**

Fifth grade students will work with the four-year-old kindergarten students during lunch recess to help them learn their colors, alphabet letters, numbers, and shapes through games. The older students will teach the younger children how to play board games by taking turns, counting spaces, and being a good sport when they win or lose.

**Maple Tree School  
Robin Booth & Jessica Wondra  
“Math Between the Lines” - \$750**

Second graders at Maple Tree will work through picture books and teacher-made materials to strengthen their math skills in areas that have been identified as areas of need. Each student will have an individualized plan that will be updated as skills are mastered. The students will work independently, with a partner, or in a group depending upon the activity.

**Maple Tree School  
Peggy Dynicki, Edward Ward,  
Denis Herbst, & Diane Shaw  
“Reading Buddies at Home” - \$750**

*Reading Buddies at Home* will allow third grade students the opportunity to take books home each week to read with their parents or families or independently. A question booklet for parents will be included with each packet of books to provide a framework for discussion questions for each book. Discussion questions will include higher order thinking such as evaluation and analysis, as well as story elements.

**McNair Academy  
Melony Bukosky & Jaime Guzniczak  
“First Grade Blasts Off” - \$750**

First grade students will be immersed with fictional and non-fictional science related literature about space while working directly with First Stage Children’s Theatre. First Stage will implement a program called “Teaching Through Theater” which will assist the students in understanding how a theatrical performance is put together. The students then will create their own play related to space education which will be performed for the entire school.

**Milwaukee School of Languages  
Kelly Guthery  
“Growing Opportunity” – \$620**

High school students with severe cognitive disabilities will learn valuable vocational skills in horticulture and gardening. Students will learn to grow and care for annual plants from seed through planting in an annual bed on school grounds. They will also learn vocational skills that will allow for increased independence in completing a task, increased presence in the school community, and increased opportunities for community-based employment.

**Milwaukee Sign Language School  
Mark Eary  
“Finding Milwaukee  
through the Lens of Youth” - \$750**

While studying the book *An Inconvenient Truth*, 50 students in the eighth grade will go to different areas of Milwaukee to explore and research environmental issues that impact Milwaukee’s community. They will visit sites that impact the community’s environment, take pictures, write papers, and develop pictorial displays to show in the school community.

**Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School  
Julianna Perry  
“Powerful Forces Around You” - \$750**

Fourth and fifth graders will explore the forces of magnetism and electricity and investigate how heat, light, and sound energy work. They will learn about the forces of magnetism by exploring with magnets, build circuits with electricity kits, learn about the properties of light through the use of prisms, and explore sound by conducting experiments through the use of a tuning fork. Students will also visit the Discovery World Museum.

**Mitchell Elementary School  
Patti Koscielak  
“Children and Reading  
Encouragement Bags” - \$ 750**

First grade students will take home C.A.R.E. bags which will help foster reading and positive behavior in the home and at school. Each C.A.R.E. bag will have a theme related to a story with a socially positive behavior message. They will also have literacy activities related to a variety of curricular areas with directions in English and Spanish in order to encourage parent/family participation. Activities will integrate reading, writing, math, social studies, science, and health.

**Muir Middle School  
Heddy Keith  
“Art’s Alive Performing Art’s Camp” - \$ 750**

*Art’s Alive Performing Art’s Camp* is a three-week summer camp to provide youth with skills that inspire, motivate, and enrich their reading, writing, and speaking skills, which will in turn build self-confidence and pride. The camp will provide students with the opportunity to develop theatrical skills through classes in singing, acting, and dance. Theatre games will help to increase self-confidence and acting skills. Students will also learn how to design sets, lighting, and sound.

**Pierce School  
Katie Fitzpatrick  
“Ice Age Adventures” - \$750**

Through classroom activities and exciting field trips, fourth and fifth grade students will study geology. Students will be guided through the tours by naturalists who will provide rich details about land formations, plants, and rocks, making the land come to life in a way the students have only read about in books.

**Professional Learning Institute  
Kimberly Jacobson  
“A Lesson for All Students:  
‘A Lesson Before Dying’ ”- \$ 750**

The book, *A Lesson for All Students* by Ernest Gaines, will be taught to a group of 80 students. By analyzing and discussing the book’s message, the students will learn to make better choices about their own lives and encourage them to take charge of their future. In addition to Gaines’ book, the students will also be introduced to some ideas from the movie, *The Freedom Writers*.

**Project STAY Senior Institute  
Cathleen Hunt & Erin Witt  
“Economic Literacy” - \$740**

Student teams at Project STAY will invest a hypothetical \$100,000 in stocks and compete for the best portfolio performance. By using the Wisconsin Stock Market Simulation, the students learn not only to read a stock table, but also how to visualize the economic concepts of supply and demand along with other elements at work in the always-changing financial market.

**Pulaski High School  
Kevin Schenk  
“Career Fair, Portfolio,  
and Recruitment Event” – \$750**

Senior students at Pulaski High School will plan and organize a Transportation Career Fair. The students will also host a portfolio show case at the event to demonstrate to their business partners their skills, knowledge, and experience they have developed during their four years at Pulaski. Also middle school students will attend the event to learn about Pulaski’s auto program, view the work of the seniors, and visit with the business partners.

**Riley Elementary School  
Susan Plewa, Rebecca Maldonado,  
Jovita Moureau, & Roberto Ramirez  
“Family Library Safari: Peacemakers  
Around the Globe” - \$750**

The *Family Library Safari* will allow families to utilize the school library for fun, engaging, literacy-rich activities. The program’s theme is based on the book *Can You Say Peace?* by Karen Katz, which was written in commemoration of the International Day of Peace. Each Safari will visit one of the countries highlighted in the book. A nonfiction literacy work will be the centerpiece of each Safari and will feature peacemakers who can serve as role models for the children.

**Ronald Wilson Reagan  
College Preparatory High School  
William Luedtke  
“Body Biography” – \$600**

Body Biography will give the students at Ronald Reagan High School the opportunity to create an art piece that represents their understanding of literary character development and use this understanding to portray their analysis of a specific character in a fictional piece that they have read.

**Ronald Wilson Reagan  
College Preparatory High School  
Katherine Collin  
“Stained Glass Artists” - \$300**

Students will work with a stained glass artist-in-residence to create an individual piece of stained glass art of their own design. The students will also participate in the design and construction of a group project. Students will write a description of their art piece and the process used to complete it. Photos and descriptions will be posted on the school’s website.

**Shalom High School  
Jean Williams  
“Cooperative Creative Writing  
Unit with UWM” -” - \$750**

Students will participate in a cooperative poetry/creative writing workshop led by UWM graduate students in English. The end result of the workshop will be a published anthology of the students work completed during the ten-week workshop. Students will receive exposure to college-level learning and gain practical application in publishing.

**Sherman Multicultural Arts School  
Maureen Dardis & Marti Anderson  
“Everything Grows” - \$750**

*Everything Grows* will have the Sherman four-year-old kindergarten classes exploring the stages of growth that humans, animals, and plants go through as they develop. It will be taught as three separate units that have growth as the unifying theme. The students will compare the needs of each growing entity; learning that they all need food, warmth, and safety to thrive.

**Sixty-fifth Street School  
Linda Sukup & Cheryl Fortune  
“School Garden” - \$750**

Grade three students will research, design, and construct a garden in the courtyard of the school. The project will integrate studies in science, math, and language arts.

**Story School  
Susan Russell & Cynthia Frankowiak  
“Lunchtime of Lifetime Skills” - \$ 280**

*Lunchtime of Lifetime Skills* will provide middle school lunch groups with constructive activities to do during “free time” at the lunch hour. The activities will help develop skills and hobbies that will become part of their life skills repertoire as well as help the students to strengthen intrapersonal skills. Students will also begin to think independently, thereby increasing self-confidence and will boost participation across the curriculum.

**Story School  
Nina Zealy  
“Creative Theater Arts Residency” - \$750**

Through the dynamic art of theater, fourth graders will be exposed to the performing arts. Students will discover their importance as individuals and how to better function in a community through theater games and improvisation that teaches skills in focus, community effort, group problem-solving, and communicating positively with face, voice, and body. In addition, students will learn about careers in the performing arts by visiting the Chamber Theater, reading and writing about careers, and utilizing an online career exploration program.

**Stuart Elementary School  
Marianne Soldavini, Heather Gruber,  
Robin Shepich, & Roslyn Sampson  
“Trips & Tales” - \$750**

Forty-one ESL and regular education students from third grade will go on five field trips to explore places in Milwaukee. These trips will help the students gain knowledge about Milwaukee and expand their background knowledge in social studies and science topics. The students will publish a memory book with photos and essays about their experiences.

**Twenty-First Street School  
Jayne E. Jaskolski  
“Pre-Emergent Literacy Skills for At-Risk  
Preschoolers” - \$750**

*Pre-Emergent Literacy Skills* will teach critical pre-emergent literacy skills to three- and four-year-old early childhood students so that they will be prepared to learn to read and enter the kindergarten environment as ready learners. The project creates a rich three-fold format of using daily interactive read alouds, shared reading and group activities, and enriched classroom literacy centers.

**Victory K-8 School for the Gifted and Talented  
Diane Edwards & Christine Knoespel  
“Book Builders” - \$ 750**

Approximately 50 gifted writers and gifted artists, grades 3-8, will write and create children’s books. During the writing process they will focus on the 6 Traits of Writing concepts. The project will integrate reading, writing, and art. The students will participate in an artist-in-residence program, which will also reinforce the 6 Traits during the book making process. A reception for the students and parents will conclude the project in order to provide an opportunity to share their works. The students will also be given the opportunity to read their books to other children in the school.

**W.E.B. Du Bois High School  
Stephanie Wolfe & Karen Ambrosch  
“Motivating Mural Project” - \$750**

Approximately 60 students from Du Bois High School will work on various components of a large-scale mural for the entrance to the school. The “motivating” mural will foster community building and create a positive identifier for the school. Students will work on several different stages including research, writing, sketching, team building, painting, and collaborating with college students from Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design. A video diary of the process will give students the opportunity to use technology as a learning tool as well as a means to showcase their work.

**Zablocki Elementary School  
Peggy Eilers  
“Games to Go” - \$750**

By using the Games to Go bags, students at Zablocki will have the opportunity to improve oral language skills, cooperative group skills, strategic thinking skills and problem-solving skills in both the classroom and home environment. Bags will be made available to all grade levels for use in the classroom or as a home-school connection. Bags will also be available to families for individual checkout.

**Whittier Elementary School  
Peggy Mystrow  
“Character Counts” - \$750**

Whittier Elementary will implement enrichment projects for its Character Education curriculum. The program teaches students basic human values dedicated to strengthen the character of today’s youth. Students will examine the nature and importance of the six pillars of character through writing assignments, discussions, craft projects, hands-on activities, and monthly family take-home projects.