



Milwaukee Public Schools
FOUNDATION, INC.

Teacher EXCEL Grants

“Excellence in the Classroom” Teacher Mini-Grant Program

2008 - 2009 Grant Winners

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 eighth year of the program. The Teacher EXCEL Grant program is supported by:

- ❖ 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.

This year, 47 projects were funded.

If you have any questions, call Kathleen Kirchhoff at 414-475-8853 or by e-mail kirchhcx@milwaukee.k12.wi.us
Visit the MPS Foundation website: www.mpsfoundation.net

Academy of Accelerated Learning
Jennifer Price and Bronwyn Lind
“21st Century Learning with iPods” - \$750

Sixty-one first and second graders at the Academy of Accelerated Learning will benefit from an enhanced reading program using technology tools. Five iPod Nanos will be added to their classroom listening centers. Students will be able to record their own voices while reading, and make edits to hear themselves reading fluently. This teaching and learning tool will provide advantages for the students who receive special education, speech and English as a Second Language services, as well as all the other students.

Clara Barton Elementary School
Robin Duncan
“Exceptional Education Engaged” - \$750

Is it possible to energize and excite fifth and sixth grade special needs students so they want to read? Can students with disabilities write using a vocabulary that will enchant their listeners? This project provides the means to answer both of those questions with a hearty, “Yes!” through the use of graphic organizers, computer aided writing tools, and materials for 20 students to create their own storybooks.

Audubon Technology & Communication Center
Donna A. Whalen
“Painting Relationships” - \$700

Painting Relationships uses art as a vehicle to provide 14 middle school students with disabilities with team-building and self-esteem opportunities. The students will design and paint mini murals on the art room storage cabinet doors. By combining this high interest project with the behavioral management techniques employed with Restorative Justice and Love & Logic, the students will learn methods to manage their own behavior.

Bradley Technical and Trade High School
Pam Guehlstorf
“Teaching & Learning with Graphing Calculators” - \$750

Ninth and tenth graders at Bradley Tech utilize graphing calculators to improve their ability to connect mathematical ideas and to increase their problem-solving skills in algebra and geometry. This project will allow teachers to demonstrate and model the best uses of graphing calculators by providing TI-84 View Screens to be used in conjunction with overhead projectors for whole class viewing.

Brown Street Academy
Todd Hartwig
“Math Club – Count On It!” - \$700

“Mathletes” at Brown Street – that is the goal of this project, which will establish a Math Club for fourth and fifth grade students. This academic club will attempt to change students’ perception of mathematics, raise math scores, and continue to change the school’s culture into one that makes learning “cool” by spotlighting academic achievement. Members of the club will participate in a team Math Olympics competition.

Browning Elementary School
Susan Mildren and Natalie Levanetz
“Maple Sugar Time: Learning to Appreciate Natural Foods” - \$500

Too many students think their food automatically comes in plastic wrappers or tin cans. That will certainly not be the case for the 40 fourth graders at Browning who will get the chance to study the life cycle of the maple tree, including its delicious by-product, maple syrup. A trip to the Audubon Nature Center figures prominently in their studies. Students will demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways and will celebrate their appreciation for natural foods at a pancake breakfast with their parents ... with *real* maple syrup, of course!

Luther Burbank School
Debbie Ivy and Jody Wensink
“Fun With Letter Writing” - \$750

Texting and emailing are part of today’s culture of communication, but nothing beats the thrill of receiving a hand-crafted letter in the mailbox! The 27 kindergarten students in this SAGE classroom, along with their families, will have the opportunity to send and receive letters through the mail. This project will help students get excited about writing in a fun and meaningful way. Students will also interact with the school’s mail carrier on a regular basis and will visit the US Post Office to learn about the daily operations that make it possible for them to communicate through letters.

A.E. Burdick School
Theresa Mattson and Kathy Masch
“Mother – Daughter Book Club” - \$750

Plot twists, engaging characters, high drama, and differing points of view – who knows better about these things than middle school girls? This mother-daughter book club will meet monthly to discuss books about issues of concern to them such as friendship, death, and family struggles. Each month a different mother-daughter team will lead the discussion and provide activities to complement the book selection. Providing a safe environment for adolescent girls and their moms to discuss serious and sensitive topics is just one of the beneficial outcomes of this project.

Cass Street School
Lisa Limberger
“Pollution Solution” - \$750

The thirteen sixth and seventh grade students with disabilities involved in *Pollution Solution* at Cass Street will learn first hand that they can impact their environment in a positive way. In addition to taking ownership of their natural world through recycling, they will learn the value of growing their own food by creating and taking responsibility for a garden. The students will learn about green living, visit a recycling center, and work with an expert to create their own organic compost station.

Clarke Street School
Sue Dentice and Jason Wensel
“Peaceful Playground” - \$750

The entire student population of 380 students will benefit from this project, which promotes positive peer relationships and social skills such as cooperation, taking turns, sharing, and working together while outside on the playground. The *Peaceful Playground* will enlist the help of older students to help the younger ones engage in positive activities on the playground that lend themselves to group involvement. Positive recognition will be given for good sportsmanship as well as for good play.

Cooper School
LeeAnne Brzenk-Nelson and Rose Haas
“Adventures in Science” - \$610

Kindergarteners by nature love to discover, observe, and explore, which makes them ideal candidates to be scientists. The 30 students in K5 at Cooper will get the chance to increase their love for science through this project that will establish an interactive science learning center. This will let them supplement their existing science curriculum with hands-on activities and help them zero in on their science Learning Targets.

Jeremiah Curtin Leadership Academy
Cynthia Lorch
“Academic Family Activity Nights” - \$750

Students at Curtin School, along with their families, will play and learn together over the course of four Family Activity Nights. Each activity night will focus on a different topic, including a math carnival, a writing night, a science night, and a child development night. In addition to the lasting links these nights will form, the families will also receive books and other materials to extend the learning experience.

Custer High School
Barbara Riebau
“Teaching and Learning with Graphing Calculators” - \$750

Ninth and tenth graders at Custer High School utilize graphing calculators to improve their ability to connect mathematical ideas and to increase their problem-solving skills in algebra and geometry. This project will allow teachers to demonstrate and model the best uses of graphing calculators by providing TI-84 View Screens to be used in conjunction with overhead projectors for whole class viewing.

Eighty-First Street School
Deborah Mayfield
“The Urban Literature Book Club” - \$750

Literary characters that look, act, speak, and live in a world much like the students themselves can serve as powerful agents for change. This project will provide books that have high relevance and high interest to middle school students, who will read and discuss them with each other and with caring adults. Increasing a love of and enjoyment of reading is one goal of this project. Another is to share that love by building up family libraries.

Fairview Charter School
Laura Yale and Wendy Novak
“Every Step We Take” - \$750

Every Step We Take combines activities in the academic areas of math, social studies, health, physical education, and technology. Thirty-five students in second grade will wear a pedometer during school hours and track their steps on an Excel spreadsheet. Students will also choose a destination in Milwaukee such as the zoo or museum. Using city maps, Google Earth and MapQuest, students will calculate the distance from school to their chosen destination and estimate the number of days it would take them to walk to their destinations.

Ben Franklin Elementary School
Scott Fields
“Promoting Positive Self-Identity for Black Adolescent Males” - \$750

Students will learn how literature can empower them in their daily lives. This Book Club will promote positive self-image through relevant, culturally connected texts and provide an opportunity for seventh and eighth grade students to engage in inquiry and discussion of ideas that have the potential to change their lives. At the same time, the Book Club will address literacy needs through the use of targeted activities and strategies.

**La Escuela Fratney
Dana Thome
“Reading for the Love of Math” - \$750**

All of the 400 students at La Escuela Fratney study their lessons in both Spanish and English, but let’s not forget that mathematics is a language, too. To successfully “read” math, students must not only decode the words, but learn to decipher symbols and vocabulary specific to math. This project will supply books for the school’s library that will assist students, teachers, and parents to make a literary connection to important mathematics concepts.

**Gaenslen School
Jill Delie
“Bringing Literacy to Life” - \$750**

Students in an early childhood special education classroom will see their books come to life through this exciting project. Puppets, flannel board activities, and music will supplement the reading of each book of the week in order to help increase the students’ attention and participation in the readings. *Bringing Literacy to Life* will also help these students reach their individual learning goals by including their families and their regular education peers in the learning process.

**U.S. Grant School
Margaret Igowsky and Michele Hilbert
“Growing a New Crop of Young Ecologists”
\$700**

Nearly 60 fifth grade students will observe and analyze various ecosystems on field trips while integrating science, math, language arts, reading and physical education learning targets. Students will learn the impact that humans have on the environment and how all the living things in an ecosystem are interrelated. Students will visit the Kettle Moraine area at Palmyra Camp and the Schlitz Audubon Center.

**Hamilton High School
Joseph Schauer and John Schmitz
“EPIC Through Reading” - \$520**

Educational Participation in the Community, or the EPIC project combines the value of student volunteerism with a desire to increase a love of reading and an appreciation for art. Twenty-five twelfth graders will spend time in area elementary schools, reading to the students, modeling good reading strategies, and leading them in art projects that relate to the books. Bringing high school seniors together with elementary students benefits the younger students, but it also has a positive impact on the confidence and self-esteem of the older students.

**Hi-Mount Community School
Debra Morrissey and Frances Bulger
“School Newspapers Connect Families and
Community” - \$750**

The 26 students involved in the Technology Lunch Club at Hi-Mount will get ample chance to hone their communication skills as they produce school newspapers. They will use digital cameras, computers, and other technologies in authentic, purposeful tasks. They will develop organizational and planning skills, oral communication skills, and writing & editing skills. All students from the school will have the opportunity to submit items to the newspaper, which will be distributed to family and community members.

**Honey Creek Elementary School
Tina Harris and Rachel Krueger
“Debate Team” - \$500**

Thirty-two fifth grade students will have the opportunity to learn debating skills, which encompass research, writing, organization, presentation skills, and the ability to pose solutions to problems. The long-term goal of this ambitious project is to have a debate team as an ongoing curricular activity and to instill interest in other elementary schools.

Humboldt Park Elementary School
Mary Beth Anich
“Exercise Your Brain” - \$750

Kindergarten, first, and second grade students will take home a Math Gym Bag once a month so they can get a “math workout” together with family members. Skills such as matching, sequencing, sorting, counting, and telling time will become part of the routine. This project will supplement students’ learning, engage families, and help improve the number of students who score proficient or advanced on mathematics portions of the state standardized test.

Lincoln Avenue School
Monica Czyzewski

“My Family ... Me ... and Literacy!” - \$750

This project promotes and encourages family involvement in literacy through the use of Books-to-Go, as well as through classroom literacy stations. The home-school collaboration extends to Literacy Delight Nights where families will participate in a Make-it Take-it literary activity. The project’s culminating activity is field trip to see a live theatrical production, with families invited, too.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School
Lisa Loomis
“Terrific Take Home Books” - \$750

Terrific Take Home Books will allow 26 first grade students the opportunity to take a different book home each week to read with their families, but that is just the beginning. They will also receive their very own story journal so they can keep a record of the stories they have read, draw a picture about the story, and have a chance to retell the stories in their own words. This project not only provides books for family reading, it will allow first graders to create their *own* book by the end of the year.

Lincoln Avenue School
Peggy Repka and Ray Curry

“Exploring Milwaukee’s Lakefront” - \$750

One of Milwaukee’s best treasures is its lakefront, yet many students have never had the chance to explore it. This project will provide 25 third grade students three different opportunities to have a great time near the great lake where they will experience first hand its cultural, recreational, and educational value. After pedaling surrey bikes through Veteran’s Park, touring aboard the Edelweiss, and visiting the schooner Denis Sullivan and Discovery World at Pier Wisconsin, the students will have the chance to write about their experiences and share them with others.

Kluge Elementary School
Barbara Berman
“The Stories in Me” - \$750

When children hear stories being told aloud, they internalize the information in a way that reading it alone can’t do. This project will help 26 fifth grade students work on their oral skills, vocabulary improvement, build their character, and share their own stories. The students will have the opportunity to work with a master storyteller as well as have the chance to see positive communication in action while viewing a play performed by some of Milwaukee’s children.

Madison High School Academic Campus
Virginia Lynch

“Teaching & Learning with Sketchpad” - \$750

Communicating geometric ideas and reasoning in a variety of ways – words, symbols, pictures, charts, tables, graphs – is a key factor in determining success. Use of the software Geometer’s Sketchpad can improve student abilities to communicate mathematical concepts and reasoning. This project provides tenth graders access to Sketchpad in a lab setting. Students will maintain portfolios including Sketchpad illustrations, vocabulary activities, and self-assessments on their improving skills.

**Maple Tree School
Christie Mulligan
“Shake, Wiggle, and Move” - \$750**

Play can be really productive work for three to six-year-olds. *Shake, Wiggle, and Move* will provide 100 youngsters with a movement specialist for at least two hours a week. This person will model and implement techniques used in organized movement and traditional games. Activities will help reinforce basic math, music and reading concepts. Activities will also stimulate developmental growth of student imaginations, verbal skills, socialization skills, and general communication skills.

**McNair Academy
Michelle Scott
“E-Readers Book Club” - \$750**

Today’s children, especially middle school aged children, are plugged in to their digital, socially-networked world, and teachers can find it challenging to engage them in traditional activities ... like reading a book. This project, *E-Readers Book Club*, combines the virtual connectivity of MPS’ Student Learning Community with the genuine pleasure of owning a new book. The 16 students with disabilities involved in this online book club will become more willing, proficient readers.

**Milwaukee French Immersion School
Andrea Goldstein
“Home Reading Journals” - \$750**

Readers are writers and writers are readers. When the 16 first grade students involved in this project take a book home to read with their family, they will in turn *write* about those books in their Home Reading Journals. The journals give them space for reflecting, drawing, and retelling what they have read so they can apply it to their own lives. This creates a bond between student and family as they increase reading levels.

**Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School
Rachel Elliott and Awilda Aranda
“Hatching Hands-On Learning” - \$750**

Science comes to life – literally – for 90 first grade students who will observe as chicks emerge from their eggs in a classroom incubator. Students will develop portfolios that incorporate science, math, art, reading and writing as they study the chicks and the life cycles of other farm animals. The project will conclude with a community connection – a trip to a working farm with a hen house, where the chicks will live out the rest of their lives.

**Mitchell Elementary School
Enid Montalvo
“Leaping into Leisure Reading” - \$750**

This project will promote literacy and joy of leisure reading among 30 bilingual seventh grade students. The students will choose appropriate, stimulating literature selections from the Bilingual Scholastic Book Club Catalogs on a monthly basis. They can take these books home to share with their families and add to their personal collection of books. This will establish purposeful reading habits and will encourage students to read outside of school.

**Morgandale Elementary School
Barbara Sem
“Guitars in the Classroom: Making Music Meaningful” - \$620**

Listening to music is important and fun, but learning to read and make music gives tremendous satisfaction and may spark a lifelong interest in music. This project puts guitars in the hands of fifty seventh grade students. What a great way to learn the names of the strings, how to tune an instrument, proper fingering, playing chords, and reading music. Armed with this musical literacy, students will develop strong practice and work habits. They may also become lifelong music lovers and music makers.

**Neesksara Elementary School
Sandra Szymkowski and Anne Desotelle
“Walls to the World” - \$750**

As part of this project, 190 third, fourth, and fifth graders will study the regions of the world (ocean, desert, forest, mountain, tundra, rainforest) and transfer what they learn onto murals that can be enjoyed by the entire school community. In creating the murals, they will put math, science, art, research and writing skills to use. The culminating event of this project will be a grand, school-wide celebration, unveiling the *Walls to the World*.

**Pulaski High School
Don Bolanowski
“Teaching and Learning with Graphing
Calculators” - \$750**

Ninth and tenth graders at Pulaski utilize graphing calculators to improve their ability to connect mathematical ideas and to increase their problem-solving skills in algebra and geometry. This project will allow teachers to demonstrate and model the best uses of graphing calculators by providing TI-84 View Screens to be used in conjunction with overhead projectors for whole class viewing.

**Pierce Elementary School
Ellen Evans
“Exemplary Elementary Environmentalists”
\$750**

In Wisconsin, natural resources are not just a part of the landscape; they are part of our heritage. Children who appreciate and connect with the wonders of nature early on are much more likely to become stewards of the earth as adults. One hundred fourth grade students will be involved in this project that will connect them to natural riches by taking them to the Kettle Moraine in Palmyra and the hiking trails at Pike Lake. Throughout the school year, they will learn to become diligent recyclers, enthusiastic gardeners and lifelong environmentalists.

**Ronald Reagan College Prep High School
Adam Murphy
“Jazzing it Up” - \$710**

Twenty students in ninth through twelfth grade, together with their music teacher, have formed a Jazz Ensemble at the school. The group meets during the 35 minutes of free time opposite the lunch hour, with the goal of growing this extracurricular activity into a full curricular class in the future. This project will jump start the program by providing resources and materials for the Jazz Ensemble music library, enable the group to expand its repertoire of music to participate in “Music in Our Schools” month, and prepare a CD of their performances.

**Project STAY Senior Institute
Cathleen Hunt and Erin Witty
“Economic Literacy in the Marketplace” - \$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 Game, students learn not only how 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. Thirty high school seniors will participate in this exciting project.

**Ronald Reagan College Prep High School
Michael Moore
“Reagan Takes the Stage” - \$750**

A dedicated group of nearly 30 students have formed a theater club at Reagan. They meet after school and during lunch hours to play drama games and participate in dramatic exercises. The ultimate goal is to develop the necessary skills and confidence to produce a play in the spring of 2009. This project will assist them in reaching that goal by providing instructional texts, scripts, play compilation books, and small props. The theater club promotes literacy through oral communication, reading, writing, language, media/technology, and research.

**Sherman Multicultural Arts School
Marti Anderson and Maureen Dardis
“Leaping into Literacy” - \$750**

Music, movement, and mastery; this is what 52 of the K3-K5 students at Sherman are involved in through this project. *Leaping into Literacy* engages students daily in a variety of activities that allow them to use their bodies to practice early literacy skills. Students sing and move to songs that teach concepts such as letter sounds and rhymes, and use giant inflatable letters and academic games to increase literacy skills. Best of all, students take WOMMPing breaks (water, oxygen, marching, crossing midline, pretzel) to keep their brains hydrated & lower stress levels.

**Sherman Multicultural Arts School
Brenda DePriest and Lori Orlando
“Sensational Plants” - \$750**

Sixty first and second grade students will visit an active bee farm as part of this project. They will also visit the Mitchell Park Domes and the Milwaukee Public Museum as they learn how bees, plants, and people are all interdependent on each other. Books, art projects, math problems, and social issues will play integral roles in this sensational science unit.

**Sixty-Fifth Street School
Kimberly Gibbs and Linda Sukup
“Discovering Milwaukee” - \$750**

This project will allow 50 third grade students to explore the impact that Milwaukee’s early residents had and continue to have on the city. Walking tours and driving tours will reveal the wealth of multicultural neighborhoods, influences, and landmarks. A visit to the Streets of Old Milwaukee at the Public Museum will help illustrate customs from various cultures.

**Sixty-Fifth Street School
Tracie Noah
“Shoebox Tasks” - \$750**

Students with autism don’t learn like their typically developing peers. Ideally, tasks must be short, structured, highly motivating, and involve as many senses as possible for optimal learning. *Shoebox Tasks*® provide the opportunity for students who need a high degree of structure and routine to experience success and build upon success for higher-level skills and independence. Thirty-one first through third grade students will benefit from the hands-on pre-academic tasks that incorporate skills such as sorting, fine motor coordination, eye-hand coordination, sequencing, and matching.

**Stuart School
Robin Shepich and Julie Kovalaske
“Learning and Growing Together” - \$750**

Third grade students will be immersed in fictional and non-fictional literature and creative writing while working directly with an adult from Luther Manor’s Independent Living Center on a monthly basis. The visits will motivate and enrich students’ reading, writing, and communication skills.

**Thurston Woods Campus
Matthew Napoli and Jonathon Mudge
“Home-School Connect” - \$750**

The *Home-School Connect* is a program designed to provide third through sixth grade students with individualized materials for family use to support student learning at home. The project extends the concepts of learning beyond the classroom while beginning to build home “resource centers.” Students will be supplied with a kit containing supplemental reading books, math games, flash cards, writing tools, and other helpful learning aids.

**Whitman Elementary School
Julie Rezash
“Healthy Choices” - \$750**

This project is a year-long effort to get first grade students and their families to make healthy choices when it comes to meals, snacks, and activities. The children will sample treats such as fruit kabobs that are delicious and nutritious. They will visit the produce manager at a large area market and get to experience lots of fresh food options. Regular neighborhood walks and jump rope breaks will be part of the school day. Healthy Choices will culminate in an event where the families Walk a Mile, then enjoy snacks prepared by students. Every student will get to keep a cookbook of healthy snacks they learned to prepare throughout the year.

