

## Durango Education Foundation Core Grants – Awarded for 2016-17 School Year

### Grants awarded within Durango School District 9-R

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#### Collaborative – Escalante and Miller Middle Schools

Growing Great Brains: Building a Classroom Model      Applicant: Hallie Whitney      Award: \$7779

Recent research in neurology has revealed fresh lessons in learning theory, from the physical classroom environment to the ways students absorb and process information. This grant will fund a pilot program in the classrooms of literacy interventionist Erica Day and English Language Arts teacher Duane Tucker, for students and staff to explore and determine the environments and pedagogical approaches most conducive for learning. Ms. Whitney's plan is to evaluate the results and offer the lessons learned to others in 9-R; throughout the year-long pilot, students from the two schools will meet to discuss the ongoing research, share insights and prepare to present results to the entire school district. Principals Cito Nuhn and Jeremy Voss are highly enthusiastic about hosting this pilot. Miller Middle School PTO has provided stand-up desks as part of the equipment needed for the pilot.

#### Animas Valley Elementary

Getting Smart with SMART Boards      Applicant: Meaghan Anderson      Award: \$4869

The request was for 13 SMART boards to complete every classroom; DEF will fund 3, to be distributed at the school's discretion for best use.

#### Big Picture High School

Video Equipment      Applicant: Dreher Robertson      Award: \$3835

This grant supplies video equipment to work with the camera DEF funded earlier in 2016 (via the Crane Arts Education Fund) to expand the school's nascent video/cinematography program. All students in the school are eligible to take courses using this equipment.

Pilot Program: Animation Classes      Applicants: Dreher Robertson, Alain Henry      Award: \$5700

Animation requires technical knowledge and skill in graphic and representational art, and it also incorporates such core disciplines as physics, anatomy, math, narrative writing, and the elements of storytelling. This grant funds a pilot program for four students to attend 4 successive courses at Rocky Mountain Animation Labs; outcomes will demonstrate the merits of adding animation courses selectively throughout 9-R.

### **Durango High School**

Book Whispering

Applicant: Heidi Jordan

Award: \$5000

Literacy education requires avid readers. The purpose of this grant is to encourage independent reading in support of other curriculum and/or for building the habit of critical and pleasurable reading. This grant will cover the purchase of classroom libraries of current, high-interest books for teens; purchases will include both young-adult and popular contemporary and classic literature, for a variety of interests and reading levels. Funding cuts have largely stopped the updating of the school library, so Ms. Jordan submitted this collaborative grant on behalf of all the DHS English teachers. The Ballantine Family Fund is providing \$4800 in support for this grant.

### **Escalante Middle School**

Reading for New Perspectives

Applicant: Michelle Fletcher

Award: \$822

Last year, DEF funded classroom sets of two classics, *The Strange History of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and the *Autobiography of Fredrick Douglass*. Both books proved very popular; discussions moved from the directly textual to the more abstract matters of social justice, examining the notion of “the other” in society, and one’s duty to self vs to others. This grant expands Ms. Fletcher’s classroom library to include related books for individual and small group study, to bring even more richness to the discussion of the two core books.

Lego Mindset Robots

Applicant: Christopher Skinner

Award: \$6300

Several years ago, DEF funded Lego Mindset Robots at the high school, under the direction of science teacher, Teresa Craft. They are still being used for classroom study, after-school projects and (when there is enough interest) for competition. Ms Craft encouraged this grant, saying that the materials can be used at any level and modified to meet standards. She also said, “Making kids think in a logical sequence and problem solve issuing commands to get a certain outcome is the most powerful self-learning I have ever seen kids do.” This program uses existing computer equipment, and the Lego materials are mostly reusable from year to year.

Ultimate Crew Kit

Applicant: Duane Tucker

Award: \$8374

Every day, every student starts with a class called Crew, which is the heart of Expeditionary Learning at Escalante. A combination of social-emotional learning and academic support, Crew builds students’ confidence in independent learning as well as in developing teamwork skills. The class uses equipment, or “kits,” for exercises in exploration skills, team-building, and more, and the kits at Escalante are now worn out. The original grant requests 1 kit (for sixth grade); the DEF grant will provide 3 kits, one for each grade.

### **Florida Mesa Elementary**

Nonfiction Books for Discovery

Applicant: Kelly Duvall

Award: \$2000

Kelly's first grade classroom will be a model in the coming year. She requested nonfiction books for her students to incorporate a 10-20 minute discovery reading block during which students read and engage in nonfiction text. After the students read, the class meets as a group and each student shares a discovery they made during their reading time. In addition to the value to the students themselves, Kelly wants "to show fellow colleagues the importance and impacts of nonfiction texts and how they can be used to expand background knowledge through conversation." She points out that it will "level the 'playing field' by consistently affording students the opportunity to have engaging conversations while at school. Working at such a diverse school, some students do not have access to nonfiction texts, let alone an adult to sit down with them to spend time having a conversation." This program will support core standards on a daily basis.

Science Club Expansion

Applicant: Kristen Toppin

Award: \$2461

Last year, DEF funded the pilot After-School Science Club at Florida Mesa. Nothing beats success to motivate an expansion, and this year, Ms. Toppin returned with a request for a second year of funding in order to expand the program to more children and divide them by age group to better align the projects for the abilities and maturity of the students. This request includes funding for common household items used by the teachers and volunteers, as well as for a sturdy microscope for the young explorers.

### **Miller Middle School**

Chromebooks for Math Classes

Applicant: Ginny Hofferber

Award: \$6552

Ms. Hofferber uses online materials and "proficiency ladders" to help students progress individually in math. Previously, the daily chore of bringing in one of the shared school laptop sets and setting them up has taken precious time from teaching. This grant will pay for the purchase of a set of 30 Chromebooks to remain permanently in Ms. Hofferber's classroom. Notes: Zach Mather has worked closely with Ginny to identify and price the best devices for her use. We did not include a charging station, and Zach believes he will be able to find one for her in the district.

### **Needham Elementary**

Decodable Readers

Applicant: Lenore Ilg-Schmidt

Award: \$728

This grant will fund four sets of specialized phonics readers (10 titles, six copies of each 14-page book) for reading interventionists to use with the children reading below grade level (right now, there are 92 children in this situation). Ms. Ilg-Schmidt says that the school has "great diagnostic tools to determine the specific areas of weakness, and these readers will provide the students with contextual practice to repair the gaps in their phonics skills." Previously the teachers have borrowed these materials from Park, so they have seen the effectiveness first-hand.

Guided Reading Books E-Licenses

Applicant: Mary LeClaire

Award: \$600

Guided reading materials (in this case, RAZ-Kids and Reading A to Z) help students become better readers by presenting increasingly challenging materials targeting specific skills individually identified by assessments. Some of these electronic materials can be used at home; parents report their children are enthusiastic about using them.

Listening Center

Applicant: Gina Preszler

Award: \$1094

Do you remember cassette tape players? The breakage and tangles? And how tricky it was to find an exact spot on a tape? Ms Preszler is still dealing with that—with her lively kindergartners, no less. In her listening center, students can listen to stories (and sometimes follow along in books). This gives the children appreciation for the power and structure of language, and in many instances, it may be the only time a child is read aloud to. This grant will provide Ms. Preszler with iPods and an iPad so that students can easily find their reading places in the stories they love.

### **Sunnyside Elementary**

iPads for Intervention

Applicant: Marci Bastin

Award: \$4254

In somewhat of an extension/expansion of last year's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Writing Fluency program (Bank of Colorado Innovation Award recipient), Marci Bastin is learning from Lori Smith the advantages of using iPads to break barriers and individualize learning for reading intervention students as well as English language learners. Marci is excited by the range of learning modalities the tablets offer—tactile, visual, and auditory. She says she has “seen reluctant learners, readers, and writers become little encyclopedias without the physical barriers of paper and pencil. Students are free to share their information verbally and have it transformed into a colorful presentation.” This grant will purchase the full set of six (plus accessories) Marci requested to be able to fully utilize the reading and writing capacities of the devices and programs.

Sensory Needs Toolkit

Applicant: Cindy Beckley

Award: \$1212

This grant will fund the development (from various sources) of a school-wide lending bank of sensory items that all teachers can borrow to meet the needs of students with sensory processing deficits. Ms Beckley says, “Each child is an individual with unique needs. Most children can regulate the sensory needs and perform in the classroom with no additional supports. Other children need supports and a sensory ‘diet’ to meet their needs. Teachers must meet children's individual needs as well as maintain a classroom that accommodates the sensory needs of all children.” The kit will include such items as inflatable cushions to allow kids to wiggle in their chairs, “hand fidgets” to occupy restless hands, time timers to help kids know how long they are expected to stay on task, weighted pad wearables that calm, a standing desk, and more. All items have demonstrated their usefulness previously, using a kit borrowed periodically from Park Elementary.

SMARTboard Clickers

Applicant: Gina Ott

Award: \$1212

Clickers are interactive devices that allow students to respond to materials instantly, allowing the teacher to know immediately if the students are absorbing the lesson. Sunnyside’s SMARTboards are dated but still in good service; these clickers are the last generation available to match the school’s boards. The alternative—replacing the old boards with new equipment—would be expensive and irresponsible.

**Note about schools not represented:** Fort Lewis Mesa received Core grants last winter (supported by the Westmeath Foundation) so, although invited, they did not apply in this cycle. Riverview and Park submitted major grants that will be funded instead by the school district.

**Durango 9-R Whole Program Grants**

9-R Kids’ Camp Staff Training

Applicant: Audra Snow

Award: \$5310

Director Audra Snow reported great results from last summer’s professional development, funded by D.E.F. This year, she would like to deepen the staff’s understanding of behavior management, curriculum interface, and student engagement. This professional training opportunity, primarily for Kids’ Camp staff, will be offered collaboratively to the Boys and Girls Club staff as space allows. The Ballantine Family Fund is supporting this program with a \$2000 gift.

Visiting Historian

Applicant: Lucinda Long-Webb

Award: \$1000

This grant would fund partial expenses to bring Navajo author and historian Dr. Evangeline Parsons to speak on the Navajo Long Walk to Durango 9-R students. She will also speak at Fort Lewis College and participate in Indigenous People’s Day events on campus. The DEF committee recommends approval of \$1000 of the original \$2323 grant, conditioned on Ms. Long-Webb finding funding to complete the grant.

**Grants to Outside Organizations Serving 9-R Students**

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TRIO Talent Search Summer Camp Materials

Applicant: Wendy Javier

Award: \$962

The TRIO program has proven itself with high rates of student retention, graduation and college admissions. This grant provides materials for the middle school overnight College Experience program that takes place at Fort Lewis in the summer and gives many students their introduction to collegiate student life.

TRIO Upward Bound Summer Academy Program

Applicant: Marya Corrigan

Award: \$1000

The more academically-focused sister program to TRIO Talent Search, Upward Bound works closely with students for 3-4 years. Two years ago, Upward Bound began a collaboration with the FLC teacher education program, to offer students an intensive program in core studies while giving the future teachers the opportunity for a summer practicum. Staff and instructors must quickly establish connections between each other

and students in order to successfully move in to five weeks of meaningful instructional time and to ensure student success in content areas. This grant supports a preparatory day of team building, to help build those effective connections.

Garden Project Program Development for Schools      Applicant: Sandhya Tillotsen      Award: \$5000

Several 9-R schools have thriving garden projects that introduce and expands students' understanding of earth science, meteorology, ecology, conservation and more; the gardens also help reinforce the district's health and wellness standards. With this grant the Garden Project of Southwest Colorado plans to develop an integrated garden curriculum, to support volunteer teachers with unified and easily accessed materials and plans. Current 9-R Curriculum Director Lynn Mather as well as the principals at all Garden Project schools have endorsed this program.

Know Your Dough Program Development      Applicant: Alison Andersen      Award: \$2500

Know Your Dough has provided the standards-mandated financial literacy curriculum component in several 9-R grades for the past 2-3 years; at the same time, the program has helped to train teachers to reinforce the lessons from the program. Ms Andersen plans to use this grant to expand, refine, and improve both the operations of the program and the delivery; in particular, she plans to add new secondary curriculum materials, incorporate supplemental materials and best-practice training to support volunteer program teachers, and refine the pre/post data collection to discover more meaningful outcome measurements.

La Plata Family Centers Coalition Backpacks      Applicant: Amelia Yeager      Award: \$1000

This grant supports a time-honored D.E.F. tradition: starting the school year right by giving youngsters backpacks filled with school supplies. Many organizations collaborate on this project; last year LPFCC distributed 700 backpacks to children who qualified for free/reduced lunch in all three La Plata County school districts. This grant will provide 50 backpacks.

Forests to Faucets: Teacher Training Workshop      Applicants: Mountain Studies Institute & SJMA      Award: \$3000

The workshop will provide teachers with a field tour of the Animas watershed, as well as demonstration lessons and classroom resources that emphasize the importance and interconnection of healthy watersheds to area water supplies through a two-day *Animas River Teacher Training* for all grades (special focus on K-6). Additionally, MSI will host an in-depth, half-day *Using Data in the Classroom Training* for secondary teachers. The program will reach 10-15 Durango 9-R teachers, impacting approximately 300-450 students annually. This program is endorsed by Curriculum Director Lynn Mather, who consulted with instructional leadership members about the value of the training.

Keys to High School Success Boys Conference      Applicants: Women's Resource Center & Durango 9-R      Award: \$3000

All 9-R 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys attend this conference which prepares them with life skills for the leap in maturity required by the demands of high school. Grant funds would be used to help defray the costs of venue, printed materials, workshop supplies, and items for distribution to participants.