

Hands-on Learning Grants – 2011-2012 School Year

Growing Green Guardians

Author: Tonya Drake

School: Meadow Lake Elementary

The rain garden will engage students through authentic science. The garden will be used for inquiry and will serve as an outdoor classroom for life and earth science in perpetuity. In alignment with state standards, fourth and fifth grade students will explore the water cycle and ecosystems, respectively. Additionally first through third graders will investigate plant life cycles, systems, agricultural engineering, integrated pest management, ecology, and weather. Interdisciplinary skills from math and language arts will be vital. Students will grow and plant many of the garden's perennials and be a part of something enduring and bigger than themselves.



Literacy From The Start

Author: Monica Potter

School: Cavanagh Early Childhood Center

District parents with children between the ages of birth-5, living in an impoverished apartment community, will have the opportunity to work one on one with a parent educator/home visitor to discover how early experiences impact children's literacy skills. The parent educator will visit each family four times throughout the 2011-2012 school year.



E-Book Readers Excel

Author: Barb Almanzo and Lori Wolfe

School: Northport Elementary School

E-Book Readers Excel combines the love of reading with technology in the classroom. Teachers in grades 1-5 will utilize e-book readers, headphones, and engaging literature to motivate readers while enhancing the curriculum. All students in the participating classrooms will have access to e-book readers on a cart. The E-Book Readers Excel project will provide flexibility for students working in guided reading and Response to Intervention (RtI) groups. The primary goals of this project are increasing exposure to technology and literature while increasing comprehension and motivation to read. E-book readers represent the new wave of technology allowing students to develop 21st century skills.



Weekly News: A Newscast Designed for Students, by Students

Author: Brendon Schwirtz

School: Lakeview Elementary School

This student-generated, teacher-supported newscast will expose students to emerging technologies and develop their communication and presentation skills. Students will use Flip cameras to capture video, desktop computers to upload and store files, and editing software to revise collected video storage. Separate teams will be formed (interview, script-writer, camera operator, video-editor) to create, edit, and produce specific news stories. All news teams will meet during the week to develop the finished newscast, which will be made available via our school website.

Better Than 1,000 Worksheets

Author: Beth Overstad

School: Noble Elementary School

Anyone who has ever watched children, had children of their own, or been a child knows how they gravitate to play. Researchers have repeatedly found that children learn best through play. We would like to capitalize on that natural state of childhood and give students opportunities to practice math skills through games rather than worksheets. If you have any doubts, ask the next child you meet, "Would you rather learn by doing a math worksheet or playing a game?" Learning can be fun.



Book Buddies

Author: Amy Wilsman

School: Robbinsdale Middle School and Lakeview Elementary

Book Buddies is an inter-school literacy project designed to increase motivation by emphasizing the social and collaborative aspects of reading and writing.

Book Buddies consists of four, hands-on learning strands:

- Seventh graders spend 30 minutes each month reading to their second grade partners.
- Students write weekly letters to their partners incorporating second grade vocabulary words.
- Seventh graders dramatize four books for the second graders during an end-of-the-year performance at the middle school.
- Second graders receive copies of one of the four, dramatized books to take home and share with their siblings and families.



Working Towards Independence

Author: Lori Kangas

School: Cooper High School and Armstrong High School

Working Towards Independence is a community-based work-site program that allows students, with special needs, the opportunity to work in the community on a volunteer or unpaid internship basis and receive a small stipend for the work that they do. Stipends will be paid on a quarterly basis and are based on several factors related to their work skills, such as attendance and the following attendance procedures. Students will be assessed weekly, have opportunities to improve and gain valuable experience in the community.



Document Cameras for the Art Department

Author: Erin Settergren

School: Plymouth Middle School

Many students learn best visually. With that in mind, we often instruct through demonstration in the art room. Because of class sizes and limited demonstration space many students just can't see what the teacher is trying to demonstrate. We believe that installing two document cameras into the art rooms will solve this problem. Document cameras can display any object placed under it in real time. We will use these cameras to show teacher led demonstration, display outstanding student work immediately, and allow students to present their work to their peers in the classroom.

Sensory Solutions

Author: Greg Sicheneder

School: Sonnesyn Elementary School

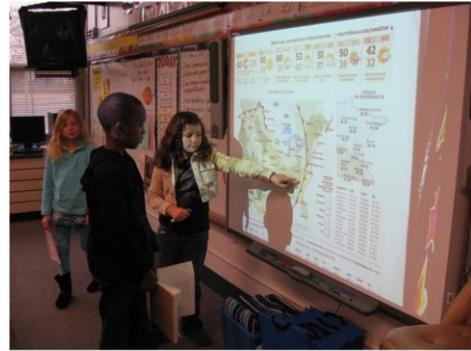
Our project used a hands-on approach of integrating sensory equipment throughout the day to help students focus and learn. With this grant, students whose learning is being impacted by sensory based needs would have direct access to sensory equipment such as visual timers, sound-reducing headphones, cushions to sit on and fidgets. The goal of this program is to help students meet their sensory needs so that they can focus and concentrate in class. This will increase the amount of time they spend on-task learning, decrease the number of problematic behaviors that may occur, and consequently increase academic skills.



Lens on Learning

Author: Rachel Schwandt
School: Noble Elementary

Imagine 25 students being able to see at the same time...the seed coast on the plant as it emerges through the dirt; not only see it, but see it up so close that every detail is visible to all learners simultaneously. As more and more is expected of math and science students across the state of Minnesota, teachers want to use tools that will develop new strategies to help students more toward achievement in math and science. We feel a document camera could be a useful tool to help us with that goal.



iPad=iCan

Author: Julie Johnson
School: Meadow Lake Elementary

We are seeking an iPad as both a communication device and as a tool for our special education students to access and expand their learning in a multitude of areas. We believe this could become the voice for our three students who are virtually non-verbal and open a door to learning more for all eight students. The iPad we believe can go far to bridge the learning gap and is easily carried through to all school environments.



Asociacion de Padres

Author: Betty Tapias-Heinrich
School: Welcome and Resource Center at Winnetka Learning Center

Native Spanish-speaking parents have expressed a desire during meets held this year for their community to continue to work together in an Asociacion de Padres (Parent Association) to help their children be more successful in school. In order to continue this initiative, culturally appropriate meetings that include dinner and childcare are needed to remove barriers. We will assist in this process to improve parent communication and understanding between parents, the school district, and the community by helping parent leaders in the brainstorming, planning, and implementation to form and lead parent meetings.

