

Awarding \$25K for Teachers' Innovative Ideas

Helping Children Overcome Many Challenges

We know not all kids learn the same way, but education budgets don't usually include a line item for innovation.

That's where Northwest Regional Education Service District's Foundation comes in. The nonprofit distributes about \$25,000 every year to educators in northwest Oregon. The funding gives educators a chance to test out ideas, equipment, supplies and curricula with their students. If the project works, that class or concept will grow and become part of the yearly budget.

That's been the case with a therapeutic learning garden at Levi Anderson Learning Center. What began as a \$2,500 grant about 10 years ago has become a mainstay for students at the social emotional learning school located on the St. Mary's Home for Boys campus in Beaverton.

The foundation recently announced this year's winners -- they include 19 educators and therapists who work in Beaverton, Gaston, Hillsboro, Knappa, Seaside, Sherwood, St. Helens, Tigard, Tillamook and Tualatin. The funding totals just over \$25,000, and the projects range from \$260 to \$2,500.

The majority of the projects will help students who are experiencing developmental, physical, behavioral and/or mental health challenges. Other projects support language development.



The NWRES D Foundation awarded a \$2,500 grant to NWRES D's blind and visually impaired program for an end-of-year carnival and community celebration. Children and families like the one pictured above participated in a day of fun, games and connection.

This year's grant projects include a weekly cooking class that blends nutrition, culture and food exploration for middle and high schoolers. Books, graphic novels and reading/language resources for students learning english and attending dual-immersion schools. Video camera, laptop, video editing software and accessories for a media class. Low-tech supplies such as piping, velcro and moldable plastic to make art accessible to children who use walkers or wheelchairs or who have trouble gripping art supplies. An indoor play structure for a preschool in Tillamook County. A Sensory equipment such as compression vests and weighted shoulder/lap pads for

preschoolers who have autism and other sensory challenges. Uniforms and sports equipment for a unified sports team that brings together athletes with disabilities and typically developing peers and therapeutic swings for specialists to use with young children and their families

Benjamin Spofford, a special education teacher at Levi Anderson, received a grant for a media production class. The school is located on the St. Mary's Home for Boys campus in Beaverton and provides specialized mental and behavioral support to sixth through twelfth graders.

With the funding, he'll purchase a video camera, laptop and video editing

software for the class. Students will learn about storytelling within the context of their own lives. They will create videos about school and sporting events, interview friends and teachers and highlight music and comedy performances. In addition to the technical skills they gain, they'll also think about how stories are told and by whom.

In his application, Benjamin wrote: "We feel that it is essential now more than any time in the past to teach media literacy and media ethics. We want students to have media production skills but also the ability to gauge the reliability of media and how to make ethical decisions so that the purpose of their media is clear and transparent to viewers."

"Every year we are delighted to see such energy, passion and creativity coming from our applicants. All of the proposals are designed to provide new experiences that adapt ways children can participate in their learning and education," says Karen Foley, foundation president. "It is our foundation mission in action."

Karen has served on the grant selection committee for many years and says the committee always takes such care in deliberating how to spend the dollars raised for these grant projects.

See below for a description of the grant, name of the recipient and their school district. Sign up for updates from the NWRES D Foundation to get notified about the next opportunity to apply for a grant at nwresd.org/foundation. The foundation typically accepts applications in the fall and awards grants in the winter.



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