

PELHAM EDUCATION FOUNDATION AWARDS TEACHER GRANTS

Jeanne Radvany, President of the Pelham Education Foundation, has announced that the Foundation recently awarded seven mini-grants, totaling over \$15,000, to district teachers. “We are very pleased to be able to support the school district and reward teacher creativity in this way,” said Mrs. Radvany. “At a time when school districts must deal with extraordinary financial constraints, the role of a local education foundation becomes even more critical to maintaining a high quality of education for our children.”

Teacher-initiated mini-grants help to carry out the mission of the Pelham Education Foundation, which is to enhance the quality of public education in Pelham with the help of educators, citizens, parents, students, alumni, businesses and foundations. The Foundation funds educational programs that are outside of the annual school budget and awards grants for projects that strengthen and enrich the curriculum by helping to develop and promote innovative programs, support additional faculty training and resources, or provide funding for special school facilities and equipment.

This fall the Foundation considered 14 applications for mini-grants. “The total amount requested was over \$53,000, far in excess of our budget for fall mini-grants,” said Cathy Draper, chair of the Foundation’s project development committee. “While we could not fully support every worthy project, we were able to support a number of innovative projects within our funding priority areas that will have lasting impact on large numbers of Pelham students.”

Several of the grants reflect the emphasis of both the school district and the Foundation on the acquisition of technology necessary to support 21st century teaching and learning. Siwanoy third grade teacher Michele O’Neil and Prospect Hill fourth grade teacher Catherine Zweig will work with Assistant Director of Technology Robert Roelle to pilot the Senteo Interactive Response System. This hand held remote response system allows students to answer questions posed by the teacher anonymously via the SMART Board. Teachers are then able to quickly assess student understanding, and adjust instruction accordingly, during class time. The \$3,998 grant will permit the purchase of two class sets of the devices.

At the secondary level, the Foundation awarded High School health teacher Kimberly Lundy and physical education teacher Alyson Lamonte a \$1,700 grant for DINE Healthy 6 software licenses and instructional materials. The software will permit students to record and analyze food choices as well as sports and leisure activities in order to understand the importance of energy balance to health and fitness.

Several approved projects support the arts, another priority funding area for the Foundation. High School English teacher Anthony Rivellini and history teacher Timothy Pitrulle were awarded a \$1,400 grant for two artist in residency experiences. The residencies will combine visual arts with core curriculum topics in language arts and social studies for students in the Bridge Academy, an alternative school class within the High School. The project is a collaborative grant expected to benefit from additional funding and substantial logistical support from the Pelham Art Center and the Westchester Arts Council.

In the area of performing arts, the Foundation granted to High School orchestra teacher Michele Zanky \$2,500 for additions to the school’s library of orchestra music. Ms. Zanky will be able to update the collection and purchase music with appropriate arrangements and parts.

Two approved projects support the district's science curriculum. The Hutchinson kindergarten team of Christina Altero, Nicole Hattar, Loretta Illustrato and Eleni Liapis will receive \$4,883 for their "Kinder 'Gardens': Butterflies, Ladybugs, and Insects, Oh My!" grant. The funds will be used to purchase instructional materials ranging from themed literature and hands-on manipulatives to puzzles and actual bugs. Some of the observation, experimentation and other activities will take place in Hutchinson's "Nature's Classroom", an outdoor education area created with the support of a previous Foundation gift.

At the other end of the continuum, some of the district's most advanced science students will benefit from a mini-grant awarded to High School science research teachers Irene Gruber and Steven Beltecas. Individual students who participate in major science competitions, such as the Intel Science Talent Search and the Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology, will be able to draw from a \$750 pool of funds to help pay for printing of the large posters that they must create to display the results of their research.

Christine Burton, the district's new Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, participated in the grant selection process as a member of the Foundation's project development committee. "I was impressed with the student-centered creativity of the teachers' applications on the one hand, and the thoughtful process and criteria of the Foundation on the other," she commented. "For me it has been a privilege to be an integral part of this effort to support teachers' efforts to expand resources for their students."