

PELHAM EDUCATION FOUNDATION AWARDS TEACHER GRANTS

Laura Sawyer, President of the Pelham Education Foundation, has announced that the Foundation recently awarded eight mini-grants, totaling over \$19,000, to district staff members. “We were very pleased with the quality and quantity of grant requests, and hope that we will see similar numbers of teachers applying for equally exciting projects during our spring mini-grant cycle,” said Dr. Sawyer. “Successful grants will go to teachers at elementary, middle and high school levels and reflect a number of disciplines, ranging from core curriculum to technology to the arts.”

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. It 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 received 19 applications for mini-grants. “The total amount requested was over \$62,000, far in excess of our budget for fall mini-grants,” said Kathy Shea, chair of the Foundation’s project development committee. “While we could not support every worthy project, we were able to provide funds for a number of innovative projects that will have lasting impact on large numbers of Pelham students. In addition, we were fortunate that Deputy Superintendent Dennis Lauro was a member of our committee. In a number of instances Dr. Lauro was able to identify alternative sources of funding, ranging from the district budget to other grants to a private contribution, for projects that we were not able to fund.”

At the Hutchinson School, the Foundation and the school’s PTA will jointly fund the “Dancing Classrooms” project proposed by teachers Maureen Morrissey, Jackie Soccodato, Paul Bloom and Lisa Buzin. The project will teach social dance to fifth grade students using a curriculum designed to increase social skills and self-esteem. At Colonial School, the Foundation and the PTA will fund a project that will transform the little-used outdoor courtyard into an outdoor classroom. Fifth grade students will work with art teacher Nancy Baird and a visiting artist to create mosaic images of habitats studied in the science curriculum.

At the middle school, seventh-grade technology classes will be enhanced by the purchase of a raceway requested by teachers Patricia Satalich and Alan Woliner. All students design and build cars powered by carbon dioxide cartridges; with the new raceway, they will be able to calculate the acceleration and velocity of their cars. Also in the middle school, teachers Christina Levi and Rebecca Schwarz were awarded grants in the visual arts. All seventh grade students will have the opportunity to meet with two visiting artists who will present their work and discuss it with students. Eighth grade students will participate in a series of “Careers in Art Workshops” with visiting artists. Building on the success of a small after-school program funded by the PTA, this program will provide students an opportunity to create an art project that mirrors the work of a professional artist and learn about career options in the arts.

At the high school level, two successful grants will help to infuse technology into the curriculum. Art teacher Gail Orfei was awarded funds for the purchase of an additional computer for use in her yearbook class. The computer will facilitate the production by students of the high school's award-winning yearbook. Social studies department chair Maria Thompson will receive funds for podcasting (the use of a network to deliver audio files on demand). The new technology will provide a more effective way both for teachers to deliver curriculum to students and for students to demonstrate and share their own learning.

The Foundation also awarded a grant to the school district's public information officer, Angela Iadavaia-Cox. Ms. Iadavaia-Cox will work with a consultant to expand, reorganize and upgrade the district web site and the six school web sites. Following completion of the project, district personnel will be able to manage and update the sites on a daily basis, making them better tools for communication among staff, students and community.