



NEWS

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District 64 Foundation Awards \$42,014 in Education Grants for 2008-09

The Elementary Learning Foundation (ELF) of Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 announced the recipients of education grants for the coming school year at the May 27 Board of Education meeting. In all, 15 projects were selected to share \$42,014 of funding, ranging from \$300 for a reading partner program to a high of \$11,000 for a weather tracking station, according to ELF Trustee Kendra Griffin, chairman of the grants committee.

"Although ELF would like to fund each and every grant request we received this spring, we believe these innovative projects will have the biggest impact on District 64 students," Ms. Griffin noted. Proceeds of a successful "Oceans 64" casino night fund-raiser in January helped finance the current grant cycle, added ELF Chairman Mike Giblin.

The exciting, new projects enhance a wide cross-section of the District 64 educational program. Elementary students will learn about blood flow and the functioning of the human heart through a unique "Heart Adventure" obstacle course, while middle school students will learn CPR with self-directed training kits. Math and logic skills will be reinforced for intermediate grade students in a District-wide "Math Mania" event, while young artists will be featured at a new community exhibit at a local restaurant. A Food Network-style cooking program by chef Dave Esau will help Field School students make better nutritional choices. The District's environmental "green" initiative will get a boost at Lincoln Middle School with a student-run vermin-composting system that uses worms and other decomposer organisms to process organic waste from students' lunches.

To help boost literacy, Roosevelt students will use the "Fluency Farm" interactive tool to boost their reading skills, while Jefferson students will visit a real "Story Bus" to make literature come alive through hands-on experiences. Students at Washington and Franklin schools will monitor their learning through a new "Study Island" computer diagnostic program. Emerson students will partner with community "book buddies" to read a book simultaneously and journal via e-mail.

Roosevelt and Field schools won grants for document cameras, which are more advanced versions of overhead projectors that allow teachers to share learning examples immediately with their classrooms. Washington School also received funding for students to produce digital photo books. Finally, all elementary school teachers will have the opportunity to attend an "On the Write Track" conference to learn new techniques to improve student writing skills. "These grants represent innovative projects that allow teachers to try creative approaches, and we are truly thankful to ELF for providing these experiences and materials that will let us continue teaching the whole child," according to District 64 Superintendent Sally Pryor.

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