

## Excellence Grants

Thanks to its many generous donors, the CFCS Foundation has been able to offer Excellence Grants for projects that will improve the educational experiences of students, strengthen the relationships between school, families and the community and provide experiences above and beyond typical classroom activities.

Since 2008, these grants have been used to improve and enhance the educational experiences of students in the Cedar Falls Community Schools. Grant applications are reviewed, and recipients are selected, based on scoring by a review committee, which includes retired elementary and secondary teachers and elementary and secondary administrators.

### 2016-2017 Excellence Grants Awarded

Eight Excellence Grants were awarded for the 2016-2017 school year. The Foundation thanks all the applicants and congratulates the recipients on the quality of the proposals. Grants of \$100 to \$1,000 were given to these projects:

#### **Utilizing the technology of digital microscopes to engage students with special needs**

This Science Excellence Grant was made possible with a gift from the Tom Brooks Memorial Grant Fund, established by Linda Brooks in her husband's memory.

Peet Junior High Science: Renae Beneke and Andy Beland

We will purchase 6 digital microscopes with LCD monitors to allow students with special needs to witness the world of cells and microorganisms. It is sometimes difficult for any student to look into the eyepiece of a microscope and to focus on the tiny specimen on the slide. For students with vision impairments, fine motor skill challenges, and other disabilities, using a microscope proves very difficult. Allowing students to see the specimen on an LCD screen will alleviate the stress of looking through an eyepiece. The microscopes will also enable students to take a snapshot of their specimen and put it directly into a lab report.

#### **Building a Video Learning Community in CFHS World Languages with Flipgrid**

High School world languages: Eric Rosburg, Victor Ochoa, Simone Sunblad, Christine Gruhn, Brittan Engels, Patricia Black, Gunda Brost, Monica Jarchow, Elaina Loyd, Katie Wencil, Sara Blanco

Flipgrid is a web-based platform designed to incorporate face-to-face interaction using the Chromebook web-camera to post short video responses to teacher or peer prompts. In each creation, students consider how they are perceived, the content of what they have shared, and are given opportunities to make changes in response to feedback. Through this process, students become stronger communicators in a collaborative digital learning environment. We believe student learning will be maximized by combining our current one-to-one infrastructure with an application designed to promote video communication in the world languages classroom.

### **Elementary Art Makerspace Project**

All K-6 art programs: Hanna Thuesen, Lysie Maynard, Lauren Nolte, Natalie Hamil, Allyce Trusheim

The Elementary Makerspace project develops a collection of hands-on tools and electronic devices for use with all elementary grade levels. The grant funds will purchase durable, non-consumable materials for use within all 6 elementary buildings (7 in the future). The requested tools will build on resources already present in the buildings within the art rooms and 4th grade Makerspace kits.

### **Design for the Future, Where Creativity Meets Science 3\_D Design Portable Art Lab**

High School art: Lisa Klenske

Design for the Future is a project that will bring state of the art technology to yet another area of the Cedar Falls High School Art program, providing our students with even more essential 21st Century Art experiences and skills. The students of the Art Department will be provided with a portable 3-D Design lab, along with additional specialized 3-D design equipment. The choice of a portable lab is due to space issues and to fully serve the needs of both the traditional hands-on and technology-oriented Art students within the existing Art rooms.

### **Robotics Takes Over Fourth with Cubelets Robot Blocks**

Orchard Hill Elementary STEM/STEAM: Angie Webb, Joan Hewett, Karen Shook, Michelle Mathias, Luke Wagner

In coordination with our Technology Coach, this set of Cubelets Robot Blocks will be used with all fourth grade students at Orchard Hill. The Technology Coach has been trained on how to use this program and will help us launch it for all students. This opportunity will allow students to share their projects with community members and families. It will allow us to bring in volunteers and guests from the community to serve as mentors and experts in the science field.

### **Bal-A-Vis-X for Southdale Elementary Music**

Southdale Elementary: Kendra Wohlert

Bal-A-Vis-X is a series of some 300 exercises, most of which are done with sand-filled bags and/or racquetballs, often while standing on a Bal-A-Vis-X balance board. Requiring multiple thousands of mid-line crossings in three dimensions, these exercises are steadily rhythmic, with a pronounced auditory foundation, executed at a pace that naturally results from proper physical techniques. Bal-A-Vis-X enables the whole mind-body system to experience the symmetrical flow of a pendulum.

Created by Bill Hubert, Bal-A-Vis-X has been shown to help students of all abilities and ages to increase confidence, coordination and focus. In group (school) settings the program demands cooperation, promotes self-challenge, and fosters peer teaching. Research is showing that students who engage in Bal-A-Vis-X have shown improved scores in reading, writing, math, spelling, keyboarding skills, among other areas of study. Research also shows that it is an effective tool for students with ADHD.

## **Holmes Outdoor Club Initiative**

Holmes Junior High: Robert Welter

Holmes students will have a chance to explore the outdoors as part of an outdoors club. We will be learning about bird, tree, wildflower, insect and mushroom identification during weekly Tiger Time meetings. Students will also learn to use binoculars and how to read a field guide. Regular weekend field trips will provide students a genuine out-of-doors experience to learn new and apply previously learned information. A volunteer waterfowl census project may be conducted in association with the Iowa DNR.

## **Boxlight Labdisc Portable STEM Lab**

Hansen Elementary Science: Jared Pirkl

Boxlight STEM solutions open the door to inquiry-based learning in a variety of science fields, including biology, chemistry, physics, environmental science, and geography. With the portable science lab, you can take the science classroom anywhere. Labdisc Portable STEM lab is an all-in-one, complete lab in the palm of your hand, with up to 15 wireless sensors built into a single compact device - revolutionizing science in terms of convenience, cost, and ease of use.

## **2015-2016 Excellence Grants Awarded**

Six Excellence Grants were awarded for the 2015-2016 school year.

## **Sphero Robots for STEM Skills**

Peet math, science and technology: Eric Rosburg, Andy Beland, Stephanie Pickett

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) related skills are becoming increasingly important in today's global economy. Pairing these skills with fun and creativity ensures a rich learning experience for junior high students. Sphero robots are a great way for young students to learn a range of coding skills in a variety of programming languages.

## **Art Is All Around**

Hansen K-6 art: Allyce Trusheim

By creating a technology center in the Kindergarten - 6 elementary art room by adding two iPad Minis, students could explore the art of photography and create their own works of art using photography as their medium. Students would explore various age appropriate drawing apps to create digital works of art and photograph their own artwork and upload it to Artsonia (an online art gallery, specifically dedicated to children's art).

## **Engaging Science with Data**

Peet science: Jan Mord, Jennifer Schultz, Renee Beneke, Hilary Iehl, Andy Beland, Amelia Buskohl

The Vernier probe-ware is a sensor based platform that will enable science students to problem solve as they collect precision data for analysis. It is set up so that the purchased probes, sensor interface boxes, via the Logger Lite data collection and analysis software, is compliant with our students' Chromebook laptops. The sensor based equipment allows our students to go further in creative problem solving and in

critical thinking activities as they apply scientific principles. This type of sensor based probe ware will help science students and teachers adhere to the upcoming new national standards that focus on applied science and engineering practices. The different science related labs and activities that can stem from this type of platform can be used in Life Science, Earth Science, Physics, and Chemistry

### **Programming with Dash Robots**

Southdale/Orchard Hill STEM/STEAM: Lisa Freese

Dash Robots will be used with students ranging from first to fourth grade, teaching computer programming that incorporate problem solving, trial and error, critical thinking skills, and collaboration. First graders will learn how to give the robot personality, intelligence, and how to make the robot move and interact with objects. Students at the second grade level will be introduced to fundamental programming and computer concepts using the free computer app called "Blocky." Third and fourth graders will be introduced to command sequences and control flow, as well as using loops in their programming with the help of the app called "Xylo." The final goal will enable the students to program and compose their own musical masterpiece. Incorporating "Robot Olympics" will allow different grade levels to work together. Fourth and/or fifth graders would generate ideas and create stations for younger students to interact with the robots. The older students would act as mentors for the younger students as they work through the tasks together.

### **Readers Are Leaders**

Orchard Hill reading: Jessie Switzer and Kelly Valiev

The grant will provide a variety of quality, engaging, and rich texts for students in all grade levels to read independently and with teacher support during reader's workshop and at home. The books will be available to teachers and students in the building wide book room. This supports Orchard Hill's goal for all students to read a combined total of at least 1,000,000 minutes by the end of the school year. Research tells us that increasing independent reading time at home and at school positively impacts reading achievement.

### **Reading Club**

Orchard Hill reading: Amy Kohlhass

This grant will provide students with a purposeful start to their morning, build students' love of independent reading, and provide out of classroom book access to students. When students arrive in the morning they will be able to go to this location and read high interest books in a comfortable environment. During this time students will have access to a variety of high interest books along with comfortable seating and areas to read. By providing this "Reading Club" environment students will be able to take initiative on working toward being better readers and thinkers.

### **2011-2012 Excellence Grants Awarded**

This year's grants were targeted toward PLC activities and the characteristics of effective instruction. The grants of \$100 to \$1,000 were awarded to:

Southdale fourth grade for two iPads; Jed Batterson, Paula Decker and Kelli Henrichs

North Cedar third grade for eight Kindle Touch Readers; Jen McCartan

High School art department for equipment to create art portfolios; Lisa Klenske

North Cedar/Orchard Hill TAG for conference for differentiated instruction; Linda Walther

Holmes science department for Mimio Vote Assessment System; Maria Hoekstra, Lisa Johnson, Amanda Kuiken

### **2010-2011 Excellence Grants Awarded**

Grants of \$100 to \$1,000 were given to these projects:

Cedar Falls High School Library/Media for 'Book Discussion Kits', Kim Traw

Cedar Falls High School Social Studies for 'Monopoly and Stratification', Chad VanCleve

North Cedar third grade for "Snapshots in Learning", Jennifer McCartan

North Cedar fourth grade for 'Technology for Diverse Needs', Melanie Trees

Peet Junior High seventh grade English for 'Cutting Edge English', Cory Cantrall

### **2009-2010 Excellence Grant Projects**

Grants of \$1000 each were given to these projects:

"Learners in Action", North Cedar Elementary, Jen McCartan, Melanie Trees

"Lego Serious Play Training", North Cedar Elementary, Kim Abbas, Sherri Larson, Linda Walther

"Lego Serious Play Kits", North Cedar Elementary, Ben Olsen, Jodi Johnson

### **2008-2009 Excellence Grant Projects**

Grants of \$500 each were given to these projects:

"Bringing Technology into the Classroom", Cedar Heights Elementary second grade, Sara Allen, Greg Hankins, Christy Peterson

"Excellence with Ipods", special education educators Bridget Bakula, Kris Brimm, Jennifer Juhl, Katie Walsworth, Tammy Frahm

"Mini Laptops for Many Students", Peet Jr. High seventh grade, Sue Dufel, Larry Bockes

"Parents as Teachers", Hansen Elementary library, media for Jan Weber