

RIPON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

News Release
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Ripon Education Foundation Funds Three Innovative Teaching Grants

The Ripon Education Foundation has announced nine recipients of its 2015-2016 Innovative Teaching Grants totaling \$10,391. Since 2002, the Foundation has awarded 59 grants to support innovative teaching activities. The grants are funded by tax-deductible donations to the Education Foundation. Generous donations enabled the foundation to award nine grants this fall.

Receiving the nine Innovative Teaching Grants were: Jeanne Hall, 6th grade teacher at Ripon Middle School; Jennifer Reilly and Ryan Zak, 6th and 7th grade teachers; Jill Puhlmann-Becker, literacy coach, and Christine Damm, Curriculum Director; Janet Ernst, 5th grade teacher; Jessi Johnson and Gretchen Geiger, 3rd grade teachers; Brenda Rapp and Lori Hron, 4th grade teachers; Jessica Hopp, 3rd grade teacher; Keycia Dahlvig, 1st grade teacher.

Hall's proposal received \$500 to support a sixth-grade hands-on and multicultural presentation called "Culture Rhymes and Tunes Live Here." This presentation uses music, dance and story to build an understanding of diversity, including a respect and tolerance for other cultures. Hall also received \$300 for a sixth-grade geography venture called "Wisconsin and Away – It All Starts at Home." This project is a joint venture with Briony Storz, the district Food Service Director to take foods with Wisconsin connections/roots and trace them through the five themes of geography including location, place, human-environment interaction, movement, and region. Hall noted, "I believe that an activity like this would have lasting impressions on the students in various ways. It would make them much more aware of the resources right here in our state as well as the interdependence we have with others and other places in our world."

Reilly and Zak submitted a \$1,836 proposal to fund self-paced learning and real-time interventions and enrichment using a school-wide version of Front-Row. Front-Row provides inquiry-based lessons that give students real-world projects to develop their understanding of the importance of different math concepts and how they are applicable. The goal according to Reilly is "to increase confidence and promote growth in ALL students, regardless of their ability. All topics and lessons are linked to current math and reading standards."

Puhlmann-Becker and Damm's proposal requested \$2,500 to send five educators to Columbia University in New York City to attend the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project professional development. Lucy Calkins, the director of the Reading and Writing Project, is the lead author of the recent materials that were adopted in the Ripon Area School District to

support reading and writing instruction Kindergarten through 5th Grade. Puhlmann-Becker shared “As district literacy coach, I had the opportunity to attend the institute last summer. The immense experience, with teachers from all over the United States and 30 different countries, was amazing and empowering. We have many extremely talented teachers in Ripon: the Teacher’s College Reading and Writing project will further propel them towards excellence in teaching literacy.”

Ernst’s proposal received \$1,134 to support a Tower Garden Challenge. In the Tower Garden Challenge, students will design and conduct a scientific experiment that compares two growing methods: vertical aeroponic growing system using the Tower Garden and traditional horizontal gardening. The Next Generation Science Standards include having students support an argument that plants get the materials they need for growth chiefly from air and water. Ernst explains, “the tower garden system, an aeroponic system, in which nutrient-rich solution is carried by moisture in the air to plant roots, would be an excellent way to demonstrate this understanding for students.”

Four additional grant requests from Jessi Johnson and Gretchen Geiger for \$830; Brenda Rapp and Lori Hron for \$2,000; Keycia Dahlvig for \$721; and Jessica Hopp for \$570 involved flexible seating to accommodate the varying learning needs and preferences of students. Hokki Stools are ergonomic stools which help active students stay focused and comfortable during seat work. The stools will help strengthen the students’ core and increase body awareness by engaging muscles in the lower half of the body which will help the students sit and stand straighter. The movement improves blood flow and oxygen to the brain, improving mental activity. The stools will have many positive benefits in the classroom and will be used every day to create an engaging, active learning environment. Dahlvig shared, “I have seen more and more students needing to move when they are required to sit still in the classroom. The Hokki stools would provide this needed movement and be less distracting to others around them.” Hopp noted the flexible seating options are “an outlet for restlessness and they promote good posture.”

The Ripon Education Foundation is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation founded in 1997 whose mission is to expand educational opportunities for Ripon K-12 students. Since 2002, the Ripon Education Foundation has awarded 59 Innovative Teaching Grants totaling \$36,362. Since its founding, the Foundation has awarded over \$200,300 in grants supporting college scholarships, innovative teaching and learning, and elementary tutoring. The Foundation also assists with RHS Reunions and acts as fiscal agent for Ripon's Art Presenter and High Mileage Vehicle Competition programs. Funding for these grants comes from generous Ripon area donors.

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