

## Grant funding helps 3 schools test new sound technology

Grants from the Education Foundation are helping Sioux Falls Public Schools test a new audio and recording system in classrooms at three schools.

Teachers at Oscar Howe Elementary, Axtell Park Middle School and Washington High School were awarded grants to acquire Juno sound equipment from FrontRow, a California-based company that specializes in audio technology for schools.

The grants were among 40 awarded this school year by the Education Foundation for innovative teaching projects. The total of the grants is \$38,638, a record high. This is the sixth year of the grant program.

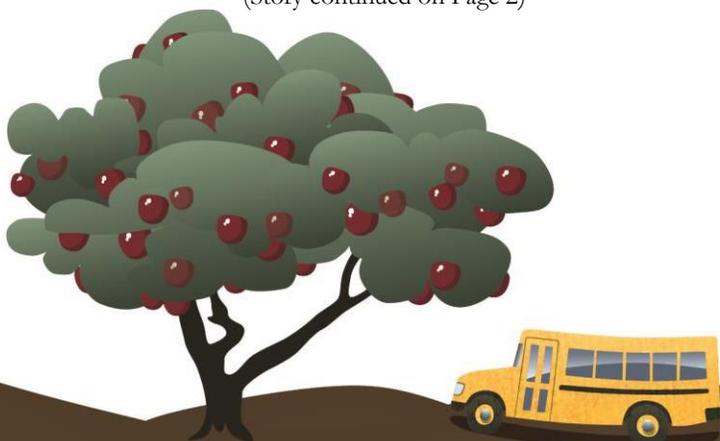
Doug Erickson, who chairs the Education Foundation's Grants Committee, says that in selecting recipients panel members look for creative ideas for improving education.

"It's been wonderful to go through these every year and see the ideas that people are coming up with in applications," Erickson says.

Each Juno systems includes a speaker-and-receiver tower that stands about 3 feet high, a pendant microphone for the teacher to wear and a pass-around microphone for the students to use.

Teachers can use the system to amplify their voices to overcome noise, such as rattling heating vents. Or they can record lessons as an electronic files for students and their parents to access later for review. In addition to the teacher's voice, the file will include information presented on the room's smart board.

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### Amy Scott-Stoltz elected chair

Amy Scott-Stoltz has been elected chair of the Board of the Education Foundation for 2014. Scott-Stoltz, a financial adviser with Raymond James, takes over for David Heflin, the former chair.

Board members elected Diane Dietsch to be vice chair. Cathy Regas was elected secretary, and Justin Reilly was re-elected treasurer.

In addition, two new members have joined the Board: Teresa Jackson, a partner and account executive at HenkinShultz Communication Arts; and Jamie Simko, an attorney with Cadwell Sanford Deibert and Garry LLP. The board is comprised of 18 members who represent the community, parents and schools.

### Check out Foundation website

The Education Foundation's website is updated with fresh information on a regular basis. Check the site out at [www.sfeducationfoundation.org](http://www.sfeducationfoundation.org).

The recently improved and relaunched website includes news and useful information about Education Foundation programs, board members and the Sioux Falls School District. It also includes information for people who would like to make donations or would like to volunteer.

The website was updated recently with assistance from Blend Interactive.

## Teachers excited about putting new audio equipment to use

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Superintendent Pam Homan saw the Juno system demonstrated at a conference. As a result, Paul Hickey, vice president of sales for FrontRow, came to Sioux Falls and demonstrated the equipment.

Sharon Schueler, director of curriculum, instruction and staff development for the district, suggested that teachers pursue the grants to test the equipment. She found teachers at each school level to apply for grants for the pilot program.

“What really sold me on the technology is the teacher can record her lesson. Students who have difficulty with a concept can access that file to listen to the presentation again. Or students who were absent can access that file,” Schueler says. “We’re excited about the opportunity to integrate this type of technology in the classroom to enhance student learning.”

The teachers who have received grants for approximately \$1,300 each for Juno systems are:

- Beth Graham, a fifth-grade teacher at Oscar Howe.
- Marissa Rippentrop, a sixth-grade teacher at Axtell Park Middle School.
- Laura Mehlbrech and Adam Smith, teachers at Washington High School.

The systems arrived recently and are beginning to be used.

“The kids are excited. They’re excited about the student mic,” Rippentrop says. “They’re excited about the possibilities of recording their voices and researching presentations.”

Rippentrop also can use the system to overcome constant hum of the heating system in her classroom.



Beth Graham is using the Juno system at Oscar Howe.

“With clearer communication, children simply perform better academically,” according to FrontRow.

Graham suspects the system will be particularly helpful in teaching math to fifth-graders. Parents will be able to download a lesson, if necessary, to help their child understand a concept.



Marissa Rippentrop demonstrates the Juno system’s microphones at Axtell Park. The mobile speaker tower is beside her.

Graham also looks forward to recording lessons for students who miss class. “The capability is amazing,” she says. “It will be great when we get up and going.”

Hickey says FrontRow has been selling audio systems since 1991. Initially, units were geared toward helping students with hearing difficulties. But it was discovered that students without hearing problems benefitted from the enhanced clarity of amplified voices, too.

Typically, students miss about 25 percent of what they hear, and they try to fill in the gaps with their limited base of experience, Hickey says.

“This is exciting technology. I’m excited to see what they do with it (in Sioux Falls),” he says.



## Foundation helps 65 new teachers buy classroom supplies

Sixty-five first-year teachers in the Sioux Falls School District got special financial help this school year from the Education Foundation.

Every new teacher received \$100 in funding to help buy classroom supplies not provided by the district.

New teachers typically spend several hundred dollars to supplement the basic supplies, such as paper and textbooks, that the district provides, says Doug Erickson, who chairs the Education Foundation's Grant Committee.

"A hundred dollars is a hundred dollars. Sometimes it doesn't go very far," says Erickson, a retired principal. "But I know these new teachers appreciate the funds."

Recipients do, indeed, appreciate the help.

Chelsea Dybsetter, a special education teacher at Roosevelt and Washington high schools, says that being a new teacher at two schools meant that she had to buy twice as many organizational supplies. She used her grant allowance to buy supplies such as crates, baskets and binders.

"I'm very grateful for this particular grant program. It helped with the stress of having to buy material that is necessary to help our students," said Dybsetter, who teaches reading and English classes.

Mitch Dunbar, who teaches language arts at Edison Middle School, used his \$100 grant to buy basic supplies such as posters, pens, pencils, baskets, planners, envelopes, folders and notebooks.

"I was extremely appreciative of this program," Dunbar says. "As a first-year teacher, I was not sure exactly what I would be needing in order to stock my room, and this money gave me the flexibility to go out and get what I thought I would need. I would just like to thank everyone who helped turn this grant into a reality."

Amber McDaniel, who teaches the second grade at Harvey Dunn Elementary, used her allowance to buy supplies such as counters and dice to help her pupils learn mathematics. She also bought writing boards for students to use.

"I think this program is fantastic," she says. "It can be extremely overwhelming to be a teacher. Between all the things I needed to learn, the things I needed to buy, and the planning that goes into getting a classroom up and running, to know I had some extra spending money took a little of the stress away."

## Want to help? Donations to Foundation are needed, welcome

The Sioux Falls Public Schools Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization endorsed by the Sioux Falls School District. Our objective is to help students, teachers and schools.

We operate with our own Board of Directors to enhance educational opportunities and promote student achievement by supporting academic projects and activities not supported by tax dollars.

Tax-deductible gifts to the Education Foundation are needed and welcome. Volunteer help for special projects is welcome, too.

More information about donating or volunteering is available on our website, [www.sfeducationfoundation.org](http://www.sfeducationfoundation.org).

Questions about donations may be directed to the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation, phone (605) 336-7055. Questions about Education Foundation programs may be emailed to [sfeducationfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:sfeducationfoundation@gmail.com).

You also may email [sfeducationeoundation@gmail.com](mailto:sfeducationeoundation@gmail.com) to get your name added or removed from the electronic distribution list for *Update*, our quarterly newsletter.

### Our Mission

The mission of the Sioux Falls Public Schools Education Foundation is to enhance educational opportunities and promote achievement among all students by supporting academic projects and activities not funded by tax dollars.

It is our belief that the good life we share here is a reflection of the quality education our students receive in our local public schools.

The Education Foundation is administered by an advisory board that is comprised of community leaders, parents, School Board members, and current and retired district teachers and administrators from the district.



## Brown brings passion for education and public experience to Board

Vernon Brown's passion for education reflects business and family connections to Sioux Falls Public Schools.

Brown, a member of the Education Foundation's Board of Directors, is married to an English teacher, Tami Brown, and the couple's daughter, Emma, is a fourth-grader in the public system. In addition, his employer, SDN Communications in Sioux Falls, strongly supports local education.

SDN gives the Education Foundation \$6,000 a year, making it one of the organization's three biggest boosters in terms of donations. The other two major boosters are The First National Bank in Sioux Falls and Billion Automotive.

Brown has served on the Education Foundation Board for a year. He was recruited by former Board member Jim Wiederrich, an attorney in Sioux Falls.

"I knew Vernon was dedicated to public service and the education of our children. I also knew he had considerable background in marketing and promotion, and those skills were in great need by the Foundation," Wiederrich says.

"Also, he's incredibly enthusiastic about everything he takes on."

Brown is well known in the community, largely for prior public service.

He served two four-year terms on the Sioux Falls City Council, from 2004 to 2012. He also ran unsuccessfully for mayor in 2006 and in 2010. For now, at least, he has no interest seeking public office again.

"I don't have any plans for elected office right now. Like any good politician, I'd never say never. But I've discovered what it's like to have free time again."

A lot of that free time continues to be consumed by other forms of public service, however.

In addition to the Education Foundation, Brown serves on the boards of the Zoological Society, the Southeast Council of Governments and the South Dakota STARBASE Foundation, which is also an educational advocacy group.

Brown grew up on a farm in the Arlington, S.D. area. He majored in journalism at South Dakota State University and worked as a reporter at KELO-TV from 1990 to 2002 before joining SDN's staff as director of marketing and community relations.



Vernon Brown

With the Education Foundation being a relatively young, Brown looks forward to helping the organization define its long-term mission.

He also would like to find ways to help the overall community reach a higher level of educational attainment.

Educational rates of residents of Sioux Falls are not as high as in some of the community's peer cities, Brown points out.

"How can we change that? How do we keep young, smart people not only in Sioux Falls but in South Dakota, so that we avoid the brain drain?" he asks.

The Education Foundation can help, he says.

One way to raise more money for Education Foundation's school-improvement programs is to increase awareness about the organization and how it is positioned to benefit from estates, he says.

"If anyone is looking for a place where they can make an impact with their estate, the Education Foundation is a great place to do that," he says.

Contributing to the Education Foundation is also a good fit for SDN, which provides broadband connectivity to schools in Sioux Falls and to most other schools in South Dakota.

"We want people to develop technologically so they can be employees of SDN someday," he says.

"On the personal front, having a girl in school and being married to a teacher, we're obviously very passionate about the school system," Brown says.

Amy Scott-Stoltz, chair of the Foundation Board, says Brown has been a good, active member of the Board and its Finance Committee.

"He's been a welcome addition to the Board. He brings lot of community knowledge and fresh ideas for the Board to explore," Scott-Stoltz says.

