

Education Foundation increases grant limit to spur innovation in classrooms

To help stimulate more creativity in classrooms, the Education Foundation has increased the funding limit for Innovation in Education Grants.

The maximum that a teacher or group of teachers may seek for a project has been raised from \$1,500 to \$10,000.

"We want to encourage more innovation," says Nancy Duncan, who chairs the committee that recommended the change.

There was a feeling among committee members that the \$1,500 limit stymied creative possibilities, says Duncan, a retired teacher and administrator.

Twaine Fink, principal at Whittier Middle School, was among the members of the Grants Committee who favored changing the limit.

"We were funding great resources, but the grant is about innovation," Fink says. "\$10,000 should open the avenue for innovation. It was a problem with a limit of \$1,500."



Twaine Fink



Nancy Duncan

Grants were being awarded for tools such as special books, videos and electronic devices, which were positive additions to classrooms. But the Education Foundation Board thought more innovation could be encouraged.

The higher grant limit might encourage results-based projects that involve the cooperation of multiple classes or partnerships in the community, for example, according to committee members. The higher the level of funding sought, the more scrutiny an application is likely to receive.

"It will be interesting to see what develops. It will be different," Fink says.

Last school year, the Education Foundation awarded teachers 42 grants that totaled \$39,858. Approximately \$40,000 in grants are expected to be awarded again for the fall of 2015. The application deadline is Oct. 16.

How the \$40,000 will be divided will depend on the number and quality of applications submitted. A panel comprised of two educators, two community members and Duncan will make recommendations on which grants the Education Foundation should fund.

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Dr. Brian Maher



Dana Dykhouse

Innovation in Education Breakfast to be held Aug. 25

Dr. Brian Maher, Sioux Falls' new superintendent of schools, and Dana Dykhouse, CEO of First PREMIER Bank, will be the featured speakers at the Education Foundation's second annual Innovation in Education Breakfast.

Maher recently took over administrative leadership of the district, and Dykhouse's bank is among the Education Foundation's stronger supporters.

The free breakfast will begin at 7:30 a.m. Aug. 25 at the Minnehaha Country Club in Sioux Falls and last for one hour. It will include a presentation by Sharon Andrews, an Honors Science and Gifted Education teacher at Edison Middle School. Last year, she received an Innovation in Education grant from the Foundation for software that students use to program virtual robots.

"We look forward to this annual event to raise awareness about what we do and thank our donors and teachers," says Amy Scott-Stoltz, who chairs the Foundation Board.

Foundation Board member Vernon Brown chairs the breakfast. Anyone who is interested in getting involved with the Foundation is welcome to attend the event, he says. However, people are asked to RSVP by Aug. 17 by writing SFEducationFoundation@gmail.com or by calling Angie at 605-310-4198.

"It's really a thank-you event for our donors, a congratulations event for grant winners, and an informational event for prospective donors who want to get involved," Brown says.

Harriet Scott Senior Care Management and Consulting in Sioux Falls is sponsoring this year's breakfast.

Help public schools by making a donation

The Education Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization endorsed by the Sioux Falls School District. Its objective is to improve education by assisting teachers and creating opportunities for students.

You can make a difference by donating to the Education Foundation to support academic projects and activities not directly funded by tax dollars. Gifts to the Foundation fund programs that encourage innovative teaching. Grants also are awarded to help first-time teachers buy classroom supplies.

More information about making donations, as well as education news, is available on the Foundation's website, www.sfeducationfoundation.org. Businesses and individuals with questions about donation options also may call the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation at 605-336-7055.

Raffle tickets available

Tickets are available for the 2015 Cash for Classrooms Raffle, which offers two top prizes of \$2,500. The price is \$10 for a single ticket or \$20 for three tickets.

Tickets may be purchased from members of the Education Foundation Board or by contacting the organization by email at sfeducationfoundation@gmail.com.

Winners will be randomly selected during the halftime of each of two Presidents' Bowl football games to be held Sept. 12 at Howard Wood Field. One \$2,500 prize, two \$1,000 prizes and one \$500 prize will be awarded during each game. Ticket-owners will not have to be present to win.

Money raised for the Education Foundation will be used for a grant program designed to fund innovative teaching projects and a program that helps new teachers buy supplies.



S.D. trails neighbors in school funding, but there's hope

South Dakota spends a lower share of the state's personal income on K-12 education than any of its six neighbors.

Data compiled by the South Dakota Budget & Policy Institute indicate that South Dakota spent 2.9 percent of the state's personal income on education in 2013. Wyoming, Montana, Iowa, North Dakota, Nebraska and Minnesota spent between 3.5 and 5.1 percent. The national average was 3.7 percent.

"We have made a decision, as a state, that we don't like paying taxes, and there are consequences to that. The consequences are we don't have as much money as other states have to offer our citizens services," says Joy Smolinsky, executive director of the Budget & Policy Institute, a nonprofit organization that promotes responsible and equitable fiscal policy through research and education.

Local funding covers roughly half the cost of K-12 education in South Dakota. State funding covers roughly 30 percent, and federal programs cover about 20 percent. State funding is where South Dakota has been slipping, Smolinsky says.

Teacher pay is one of the most visible areas affected by education funding. South Dakota ranks at or the near the bottom in most national rankings of teacher pay.

South Dakota also ranks below neighboring states in average wages for all workers. But teachers' salaries are worse. Private, non-farm workers in South Dakota make about 12 percent less than the regional average. The state's teachers make 24 percent less.

A statewide advisory committee created by Gov. Dennis Daugaard and legislative leaders has been studying education funding in South Dakota. The Blue Ribbon Task Force is expected to offer recommendations to Daugaard and the 2016 Legislature. The lawmaking session will convene in January in Pierre.

Sioux Falls' new superintendent, Dr. Brian Maher, is among the 13 officials recently added to the membership of the task force, bringing its total membership to 26 people.

The task force is co-chaired by Sen. Deb Soholt, R-Sioux Falls, and Rep. Jacqueline Sly, R-Rapid City.

The task force has held meetings in Sioux Falls and other cities to gather public input. Smolinsky says the study is an excellent opportunity to get facts out and address the issue of education funding in South Dakota.



Joy Smolinsky is the executive director of the Budget & Policy Institute, a nonprofit organization.

Other legislative committees have studied the issue but failed to do much to correct problems. However, the Blue Ribbon Task Force was initiated by the governor, so it might have a greater chance of producing results, she says.

Daugaard has said he wants the task force to pursue three goals: schools that focus on student success, great teachers, and an efficient, effective funding system.



Two new members join Foundation Board

The Education Foundation Board has two new members: businessman John Hedrick and teacher Peggy Baney.

Baney has been with the school district for 35 years. She is beginning her sixth year at Anne Sullivan Elementary School. She currently teaches a specialized reading program for first-graders.

Baney says she has benefitted in the past from Education Foundation grants and wants to help other teachers get similar opportunities. "Teachers have these wonderful ideas, but they don't have the money to implement them. That's what's so cool about the Foundation," she says.

She has two grown children. Her husband, Bhrett, is a preschool assistant and director of development at Sioux Falls Lutheran School.

Hedrick is the president and owner of Forever New International Inc., which manufactures and sells high-end fabric care wash. The company's products are sold around the world.

Hedrick is a Sioux Falls native who practiced law in Denver for nine years. He moved back to his home town recently to buy and run the family business. His wife, Gretchen, worked in Colorado as a teacher. The couple has three daughters, ages 7, 4 and 1.

"What drives my desire to be part of this Board is really my



John Hedrick



Peggy Baney

kids and a desire to make the schools they will be attending the best they can be, and add to the limited budgets," he says.

Other volunteers who serve on the Education Foundation Board are: Vernon Brown (Secretary), Catherine Dekkenga, Nancy Duncan, Twaine Fink, Stephanie Gongopoulos, Teresa Jackson, DeeAnn Konrad, Mike Moore, Anne Powers, Justin Reilly (Treasurer), Carly Reiter (Ex Officio), Diane Rausch (Vice Chair), Amy Scott-Stoltz (Chair) and Jamie Simko.

The Board is assisted by two part-time employees: Foundation Coordinator Angie Kuiper and Newsletter Editor Rob Swenson. Questions about Education Foundation programs may be emailed to sfeducationfoundation@gmail.com.

Change in grant limit

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The Innovation in Education Grant Program is one of the Education Foundation's two signature projects. The organization's other major program is Beyond Books, a grant program that helps first-time teachers buy classroom supplies.

Money for the grant programs comes from donations from businesses and individuals. Major corporate sponsors include The First National Bank in Sioux Falls, First PREMIER Bank and PREMIER Bankcard, and SDN Communications.

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.



Flexible tripods help New Tech students get creative

Sometimes small investments in educational tools can make a big difference. That's been the case in Holli Rausch's classes at New Technology High School.

Rausch, who teaches animation, graphic design and art, used a grant of about \$400 from the Education Foundation to buy a dozen Joby Gorillapod Action Tripods with camera-mounting devices. Gorillapods are flexible, bead-like tripods that at full extension stand about 9 inches tall.

Students can twist the three legs of the tripods around poles, chairs and oddly shaped surfaces to hold phones, cameras or other mobile devices. In addition, the magnetized tripods can stick to metal surfaces, further enhancing creative uses.

Students can use the Gorillapods to record videos or shoot photos from a variety of normal and unusual angles. Rausch has used them to help her track the progress of students' art projects over time.

"It's a simple item that we got, but it's made a big difference for the students and the projects we do," Rausch says. "They can use them with their own devices to make some cool things."

Rausch was awarded an Innovation in Education grant for the tripods in the fall of 2014. The Education Foundation gave out nearly \$40,000 in grants for innovative teaching projects last school year. Since 2005, the Foundation has given out more than \$200,000 in grants that have benefitted more than 25,000 students.

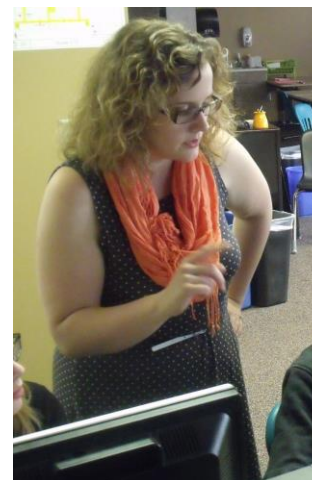
The grants, which are funded by private donations to the Education Foundation, are intended for teaching materials or equipment that go beyond the basics funded by School District tax dollars. Changes were recently made in grant limits. (See Page 1.)

Having access to the latest tools of technology, such as Gorillapods, is a plus for students, says Dolly Ellwein, principal at New Tech High. "I know the kids have really enjoyed having access to them. They've used them quite a bit," Ellwein says. "It's a good resource for when they are making videos."

If the Gorillapods are not being used in classes, students may check them out for use with their own devices. "We're trying to teach them to be professional with their devices," Rausch says.

She is beginning her fourth year as a high school teacher. She previously worked as a graphic designer at the University of Sioux Falls. She has reached out for extra help for her students in the past, too. In 2013, she raised \$2,500 through DonorsChoose.org to buy a 3D printer for classroom use. This past year, her 5-year-old son, Ian, gave students input about children's game interests and test-played video games that students created.

Rausch appreciates the grants that Education Foundation provides teachers in Sioux Falls. "I was really pleased with what we got, and the students are really excited about it, too," she says.



Holli Rausch is a teacher at New Technology High School. She used a \$400 grant to buy flexible tripods for her students to use. The devices (below) are called

