

2015 Inspiring Imagination teacher grant winners

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GRANTING TEACHERS' *Creative Wishes*

Inspiring Imagination grants transform Katy ISD teachers' educational visions into reality

Written by Wendy Teng | Photography courtesy of Katy ISD Partners in Education



Mayde Creek Junior High winner is awarded a \$5,000 grant



Nottingham Country Elementary teacher is granted up to \$5,000 to complete her project



Bear Creek Elementary is awarded the Inquiring Minds Grant



Mayde Creek High School is awarded a grant for their tutoring program, Tools of the Trade

Bright minds often inspire and encourage the creativity of others. Katy ISD Education Foundation's Inspiring Imagination grant program was established to help enrich classroom education for students through the inspiration and creativity of Katy ISD teachers. In the past three years, the Inspiring Inspiration grant program has distributed more than \$550,000 in grant awards to Katy ISD teachers. In 2015, Inspiring Imagination awarded grants to 180 teachers and 30 campuses across Katy ISD.

Inspiring Classrooms

The grants help improve education opportunities for Katy ISD students and engage them in a unique learning experience based on a conceptual understanding of real-world situations. "Grant activities emphasize hands-on, experiential learning. Students are exposed to a greater vision for their future, potential careers, and education choices," says Janet Theis, director of community partnerships at Katy ISD's Partners in Education. The grant committee has heard several positive reports regarding students who are exposed to a creativity-enriched classroom. "Teachers tell us they've also seen grant activities boost student confidence, increasing their comfort level with subject areas - science and math, for example," Theis adds.

The Inspiring Imagination grants have jump-started many innovative programs with the potential to accelerate student's capabilities in science and math. The after-school GEMS Club - girls engaged in math and science - is a girls-only program inspired by the observation of under-representation of females in areas of science, technology, engineering, and math in colleges and in the workforce.

The GEMS Club was launched at Hayes Elementary and led by teacher Laurie McKnight and her team. Another example is the establishment of horticulture as an elective to inspire students' interests in plants, science, and other related careers.

A special feature of the Inspiring Imagination grant program is the BP's STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) Grant. This program is funded by BP, Katy ISD Education Foundation's cornerstone investor. BP staff frequently visits and interacts with STEM Grant recipients and their classrooms.

Blossoming Technology

New technology allows students to achieve a hands-on learning experience that was not possible in the last decade. With the ability to grasp information easier and clearer, Katy ISD students can further expand their knowledge and



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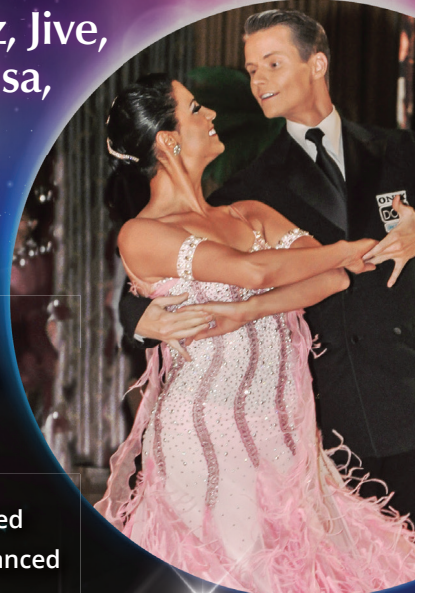
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potentially develop a new understanding in different subject matters. Science equipment, STEM lab equipment, school supplies, calculators, and iPads are some of the technology purchased from the Inspiring Imagination grants that have been added to classrooms.

Creative Ideas Rewarded

For teachers who apply, every idea has the potential to blossom into reality. Teachers can submit creative ideas as individuals or as part of a team. Individual winners are awarded up to \$1,000, while teams are awarded up to \$5,000. Winners can apply again for a grant every year.

Katy parents and residents can help support the Katy ISD Education Foundation and its Inspiring Imagination program by becoming an investor, making a one-time contribution, or attending foundation events. Investors can also participate in the grant process or volunteer to be on the foundation committee.

Katy ISD Education Foundation hopes to expand the Inspiring Imagination program by raising more funds for the grants. With each grant awarded, the program is able to reach out to more teachers and students across the district. **KM**

WENDY TENG is a freelance writer. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, blogging, volunteering, trying new restaurants, and learning about new organizations.

Wishes Granted

A few recent Imagination Grants

Monarch Butterfly Restoration, \$1,276

Science teachers at Holland Elementary will engage the entire school population and community of families in helping restore a vital part of the ecosystem - the Monarch butterfly.

Math 360 Labs Peer Tutoring Program, \$4,020

This grant adds a fourth whiteboard to the existing Math 360 Lab at Mayde Creek High School and purchases new manipulatives.

Installation of a Robotics Club, \$4,077

West Memorial Junior High students will now be able to join the Robotics Club. During the 15-week program, they will ultimately write their own programs to create dance routines for the Scribbler Robot.

Smarter Choices, \$4,129

Purchasing and installing a SMART Board for a Life Skills classroom will create an interactive resource for teachers and students at Shafer Elementary.

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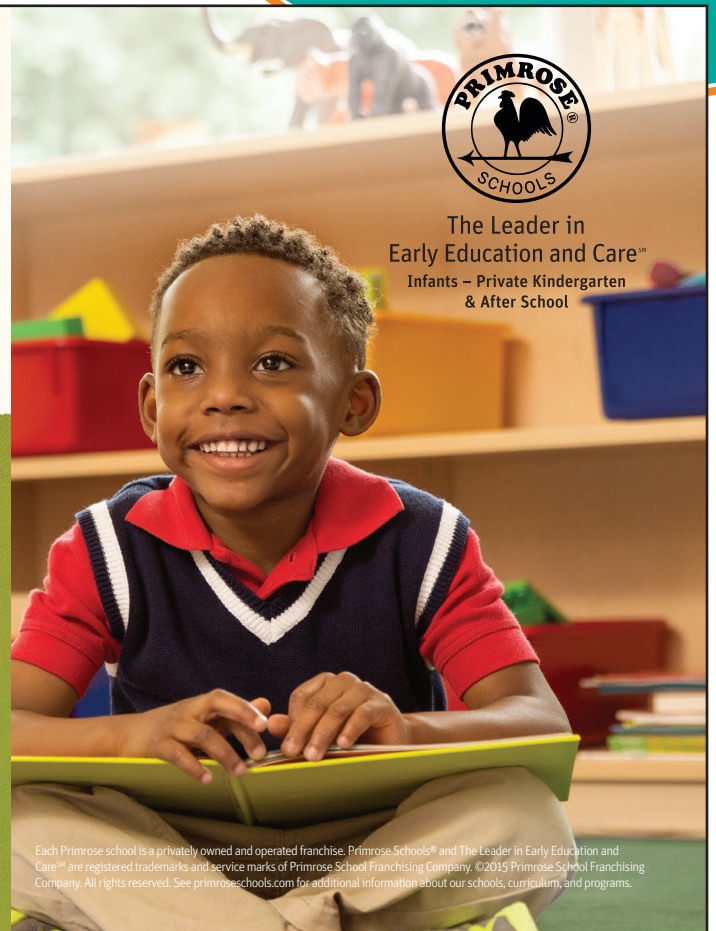
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