

5 teachers receive grants for classroom

Elementary school educators share the projects they plan on putting the \$500 toward

The Fort Mill Foundation for Schools this semester awarded \$500 grants for innovative classroom projects to teachers at each of the district's five elementary schools. The winners told us what their grants will go toward. Their responses have been edited for clarity and brevity. — DEBORAH HIRSCH

Michelle Arden

*Technology, Fort Mill Elementary
"The Decades Project"*

DETAILS: The six fifth-grade home-room classes each research an assigned decade ('40s through '90s). In groups, the students look up topics in four categories: "Lifestyle/Leisure/Sports," "Arts/Entertainment," "People/Events" and "Science/Technology." They use the Internet, first-person interviews via e-mail and interviews with guest speakers. Then, the students create a digital movie about their topics using a video camera purchased with the grant. They'll even write and tape "commercials" for products or artifacts from their decade. In the spring, students will share a final presentation with other classes, parents and community members.

INSPIRATION: In past years, fifth-grade teachers had students research the decades as a year-end project. As the technology teacher, I worked with the grade-level teachers to incorporate technology standards into the assignment. It has since grown into a full-year project.



Arden

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5 teachers win \$500 grants

Projects *from 1Y*

Nicole Ayers, Susan Bates and Lindsey Campbell

Fourth grade, Orchard Park Elementary "Media Literacy Connection"

DETAILS: Throughout the year, we have planned activities and projects for students that link to our standards and media literacy.

Each month, parents and students complete questions related to a focus of the month, such as "What elements of an advertisement or a commercial persuade you to buy a product?" Students will create print and commercial ads, movie scene storyboards and scripts, endangered species brochures and class books. We are also hoping to visit a production studio and meet with marketing directors.

INSPIRATION: Our students need to learn how to analyze media for truth. The majority of students have technology readily available at home, such as video games, iPods, computers and televisions. The goal is to teach them to evaluate all information from media sources for bias and stereotypes, so they can make educated decisions and become savvy communicators and consumers.



Ayers



Bates



Campbell

Jessy Belue

*First grade, Riverview Elementary
"Reader's Theatre"*

DETAILS: The grant will be for two sets of books that can be turned into plays and supplies to make puppets. After the teacher reads the story to the class, the students will discuss the characters and what kind of expression they used. The students will read the story again in small groups and choose character parts to play. Then, they'll make puppets to represent their characters and perform for another class.

INSPIRATION: The less time children spend decoding words, the more attention they can place on comprehension and gaining meaning. One way to increase this fluency is by repeated readings of the same story. This project provides a reason to reread the same text and also encourages collaboration. It also incorporates all aspects of language arts: reading, writing, listening and speaking.



Belue

Carol Claypool

*First grade, Gold Hill Elementary School
"Just Right Reading"*

DETAILS: The grant will pay for books at a variety of levels to meet the individual needs of each student. My beginning of the year reading assessments indicated that my 21 students range from a level 1 to a level 20. Once students can read a book from a "leveled" set, it is sent home to read there. Then,



Claypool

it's returned and the students read the book each morning in small groups to build fluency. The books are periodically collected and reshuffled so they can be used all year as the children advance through the different levels.

INSPIRATION: At my previous school out of state, I was given the opportunity to assist in developing a leveled book room. I have witnessed great success with this reading approach. Children have built fluency, using strategies and comprehension skills. An average of 98 percent of all my students who have participated through this program have read at or above grade level by the end of each year.

Robbie Sluder

*Fourth- and fifth-grade gifted/talented, Springfield Elementary
"Student-created videos"*

DETAILS: The grant will chase a video camera and equipment that can be used schoolwide. My students will start out using it to make movie clips related to science units.

For example, they will write a script about all the things learned about weather, film it and edit it with a computer program.

INSPIRATION: I took two graduate classes on incorporating digital media into the classroom where I learned how to use cameras and add music animation. I thought this would be a good idea to share with my students because kids are just really puter savvy. This would give students a chance to think outside the box, in other than paper, pencil. It's a good way to allow children who aren't in gifted and talented programs to showcase their



Sluder