

## Grandview Opens Cultural Exchange with Pen Pals in Ghana



By Lorrie Ham  
Westonka Public Schools

Sixth-graders in Jessica Lunski's language arts classes at Grandview Middle School are learning firsthand what life is like

halfway around the world in Ghana, Africa. As pen pals with students at the Timoskay School Complex, located just outside of Takoradi, the Grandview students are finding out that while their differences are many, their similarities

are striking.

The opportunity arose when Megan Bryan, a 2014 graduate of Mound Westonka High School, took a gap year in her education to volunteer in a developing country. Although Ghana was not her first choice, Bryan ended up at the Timoskay School Complex, where she taught English and primary math. The small school has a total of 200 students, aged two to 19, said Bryan. She lived with a host family, whose father was the proprietor of the school.

Bryan said teaching children in a developing country was a rewarding job. "The students are eager to learn and have such strong character," she said. "My school was very low on learning and teaching resources. I was given chalk and a board, but other than that, we didn't have anything."

At her host father's suggestion, Bryan contacted Westonka Schools to see if there was interest in connecting with students at the Timoskay School.

"I chose to link my students up with students back in America so they could practice their English reading and writing skills, along with the opportunity to learn more about America," said Bryan. "When I gave them the news, they were very excited."

Westonka Schools was excited as well. "We thought it was a great opportunity," said Lunski, who gave students in her three language arts classes the option of becoming pen pals, in pairs or as individuals, with the African students. Those who chose not to write letters did research papers on Ghana instead.

Even in this age of 21st century technology, students opted for old-fashioned pens and paper for the exchange of information. Grandview students wrote letters to their counterparts at the Timoskay School before the winter break. They shared information about themselves, their school, their hobbies and their families. They just received their first

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## Technology Integration at Ellis

Ryan Mayers  
Technology Integration Specialist  
ISD 492

Walk into a classroom at Ellis Middle School, and the odds are you'll see students using technology. Whether using Moodle to access course resources, responding to questions using a student response system, or watching videos as a means of helping review content, technology is beginning to play a very important role in education at Ellis.

"Technology has very quickly become a part of Ellis' culture," says Derik Gustafson. "Students are already expecting to use their laptops in class as an integral part of the lesson."

Austin's 1:1 Laptop initiative, which began last year with students at IJ Holton Intermediate School, expanded this year to encompass students at Ellis. Gustafson is the school's Technology Integrationist, which means he plays a large part in helping teachers effectively use technologies available to them in the classroom.

"The teachers have really taken to it," says Gustafson. "In the beginning of the year there was a bit of a learning curve, but now they seem to really be embracing it."

The results so far, though anecdotal, seem quite positive. There's been a marked increase in student engagement, and the opportunities for self-assessment and self-management are multitude. "The teachers are using things like Socrative [an online student response system] and Kahoot [an online educational gaming system], which is definitely helping to improve instruction." Indeed, using technology in the classroom has allowed teachers to more quickly and easily gather data on how well students understand the material, which in turn allows for lesson modifications to more effectively use the limited amount of class time available.

For Gustafson, one of the best outcomes is the democratization of participation. "Before, you'd have three or four kids who would raise their hand for everything while everyone else didn't really participate. Now, with the various tools we're using in the classroom, everyone gets the chance to interact with the material. We've seen kids who never used to get involved suddenly start sharing and participating in discussions."

Of course, no matter what technology is available, if it isn't utilized effectively, then



the benefits will never be fully realized. That's where Gustafson comes in. "I work with the teachers to help them design lessons that use technology in ways that encourage the kids to explore and internalize what they're learning. For me, this is all only successful if teachers can use it effectively."

[www.austin.k12.mn.us/Ellis](http://www.austin.k12.mn.us/Ellis)  
(507) 460-1500



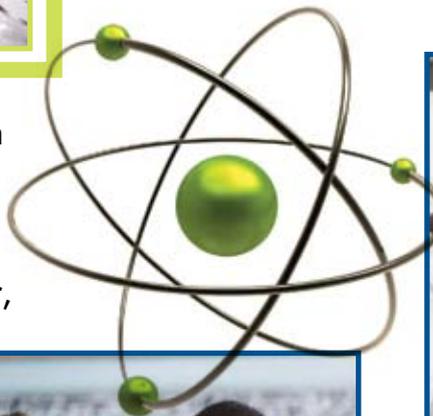


## YOUTH SCIENCE RETREAT



This year's i3@MTC Youth Science Retreat, which stands for, **"Inspire, Investigate, and Innovate at the MinnWest Technology Campus"** will include about 25 different demonstrators. The intention of each is to not only expose the students to real world applications of STEM but also to get them involved with hands on experiences.

The Youth Science Retreat is targeting children grades 3–8, is intended to expose students to STEM disciplines in the workplace (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). However, all students, parents, and grandparents are invited to attend.



# SAVE THE DATE:

Saturday, April 18, 2015



[www.mnwesttechnology.com/i3mtc](http://www.mnwesttechnology.com/i3mtc)

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## From our Website



### VetoViolence

Veto Violence has been developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide access to training and tools that focus on the primary prevention of violence.

### Youth Physical Activity Guidelines Toolkit

The CDC and several partner organizations have developed the Youth Physical Activity Guidelines Toolkit, which highlights strategies that schools, families, and communities can use to support youth physical activity.

### The Nutrition Source

The Nutrition Source aims to provide timely, evidence-based information on diet and nutrition for clinicians, allied health professionals, and the public.

### The International Children's Digital Library

The International Children's Digital Library is an amazing open-access resource with hundreds of digital books in dozens of different languages.

### Wide Angle

These resources will enrich the study of Global History by using contemporary examples as jumping-off points to engage students with historical themes that were as relevant in the past as they are today.

### The ASEE Engineering K12 Center

Developed by the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE), the site provides resources for grade school students, parents and teachers that promote engineering.

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Questions? Contact Carmen Croonquist, Director of Career Coaching/Counseling at (612)767-7060 or [carmen.croonquist@alfredadler.edu](mailto:carmen.croonquist@alfredadler.edu). For application information, contact [admissions@alfredadler.edu](mailto:admissions@alfredadler.edu).

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**"The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance,  
it is the illusion of knowledge."  
—Stephen Hawking**

# Pen Pals in Ghana

Continued from Page 1



responses last week.

"The students were really excited to read their letters," said Lunski.

Grandview students Sydney Turner and Mackenzie Wallace were thrilled to receive a letter from 10-year-old Grace, complete with coloring, stickers and a couple of photos. They learned that Grace has three siblings, loves school and likes to play football. Her father works on a coconut farm. They were surprised to find out that Ghana has both a wet and dry season. Grace has never seen snow and can't actually imagine what it is like.

Emma Gray enjoyed learning how things are done in school in Ghana. In their letters, African students said they liked Coca-Cola, hot cocoa, caramel apples and Disney's High School Musical. Many students, most of whom

had large families, mentioned their love of school. Others shared information about their pets and their hobbies, which included music and sports.

Another pair of Grandview students received a peso coin with their letter. That student talked about a monkey sanctuary near her home. Students also talked about all of the festivals and celebrations that are held each year in their community.

"The main thing I would like people in America to know is to appreciate the things we are given, like a proper education," said Bryan. "We really have no idea how good we have it until you see with your own eyes that others around the world are not as lucky as we are."

In the meantime, Grandview students are appreciating the chance to make new friends across the globe. As soon as they read their African pen pals' letters, the sixth-graders were already formulating their responses.

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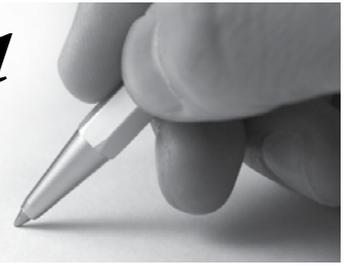
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# Apply for a Grant



## State Farm Service-Learning Grants

The Youth Advisory Board is currently funding service-learning projects between \$25,000 and \$100,000 that address the root cause of the following issue areas. You can also learn more about each area by visiting our Projects page.

Access to Higher Education/Closing the Achievement Gap, Economic Empowerment and Financial Literacy, Community Safety and Justice, Health & Wellness, Environmental Responsibility and Arts and Culture

**Deadline:** Applications will close May 1, 2015 at 5:00PM CST

**Website:** [www.sfyab.com/apply/national-grants/](http://www.sfyab.com/apply/national-grants/)

## RGK Foundation Grants

The Foundation's primary interests within Education include programs that focus on formal K-12 education (particularly mathematics, science and reading), teacher development, literacy, and higher education. Youth development programs supported by the Foundation typically include after-school educational enrichment programs that supplement and enhance formal education systems to increase the chances for successful outcomes in school and life. The Foundation is also interested in programs that attract female and minority students into the fields of mathematics, science, and technology.

The average Foundation grant is \$25,000.

**Deadline:** Applications are accepted year-round.

**Website:** [www.rgkfoundation.org/public/guidelines#deadlines](http://www.rgkfoundation.org/public/guidelines#deadlines)

## Academic Enrichment Grants

The McCarthy Dressman Education Foundation offers Academic Enrichment Grants designed to develop classroom and extracurricular programs that improve student learning. The foundation considers proposals that foster understanding, deepen students' knowledge, and provide opportunities to expand awareness of the world around them.

Grants are awarded in amounts up to \$10,000 per year for a maximum of three years, provided the eligibility requirements continue to be met.

**Deadline:** Online applications are accepted January 15 through April 15, annually.

**Website:** [mccarthydressman.org/academic-enrichment-grants/](http://mccarthydressman.org/academic-enrichment-grants/)

## Music Performance Attendance Grants

The Sharon Gewirtz Kids to Concerts Fund provides small grants to provide the opportunity for children and youth to attend live performances of classical music and other related programming. Grants are open to schools and nonprofit music programs throughout the United States, and eligible applicants must demonstrate financial need to be considered.

Grants up to \$500 are available to music programs for students in kindergarten through grade 12.

**Deadline:** Applications are due June 30, annually.

**Website:** [sites.google.com/site/gewirtzkidstoconcerts/](http://sites.google.com/site/gewirtzkidstoconcerts/)

## Music Education Grants

The Mockingbird Foundation offers grants to public schools and nonprofit organizations to support projects in music education. The primary focus is students, ages 18 and younger, with particular interest in projects that target underserved children.

**Deadline:** Initial inquiries are due August 1, annually.

**Website:** [mbird.org/funding/guidelines/](http://mbird.org/funding/guidelines/)

## Instrumental Music Grants

The Fender Music Foundation awards instruments and equipment to eligible music instruction programs that are part of US public schools or qualified nonprofit organizations. The instruments and equipment are lightly used, blemished, or otherwise imperfect and have been collected from manufacturers and retailers. The foundation provides information on specific imperfections to programs that are selected to receive instruments.

**Deadline:** Applications are accepted year-round.

**Website:** [www.fendermusicfoundation.org/grants/grants-info/](http://www.fendermusicfoundation.org/grants/grants-info/)

## Art Works: Media Arts

The guiding principle of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is embodied in one sentence: "Art works". Grants are available to support the development, production, and national distribution of innovative projects that demonstrate media as art and media about the arts such as visual arts, music, dance, literature, design, theater, musical theater, opera,

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# Bilingual Tutoring

Ryan Mayers  
Technology Integration Specialist  
Austin Public Schools

When you walk into Sarah Heller's Blue Chipmunk room at Woodson Kindergarten Center, you're likely to see the students playing educational games, gathered around the Smartboard learning as a class, or working in small groups at various stations. Sometimes, you'll even find a small group of English Language Learners working with Blanca Rodriguez, the bilingual classroom para-professional, on Spanish language reading curriculum. "It's the same curriculum that all the other students will learn," says Heller, "except we're trying to expose this group to it ahead of time." It's all part of a special project being piloted this year in Heller's class.

The project is the brainchild of Heller, school psychologist Melissa Kossoris, and instructional coach Karol Langemo. According to Kossoris, EL students are given a score based on language assessment, which is then used to determine which students are able to work with the school's EL teacher. "Unfortunately, we were seeing a gap where some students who scored higher than the cut-off still needed assistance, so we were looking for a way to help them."

In the course of trying to solve this EL gap, the trio discovered a wealth of research describing the unique difficulties facing EL students entering a non-EL classroom. "What we've found is that students with an EL background tend to struggle with integrating into the mainstream classroom not because they're incapable of learning, but because the difficulties they face due to the language barrier cause them to be very uncomfortable and hesitant in the classroom," says Kossoris. "So when we were looking for ways to address EL needs, we thought it would be great to try and address that discomfort as well."

From there, the project became an avenue to help students grow not only academically, but also socially. The students participating in the project go through the readings and vocabulary first in Spanish and then in English so that when the time comes for them to cover the material with the rest of the class, they've seen it before and can feel more comfortable participating. "We've seen," says Langemo, "that when students feel more comfortable in class, then they're more willing to participate, which in turn leads to higher achievement."

So far, it appears to be successful. Heller, as the mainstream teacher, has numerous stories about how much growth she has seen



from each of the students, both academically and socially. "One little girl, when she first started with us, was withdrawn and didn't want to do anything in class. Now, she's one of the first to volunteer and always seems incredibly happy and vivacious. We've seen several of the students go up three or four levels in reading, which is almost unheard of for the group we're working with."

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woodson](http://www.austin.k12.mn.us/woodson)  
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## 20th Annual Minnesota Autism Conference

April 29–May 2 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Minneapolis Park Place Hotel

The 20th Annual Minnesota Autism Conference, presented by the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM), will be held April 29 – May 2, 2015 at the Doubletree by Hilton Minneapolis Park Place Hotel in Minneapolis, Minn. Here, speakers, educators, therapists, psychologists, employers, paraprofessionals, caregivers, parents and individuals on the autism spectrum have a platform to exchange knowledge and ideas with one another - all with the goal of enhancing the lives of those touched by autism.

Held annually during Autism Awareness Month, this four-day conference is produced by AuSM, the local organization serving individuals and families living with autism. The mission of AuSM is to enhance the lives of individuals with autism spectrum disorders through education support, collaboration and advocacy. Autism is the fastest growing disability in Minnesota with diagnosis rates reported as one in 68 (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

The goal of AuSM's annual conference is to advance the public's knowledge of ASD by offering daily keynote speakers and experts, topical breakout sessions, exhibitor booths with a variety of services and products, and the

AuSM Bookstore.

This year's keynote speakers include:

- **James Coplan, M.D.** is an internationally recognized clinician, author, and public speaker in the fields of early child development, early language development and autism spectrum disorders. Dr. Coplan heads his own practice, Neurodevelopmental Pediatrics of the Main Line, PC and authored the book, *Making Sense of Autistic Spectrum Disorders: Create the brightest future for your child with the best treatment options* (Bantam-Dell, 2010). Dr. Coplan is the keynote speaker on Wednesday, April 29 from 7–9 p.m.
- **Patrick Schwarz, Ph.D.** is a dynamic and engaging professor, author, motivational speaker and leader in inclusive education, special education, general education, educational leadership, and human services. He is a professor at National-Louis University, Chicago. Dr. Schwarz authored four books with Paula Kluth: *From Disability to Possibility*, *You're Welcome, Just Give Him the Whale* and *Pedro's Whale*. His new book is *From Possibility to Success*. Dr. Schwarz is the keynote speaker on Thurs-

day, April 30 from 8:30-10:30 a.m.

- **John Miller** is the author of *Decoding Dating, A Guide to the Unwritten Social Rules of Dating for Men with Asperger Syndrome* (Autism Spectrum Disorder), a book that offers individuals with autism practical guidance on the more baffling aspects of dating and advice on how to take the step from dating to a relationship. Miller is the keynote speaker on Thursday, April 30 from 7-9 p.m.
- **Kari Dunn Buron, MS** is an Autism Education Specialist who taught in the K-12 public school system, working with students on the autism spectrum for more than 30 years. A national and international speaker, Dunn Buron has authored many books and is the co-author of *The Incredible 5-Point Scale* (Revised Edition). Dunn Buron is the keynote speaker on Friday, May 1 from 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Also featured will be cutting-edge topic breakout presentations by autism experts and exhibitor booths with autism programs, services and resources. The final day of the conference will focus on autism transition, employment and life skills. Educators seeking

standards for resubmission for ASD licensure may obtain criteria standards during the 20th Annual Minnesota Autism Conference. Criteria standards addressed by sessions, along with a detailed conference schedule, will be listed on the AuSM website, [www.ausm.org](http://www.ausm.org).

In celebration of the conference's 20th anniversary, AuSM will host an inaugural gala during the conference on Friday, May 1 from 6-10 p.m. The gala, "Celebrate AuSM Inspirations," will bring the community together for fantastic food, drinks, games, prizes, a silent auction and a celebration of those serving as true inspirations to individuals affected by autism.

As the population diagnosed with ASD ages, the AuSM is committed to serving these individuals in all stages of development. With adult support groups and therapy, family advocacy programs, social skills classes, camps, summer programming, targeted training offerings, and an extensive resource directory, AuSM strives to fulfill the needs of those living with autism throughout Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

For more information about AuSM or the conference, please visit [www.ausm.org](http://www.ausm.org), e-mail [news@ausm.org](mailto:news@ausm.org) or call 651.647.1083.

# Heart-rate monitors being used at Willow Creek



Jim Kiefer, Willow Creek Principal  
Owatonna Public Schools

Josh Storm, at Willow Creek Intermediate was the recipient of an ISD761

Foundation Grant. The ISD761 Foundation is an organization that is committed to improving opportunities for students. Storm wrote the grant in order to purchase Heart-Rate Monitors for students. Storm's goal, with the heart-rate monitors is to:

- Increase activity level
- Increase motivation for students
- Increase participation of students with special needs
- Increase understanding of how hard you have to work for beneficial safe exercise.
- Increase validity to grading in PE. (Makes grading objective in PE)

In the past, one may potentially have heard a physical education teacher tell a student to "try harder." In response, a student may have responded by stating that the effort is already present. The heart-rate monitors eliminate such conversations. The students wear heartrate monitors, and the students monitor their own effort by simply looking

at their heart rate; the heart rate is projected, in real time, onto a 21-foot screen on the gym wall. The students have a 30-minute class. The expectation is that each student keeps their heart rate within 70 to 100 percent of their target rate for at least 20 minutes of the class period.

The students get to choose which activities they would like to do in order to keep their heart rate above 70 percent of their target. When observing the class, you may witness students jogging, doing pull-ups, doing push-ups, jumping rope, playing tag, and so on. In the process, the students learn a life skill; the students learn what sorts of activities they can do in order to maintain "physical fitness." The students do activities that they enjoy, and they learn the level of intensity that they must obtain in order to improve cardiovascular fitness. It's almost like a video game for students, because they earn badges for keeping their heart rate "in the zone" for periods of time. It is a very social, enjoyable way for students to self-monitor their fitness.

Another advantage to the system is that each student is being challenged at their own fitness level. Some students, who are extremely physically fit, have to work harder to get their heart rate "up."

So, the program differentiates effort levels, for every student, based upon the current fitness level. All facets of each individual's heart rate and effort levels can be charted and graphed. This increases the level of self-motivation for each student. They are not competing against each other; each student is working with their own body and their own fitness level in order to find enjoyable ways to increase cardiovascular fitness.

This approach to physical education is revolutionary. It encourages the students to self-monitor, to challenge themselves, to empower themselves, and to become healthier and stronger individuals by educating them with respect to which activities will escalate their hear rates. Willow Creek Intermediate would like to sincerely thank the ISD761 Foundation for providing our students with this amazing educational tool and opportunity.

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# Student Contests and Awards

## Google Science Fair Competition

The Google Science Fair is a global competition open to students ages 13–18. Students may enter as individuals or in teams. There is no entry fee. Finalists will compete for internships, scholarships and prizes in front of an international judging panel of scientists and engineers.

The grand prize includes \$50,000 in scholarship funding. There are also prizes for the top finalists and category awards.

**Deadline:** Submissions due May 18, 2015.

**Website:** [www.google-science-fair.com/en/](http://www.google-science-fair.com/en/)

## Young Scientist Challenge

Discovery Education and 3M invite students in grades 5 through 8 to participate in the Young Scientist Challenge. Entrants must create a one- to two-minute video describing a new, innovative solution that solves an everyday problem.

The ten entrants with the highest overall scores will be deemed finalists and will compete for the grand prize. The remaining entrants will be considered for a state merit award. Up to 51 state merit winners will be chosen based on highest score among the remaining entries received per state.

Ten finalists will each receive \$1,000. The grand-prize winner will receive \$25,000.

**Deadline:** Entries are due April 21, 2015.

**Website:** [www.youngscientistchallenge.com/2015-challenge](http://www.youngscientistchallenge.com/2015-challenge)

## STEM Voice Video Competition

The STEM Voice Video Competition is nation-wide opportunity for kids in grades 5–12 to artistically explore the importance of STEM. The competition encourages you to be creative and use video to show how much you love STEM. Act it out, create an animation, sing it but, make sure it is appropriate for all ages. One semi-finalist from Middle School (grades 5–8) and one semifinalist from High School (grades 9–12) will be selected from each of the three regions. Each semifinalist (6 total) will receive a \$500 cash award. Two grand prize winners (one from Middle School and one from High School) will receive \$1,000 cash awards.

**Deadline:** Applications Due April 17, 2015, 11:59 PM PST

**Website:** [www.csbinstitutes.org/go.cfm?do=Page.View&pid=13](http://www.csbinstitutes.org/go.cfm?do=Page.View&pid=13)

## DiscoverDesign.org National High School Architecture Competition

Sponsored by the Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF), the aim of this competition is to promote architectural awareness and design problem solving skills in high school students across the United States. Design a pocket park for a small piece of land near your school or in your neighborhood.

**Deadline:** Registration and consent forms are

due April 25, 2015. All final entries are due May 6, 2015, at 5:00 p.m. (CDT).

**Website:** [discoverdesign.org/Competition-2015Guidelines](http://discoverdesign.org/Competition-2015Guidelines)

## STEM Scholarship Essay Contest

Reed Technology and Information Services sponsors an essay contest with a scholarship prize. The essay limit is 750 words, with one essay per student accepted. Eligible applicants are students who are currently enrolled or currently applying to US colleges and universities and who are studying or plan to study a major in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) for the 2015 to 2016 academic year. The essay topic is to write about a significant STEM-related innovation, benefits it has provided, and how it could be improved.

One scholarship of \$1,000 is awarded.

**Deadline:** Essay submissions are due May 30, 2015.

**Website:** [www.reedtech.com/about-us/scholarship](http://www.reedtech.com/about-us/scholarship)

## Science Without Borders Art Challenge

This year's Science Without Borders Challenge asks students ages 14–19 to enter

artwork on the theme, "Reef Relationships." Coral reefs are important ecosystems that harbor nearly 25% of all marine species. There are many different types of relationships that take place in the coral reef ecosystem. The submitted artwork should creatively portray one of these relationships.

**Deadline:** Submissions due 5 p.m. April 27, 2015.

**Website:** [www.livingoceansfoundation.org/resources/for-educators/science-without-borders-challenge/](http://www.livingoceansfoundation.org/resources/for-educators/science-without-borders-challenge/)

## Carton 2 Garden Contest

Evergreen Packaging and KidsGardening.org are on the lookout for your creative and sustainable uses for recycled milk and juice cartons in the garden. K–12 schools are encouraged to collect, design, and construct garden-related structures made from empty cartons and document their experience.

Four national winners will be selected to receive prizes valued at \$2,500. Sixteen winners from eight different regions will receive award packages valued at \$1,000.

**Deadline:** Entries due by April 22, 2015.

**Website:** [www.kidsgardening.org/article/carton-2-garden-contest-0](http://www.kidsgardening.org/article/carton-2-garden-contest-0)



## Outstanding Earth Science Teacher Award

The National Association of Geoscience Teachers (NAGT) presents its Outstanding Earth Science Teacher awards to K–12 educators who have made exceptional contributions to the stimulation of interest in the earth sciences. Any teacher or other K–12 educator who covers a significant amount of earth science content with their students is eligible.

Sectional winner awards include up to \$500 in travel funds and \$500 in classroom improvement funds, as well as memberships, subscriptions and publications. There are also a variety of awards for state winners, section runners-up, and honorable mentions.

**Deadline:** Apply by May 1, 2015.

**Website:** [nagt.org/nagt/awards/oest.html](http://nagt.org/nagt/awards/oest.html)

## Green in Action Awards

Green In Action Awards will be granted to inspiring projects based on GEF's sustainability themes. Winners are those schools, classrooms or youth groups who have demonstrated their commitment, creativity, or passion for sustainability in their application. Great application materials include photos, videos, essays, or artwork describing your environmental project, weigh-in, activity, community service project, or green team program!

Winners receive \$250 for their class! They will also be featured in national news and have their application materials (such as videos, photographs and scanned artwork) shared on the National Green Week site.

**Deadline:** Application Deadline May 2, 2015!

**Website:** [www.greeneducationfoundation.org/greenweek/contests/green-in-action-contest.html](http://www.greeneducationfoundation.org/greenweek/contests/green-in-action-contest.html)

## Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes

The Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes celebrates inspiring, public-spirited, highly diverse young people from all across America. Each year, the Barron Prize honors

twenty-five outstanding young leaders ages 8 to 18 who have made a significant positive difference to people and our environment. The top 15 winners each receive a \$5,000 cash award to support their service work or higher education. The primary goal of the Prize is to shine the spotlight on these amazing young people so that their stories will inspire others.

**Deadline:** Nominations are due April 15, 2015

**Website:** [barronprize.org/how-nominate](http://barronprize.org/how-nominate)

## Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math & Science Teaching

The 2015 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching will honor outstanding teachers of grades K–6 in mathematics and science (including computer science). Awardees are recognized for their contributions to teaching and learning and their ability to help students make progress in mathematics and science. In addition to honoring individual achievement, the goal of the award program is to exemplify the highest standards of mathematics and science teaching.

**Deadline:** Nominations due May 1, 2015.

**Website:** [www.paemst.org/](http://www.paemst.org/)

## Nancy Lyman Roelker Mentorship Award

The American Historical Association (AHA) is an organization devoted to the study and promotion of history and historical thinking. The Nancy Lyman Roelker Mentorship Award recognizes teachers of history who taught, guided, and inspired their students in a way that changed their lives.

Grants of \$500 are awarded.

**Deadline:** Nominations are due May 15, 2015.

**Website:** [www.historians.org/awards-and-grants/awards-and-prizes/nancy-lyman-roelker-mentorship-award](http://www.historians.org/awards-and-grants/awards-and-prizes/nancy-lyman-roelker-mentorship-award)

## Minnesota's Green Ribbon Schools in 2014

The aim of U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools (ED-GRS) is to inspire schools, districts and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to strive for 21st century excellence, by highlighting exemplary practices and resources that all can employ. To that end, the award recognizes schools, districts, and IHEs that:

1. Reduce environmental impact and costs;
2. Improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff; and
3. Provide environmental education, which teaches many disciplines, and is especially

### Five Hawks Elementary School, Prior Lake, Minn.

#### A Local Hub of Environmental Education

Five Hawks Elementary School is the birthplace of environmental education in Prior Lake-Savage schools. As a result of Five Hawks' impressive academic performance on tests – and recycling anything that could be recycled -- the district added a seventh principle to its mission statement, ensuring that environmental education would have a permanent place in the school system. Five Hawks staff then conducted district-wide training courses to teach staff at all schools how to incorporate environmental education into everyday learning. Five Hawks is the creator of the districtwide environmental curriculum that is used to deliver instruction in all schools. The curriculum, using the existing Minnesota standards, replaces indoor lessons with outdoor environmental lessons in all subjects.

Not surprisingly, environmental education is a way of life at Five Hawks. First- and fourth-grade teams take sample data at the outdoor learning center to determine the health of the forest and water. The sixth grade examines the dissolved oxygen of the school's stream. Due to building around the pond, the class discovered that oxygen levels had dropped to a dangerously low level. They presented their findings to the city council and the construction team had to change its building requirements. All students are trained to identify trash that cannot be reused, recycled, or composted, recycling-appropriate material, compost material, and reusable material. Parents often comment about how seriously students take these efforts, as they make sure their families are recycling as well.

The school is fortunate to have a nature center that consists of 33 acres right outside the doors of the classrooms. Within this acreage, there are two prairies, wetlands, a forest, five various types of gardens, an amphitheater, outdoor classroom gazebos, a learning platform, a floating dock, and a fire pit, many connected by approximately two miles of trail. Outdoor classes frequently stop to observe spontaneous events in the outdoors.

More than 50 percent of physical education takes place outdoors. Between scheduled physical education classes, outdoor recess, and environmental activities, students receive more than 120 minutes of supervised physical education per week. Five Hawks has a schoolwide daily snack cart program, which makes healthy choices an easy option for parents. The school birthday party policy prohibits sugary snacks.

Five Hawks has embraced Integrated Pest Management program standards as its protocol, working hard to reduce the chemical footprint.

They also conduct an annual survey regarding indoor air quality. The school's multipurpose room has floor-to-ceiling windows, and students are able to enjoy the natural sunlight, as well as watch the birds feed all winter. Natural daylight is available to most classrooms via windows and doors. The building is equipped with an automated energy management system through Siemens for controlling and maintaining a healthy environment while occupied, as well as for efficiency when not occupied.

Five Hawks has used ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager since 2007. Utilities, including gas, electricity, and water, have been tracked extensively, and an independent firm, Bishop Energy Engineering, has also been used to corroborate the results. For the past three years, the district has participated in the Schools for Energy Efficiency (SEE) program, receiving acknowledgment for Outstanding Achievement in Energy Reduction from SEE for at least 10-percent reduction in overall energy use for 2010, 2011, and 2012. The school has an energy master plan and received ENERGY STAR certification in 2012 with a score of 90, reducing its carbon footprint some 25 percent in six years. Many Minnesota schools have visited Five Hawks, looking to the school for leadership as they move forward with embedding state standards and implementing environmentally based learning in their schools. Five Hawks is proud of the road traveled, looking to continue as vocal stewards of all its natural resources.

[www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us](http://www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us)  
(952) 226-0000



### Chisago Lakes Middle School, Lindstrom, Minn.

#### Acting locally produces global results

Over the past decade, Chisago Lakes Middle School (CLMS) has expanded its tradition of excellence in academics, fine arts, and community education to include programs, projects, and curricula that focus on reducing energy consumption and environmental impact. CLMS has been honored with both the EPA Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Leadership Award and the Xcel Energy Efficiency Partner Award.

CLMS has a 10 kWh photovoltaic solar panel system mounted on the roof and purchases 20 percent of its power from green energy sources. Students can visit a webpage to see how much power the panels are producing and how much carbon they are offsetting. The school district contracts a fleet of buses that have diesel exhaust fluid injection systems, which meet or exceed emission standards. The school building's HVAC system helps control building humidity and deters mold growth. Staff is surveyed annually using the Tools for Schools indoor air quality ventilation checklist. CLMS also was a pilot school for the State of Minnesota Public Buildings Enhanced Energy Efficiency Program.

All students at CLMS participate in a food-recycling program. This diversion of waste from trash helps to reduce pests naturally, averting the use of dangerous pesticides. Staff members encourage students to take the appropriate portions of food to help cut down on food waste in general. Students sort food waste for a local pig farm, are educated about landfills, and are taught about general recycling through videos and hands-on-activities.

Through service learning projects, students at CLMS are challenged to find ways to support

those in need, inspire each other, and take action to help change the world for the better. In collaboration with H2O for Life, staff, students, and community members raised over \$14,000 to provide a well for clean water, restrooms, and hygiene education for a small village in Mozambique. Students also came together to raise over \$16,000 to install 44 solar panels on the roof of the school.

CLMS students receive more than 120 minutes of physical education per week, including units on archery, cardio kickboxing, yoga, and Pilates. The school also participates in a local farm to school program. One hundred percent of the landscaping at CLMS is regionally appropriate or water-efficient, with an extensive array of flowering and herbaceous plants and grasses used in the school's five gardens. Construction has begun on raised vegetable beds that will supply fresh produce to the cafeteria, which already provides a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and a salad bar.

Students are exposed to environmental concepts in many classes, including language arts, science, social studies, math, and art. Students study the types of landforms and natural resources in social studies, and then expand on those concepts in science classes by analyzing ways to sustain the planet's resources and protect the environment. Language arts classes incorporate readings about sustainability and environmental protection.

[chisagolakes.mn.schoolwebpages.com](http://chisagolakes.mn.schoolwebpages.com)  
(651) 213-2400



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# STEM – Is it Everything They Say it is?

Brian Eberhardt, 6th Grade Science Teacher

Fish Lake House

South Washington County Schools

Lake Middle School

As a science teacher who has been around for a little while, I have to admit that I never gave much thought to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) because I thought it was simply another fad. Ideas, programs, words, and especially fancy sounding acronyms it seems come and go in education as often as our students. I assumed that what I was already doing in my classroom was STEM because I have always allowed students to use their phones in class as helpful tools when appropriate, I have always incorporated mathematical reasoning into many of the lessons I teach, and on occasion allow students to think outside the box and create something that they design. I believed STEM, as an idea was nothing new, but instead, just a trendy new word that educators have latched onto. I was wrong.

A couple of years ago I was given the opportunity to participate in a STEM curriculum-writing grant. The author of this grant was a professional engineer whose

focus was on integrating engineering methodologies into the middle level science classroom utilizing technology. With a Ph.D. in engineering, she admittedly had little experience in designing curriculum for middle level science classrooms, and so she invited science teachers to participate as “fellows.” As fellows, these teachers would work closely with engineers and graduate students to design engaging and age-appropriate curriculum, while learning the ins and outs of engineering which they then integrated into the lessons. It was through this summer opportunity that I came to understand what STEM really was and how it can impact the classroom in amazing ways.

Each fellow spent their summer working in teams on a STEM unit aligned to particular standards. Our charge was to ensure proper alignment to given standards and to incorporate the components of engineering into all of the unit lessons, which would culminate in a final engineering design task. This final task was to provide students the opportunity to participate fully in the Engineering Design Process, which I had never fully understood until that fateful summer. After many sessions of intense discussion, deliberation, brain-

storming, research, training, and lesson writing, each group had completed and independent, multi-week unit that could be used in the middle level science classroom, and which fully incorporated the components of STEM. At the end of the summer, each group was able to “pilot” a portion of their unit with a small group of students who had enrolled in a summer science camp on a university campus. My first experience teaching a true STEM lesson was during this piloting phase, and it was remarkable. The students were engaged and motivated simply by their interest in the task. The math and engineering components of the lessons were particularly stimulating, which I had been rather surprised about. However, the engagement likely would not have been there if we had not been encouraged, through our training, to include a captivating and relevant real-world challenge, such as those faced by engineers on a regular basis. This challenge was associated with the specific content standards being addressed and it was through the lens of an engineer that they were to address the given challenge. At the end of the summer, my eyes were

Continued on Page 17

## Lake Middle School's Brian Eberhardt named Fox 9 Super Science Teacher

Brian Eberhardt, sixth grade science teacher at Lake Middle School, received Fox 9's Super Science Teacher Award, which recognizes outstanding STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) educators in the Twin Cities metro and surrounding communities. Hundreds of nominations were received, and the award's judges selected nine winners who use science, technology, engineering, and math within the classroom to inspire their students.

As a Fox 9 Super Science Teacher, Eberhardt received \$900 for his classroom from **Royal Credit Union** and the opportunity to present his favorite classroom activity or demonstration at the Science Museum of Minnesota on Nov. 15 as part of Fox 9's Girls and Science Event.

“I am humbled by the staff member who nominated me and by Fox 9 for selecting me,” said Eberhardt. “I love teaching science and I am glad that what I am doing in the classroom is having a positive impact on my students.”

For his demonstration at the Girls and Science event, students participated in a simulation of a water molecule traveling through the water cycle. They created a water cycle bracelet that contains different colored beads representing the different places the water molecule visits throughout its journey.

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# Five Ways to Beat a Government Imposter Scam

## Don't wire money

Scammers often pressure people into wiring money, or strongly suggest that people put money on a prepaid debit card and send it to them. Why? It's like sending cash: once it's gone, you can't trace it or get it back. Never deposit a "winnings" check and wire money back, either. The check is a fake, no matter how good it looks, and you will owe the bank any money you withdraw. And don't share your account information, or send a check or money order using an overnight delivery or courier service. Con artists recommend these services so they can get your money before you realize you've been cheated.

## Don't pay for a prize

If you enter and win a legitimate sweepstakes, you don't have to pay insurance, taxes, or shipping charges to collect your prize. If you have to pay, it's not a prize. And companies, including Lloyd's of London, don't insure delivery of sweepstakes winnings.

If you didn't enter a sweepstakes or lottery, then you can't have won. Remember that it's illegal to play a foreign lottery through the mail or over the phone.

## Don't give the caller your financial or other personal information

Never give out or confirm financial or other sensitive information, including your bank account, credit card, or Social Security number, unless you know who you're dealing with. Scam artists, like fake debt collectors, can use your information to commit identity theft — charging your existing credit cards, opening new credit card, checking, or savings accounts, writing fraudulent checks, or taking out loans in your name. If you get a call about a debt that may be legitimate — but you think the collector may not be — contact the company you owe money to about the calls.

## Don't trust a name or number

Con artists use official-sounding names to make you trust them. It's illegal for any promoter to lie about an affiliation with — or an endorsement by — a government agency or any other well-known organization. No matter how convincing their story — or their stationery — they're lying. No legitimate government official will ask you to send money to collect a prize, and they won't call to collect your debt.

To make their call seem legitimate, scammers also use internet technology to disguise their area code. So even though it may look like they're calling from Washington, DC, they could be calling from anywhere in the world.

## Put your number on the National Do Not Call Registry

Ok, so this won't stop scammers from calling. But it should make you skeptical of calls you get from out of the blue. Most legitimate sales people generally honor the Do Not Call list. Scammers ignore it. Putting your number on the list helps to "screen" your calls for legitimacy and reduce the number of legitimate telemarketing calls you get. Register your phone number at [donotcall.gov](http://donotcall.gov).

## Report the Scam

If you get a call from a government imposter, file a complaint at [ftc.gov/complaint](http://ftc.gov/complaint). Be sure to include:

- date and time of the call
- name of the government agency the imposter used
- what they tell you, including the amount of money and the payment method they ask for
- phone number of the caller; although scammers may use technology to create a fake number or spoof a real one, law enforcement agents may be able to track that number to identify the caller
- any other details from the call

<https://www.ftc.gov>



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## Introducing District 197's Parent Academy



Travis Andries  
Communications Specialist  
School District 197

Students with parents who are actively involved in their education perform better in school. Recognizing this important connection between parent involvement and student achievement, this year District 197 will launch a new Parent Academy program at each school.

District 197's Parent Academy is a six-session course for parents of current District

197 students. The goal of the program, which will be hosting its first session in October, is to better connect parents to their child's school; including information on how the school works (procedures, communication resources, etc.), how the parent can better support their child academically and ways to set students on a path toward career or college readiness.

With an E-12 focus and emphasis on helping students on the path toward college, the implementation of the Parent Academy is directly connected to two of District 197's

Strategic Goals – narrowing the achievement gap and preparing students to be career or college ready.

"The research clearly says, and educators definitely know, that the more involved a parent is the better their child is going to do. We not only want to involve parents, we want to empower them and make sure they are fully equipped with tools to effectively support and guide their child's academic journey," said Sarah Egberg, District 197's equity and integration coordinator.

Each Parent Academy session is scheduled for two hours and includes a social dinner, along with an informational session for parents and guardians. Students may also attend and use the time to complete homework. Childcare is provided for younger siblings.

Each school's Parent Academy will use a curriculum created by the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), which incorporates activities into each session designed to engage parents in discussion. Parents will be encouraged to take ownership of the course by directing the conversations relating to each session's topic. Session instructors, all of whom are a District 197 employee or the parent of a District 197 student, serve as facilitators or "guides on the side."

"There are very interactive activities

where parents will get in 'jigsaw groups' and talk about a certain topic, maybe make a poster and present it to the rest of the group," Egberg said. "It's very active. It's not just parents sitting and getting information for an hour and a half."

Sessions are free and open to all parents and guardians to attend. Participants are asked to register in advance, as space will be limited, and to plan to attend all six sessions.

The District 197 Parent Academy began with a Spanish-language course at Garlough Environmental Magnet School. A second Spanish-language course began on December 8 at Henry Sibley High School, while an English-language was held at Mendota Elementary School in January. Parent Academy sessions are held on Monday evenings and run from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

All parents and guardians are encouraged to watch for information from their school regarding English and Spanish Parent Academy offerings, which are being scheduled throughout the rest of the school year.

[www.isd197.org](http://www.isd197.org)  
(651) 403-7000



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In our previous issue of *Teaching Today MN*, we highlighted two of six Brainerd Public Schools elementary schools that were honored as 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools.

Within Minnesota, only eight schools were awarded this honor and six were each of the elementary schools within Brainerd Public Schools. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan rec-

## 6 Elementary Schools – 6 Blue Ribbon Awards!

ognized 287 public schools nationwide as 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools.

It's unusual for a school district to pick up so many designations in one award cycle. But the Brainerd Public School District did just that — a feat noted by Minnesota Education Commissioner Dr. Brenda Cassellius.

“We’re seeing something unique in this year’s winners—multiple winning schools from a single district in a single year, or in recent years. That tells us these schools have figured out something special and important: how to move the needle not for just the kids in one school, but for kids in schools across the district,” she said.

In this issue we draw your attention to two more of these award-winning schools.

You can access the previous issue (Winter 2015, Volume 3) at our website: [www.teaching-todaymn.com](http://www.teaching-todaymn.com)

### Baxter Elementary School

Baxter Elementary School provides education for approximately 540 students, preschool through 4th grade and strives to do what is best for kids. The school philosophy is one of shared responsibility where each well-trained veteran staff are involved in various leadership roles. Along with classroom teachers, dedicated support staff are committed to the success and well-being of all students. Each year, over 200 volunteers generously share nearly 2000 hours of their time supporting teachers and students. Everyone has ownership and uses their individual strengths to achieve success at Baxter. Baxter’s staff offers many differentiation opportunities to meet the academic needs of our students. Embedded throughout the day, Baxter offers intervention groups such as Reading Recovery and Leveled Literacy Intervention, along with enrichment opportunities including Junior Great Books and advanced math groups. Before and after school remediation and enrichment classes

are available which focus on academic skills, as well as social skills. A foundation is laid for student success starting in August with traditions such as Kindercamp and parent information nights. The year is wrapped up with Kinderfriend Day and 4th grade graduation. These and many more time-honored traditions share the joy of the milestones that students attain as they progress through Baxter. Though large in size, Baxter maintains the feeling that school is family. Staff, students, and parents are committed to each other. We have a strong academic tradition, yet relationships are at the heart of what we do.

[baxter.isd181.org](http://baxter.isd181.org)  
(218) 454-6400

Additional information regarding the 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools is available at [www.nationalblueribbonsschools.com](http://www.nationalblueribbonsschools.com)

A short Brainerd Public Schools video describing methods and strategies for achieving these results can be seen at [www.isd181.org](http://www.isd181.org) under the Success tab.

The mission of the Brainerd Public Schools, in partnership with the community, is to ensure all students achieve their individual potential by providing the highest-quality programs and resources to prepare learners for an ever-changing global society. More information can be found at [www.isd181.org](http://www.isd181.org)

### Nisswa Elementary School



Across rural Minnesota, every indicator of economic and social well-being reinforces the belief that communities with their own schools fare significantly better than communities without. Nisswa School is located in the heart of Nisswa and the community’s commitment to students is immeasurable. Service organizations, businesses, and merchants treat the elementary children like they are the heartbeat of the community, and have done so for decades. From kindergarten treks to the Nisswa Fire Department atop fire trucks, to Halloween treats being doled out by downtown merchants lined up in front of their Main Street shops, to meaningful ceremonies hosted by the Nisswa American Legion Club, Nisswa students, families, and staff are reminded that they are a welcome and valued part of the community. Nearly 15 percent of current student population is “open enrolled” from other districts. Nisswa believes it is something they “have” that draws these students to their school, but most likely

it’s something they “do”. Nisswa seeks to nurture a relationship with their small-town community while providing students with all of the amenities found in a larger school district. Nisswa is small, community-focused, evolving...and truly appreciative of all the opportunities afforded their students. Nisswa Elementary staff is highly trained, devoted, and passionate professionals who teach community, the value of lifelong learning and grit via their inspiring example. Student achievement is the goal as they provide children in grades PreK-4 with rigorous academic programming and the support necessary for all to be successful. Nisswa is LAKERS PRIDE!

[nisswa.isd181.org](http://nisswa.isd181.org)  
(218) 961-6860

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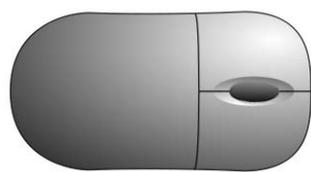
This exciting event will provide resources for educators and organizations seeking to learn more about STEM education, associated outreach programs, partnerships, schools, and curricula.

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# RESOURCE CENTER



## Science360 for iPad

Science360 for iPad provides easy access to engaging science and engineering images and video from around the globe and a news feed featuring breaking news from NSF-funded institutions. Content is either produced by NSF or gathered from scientists, colleges and universities, and NSF science and engineering centers.

**Website:** [science360.gov/ipad/about](http://science360.gov/ipad/about)

## Computational Science Education Reference Desk

Computational Science Education Reference Desk provides hundreds of visualizations, tutorials, and other resources for learning about computational science and astronomy, chemistry, geography, engineering, and space. Students can find competitions, internships and fellowships, career information, and the challenge of the week.

**Website:** [www.shodor.org/cserd/](http://www.shodor.org/cserd/)

## NASA Education Rocketry

NASA Education Rocketry is a website devoted to learning about rockets. There's a beginner's guide to rockets, a pictorial history of rockets, an index of rocket topics (including math and science fundamentals), and more. It offers interactive features, including one on "building a rocket."

**Website:** [www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/rocketry/home/](http://www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/rocketry/home/)

## TeachEngineering

TeachEngineering provides more than 500 lessons and activities for teaching engineering content in K–12 science and math classes. Topics include oil and energy consumption, water and electricity, mass and volume, various energy sources, heat transfer, solar heating systems, collisions and momentum, electrons, cellular respiration, biomedical engineering, and more. Lessons connect real-world experiences with concepts and skills already taught in K–12 classrooms.

**Website:** [www.teachengineering.org/](http://www.teachengineering.org/)

## Activity-Based Physics

Activity-Based Physics presents "thinking problems" for physics topics: vectors, kinematics, momentum, circular motion, universal gravitation, sound, energy, temperature, and circuits. Problems include designing a roller coaster, riding a bicycle efficiently, tailgating, tuning a radio, electrical safety, and how bats and dolphins "see" with sound (echolocation).

**Website:** [www.physics.umd.edu/rgroups/ripe/perg/abp/](http://www.physics.umd.edu/rgroups/ripe/perg/abp/)

## National Science Digital Library

National Science Digital Library provides access to resources in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and research. From video clips teaching cell division to simulations demonstrating plate tectonics, NSDL showcases Pathways through the collection that consist of content or audience specific resources provided by NSDL partners. These materials are supported with digital tools and services such as interactive science literacy maps.

**Website:** [nsdl.oercommons.org/](http://nsdl.oercommons.org/)

## Hoover Dam Learning Packet

Hoover Dam Learning Packet contains learning activities on the impact of Hoover Dam on the environment and its technical and historical significance. Learn about the history, wildlife, water resources, and hydroelectricity of Hoover Dam.

**Website:** [www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam/educate/index.html](http://www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam/educate/index.html)

## Secrets of Plant Genomes Revealed!

Secrets of Plant Genomes Revealed! tells the story of corn, cotton, and potatoes and introduces us to genome sequencing scientists. Watch videos about mutations, genetically engineered food, the importance of sequencing, and more.

**Website:** [plantgenomesecrets.org/](http://plantgenomesecrets.org/)

## Centers for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence

Centers for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence provides resources for learning about Arctic sea ice, Bearing Sea ecosystem, climate change, coastal wetlands, coral reefs, fisheries, Great Lakes, hydrothermal vents, ocean systems, oil spills, robots in Antarctica, sea floor maps, storm drain water, and more.

**Website:** [www.cosee.net/](http://www.cosee.net/)

## Chemistry Now

Chemistry Now is an online video series that explains the science of common foods and objects — water, cheese, bread, chocolate, flowers, nylon, artificial sweeteners, and more.

**Website:** [www.nsf.gov/news/special\\_reports/chemistrynow/](http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/chemistrynow/)

## K–12 Science and Health Education

K–12 Science and Health Education provides dozens of resources for teaching and

learning about topics in biology, environmental health science and chemistry, forensics and medical technology, genetics, health, and HIV/AIDS. Careers and Spanish language resources are included.

**Website:** [sis.nlm.nih.gov/outreach/k12.html](http://sis.nlm.nih.gov/outreach/k12.html)

## Seeing Math

Seeing Math™ Interactives clarify key algebra concepts. They help students see connections between symbolic and graphic representations of quadratic functions, linear functions, piecewise linear functions, and more.

**Website:** [seeingmath.concord.org/sms\\_interactives.html](http://seeingmath.concord.org/sms_interactives.html)

## Calculator-Controlled Robots

Calculator-Controlled Robots is a guide book for using calculator-controlled robots with students in Grades 6–9 over the course of one semester. Missions are built sequentially on the knowledge of previous activities. The first missions have step-by-step programming instructions; in later missions, students create their own programs. Students use math and science concepts to direct their robots through various challenges.

**Website:** [www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/topnav/materials/listbytype/Calculator-Controlled\\_Robots.html](http://www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/topnav/materials/listbytype/Calculator-Controlled_Robots.html)

## Statistics Online Computational Resource

Statistics Online Computational Resource provides online aids for probability and statistics education, technology-based instruction, and statistical computing. It includes interactive graphs and calculators for showing distributions, computer-generated analogs of experiments and popular games, web tools for statistical data analysis, simulations of real-life processes, modeling tools, a wiki, technology-based continuing statistics education, and more.

**Website:** [www.socr.ucla.edu/](http://www.socr.ucla.edu/)

## Practical Uses of Math and Science

Practical Uses of Math and Science offers more than 60 one-page examples of how science and math can be used in interesting settings and everyday life. Topics include clouds (why they float), social security benefits (algebra), Pythagoras theorem (cabinet corners), ice sheets and sea level, logarithms, matching birthdays (statistics), natural selection and a scavenger hunt, photons, traffic signals (probability), seasons (causes), volca-

nic clouds, wind chill (algebra), and more.

**Website:** [pumas.jpl.nasa.gov/](http://pumas.jpl.nasa.gov/)

## Calculus on the Web

Calculus on the Web offers an interactive environment for learning, practicing, and experimenting with the ideas and techniques of calculus. It is organized in seven parts: Precalculus; Calculus I, II, and III; Linear Algebra; Number Theory; and Abstract Algebra.

**Website:** [cow.math.temple.edu/](http://cow.math.temple.edu/)

## Calendars Through the Ages

Calendars Through the Ages looks at the astronomical basis of calendars, the history of our (Gregorian) calendar, and when various countries moved from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. Learn about Leap Year, the solar cycle, equinoxes and solstices.

**Website:** [www.webexhibits.org/calendars/](http://www.webexhibits.org/calendars/)

## Exploratorium Online

Exploratorium Online features dozens of online learning activities and exhibits. Make a mold terrarium, pinhole projector, telescope, or hair hygrometer. Explore the brain, biodiversity, Antarctica, DNA, frogs, structures, or illusions. Learn about magnetism, electricity, motors, eyeballs, perception, Mars, chocolate, seasonings, or the science of cooking, sports, and music. Search over 3,000 photos and movies. Watch webcasts of science demonstrations by teachers.

**Website:** [www.exploratorium.edu/explore](http://www.exploratorium.edu/explore)

## Project SkyMath

Project SkyMath: Making Mathematical Connections uses real-time weather data, involves classrooms in hands-on mathematics. It is designed for middle school mathematics teachers and contains all of the information needed to use the 16 classroom activities.

**Website:** [eo.ucar.edu/skymath/](http://eo.ucar.edu/skymath/)

## Imagine the Universe

Imagine the Universe includes lesson plans on wavelengths and frequencies, sizes of stars, gamma-ray bursts, the binary number system, the probability of life elsewhere in the universe, constructing and analyzing images from digital satellite data, measuring periodic behavior, logarithmic plotting and classification of objects by their mathematical behavior, the origin of the elements and their identification in supernova remnants, and identifying elements using spectroscopy.

**Website:** [imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov/teachers/index.html](http://imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov/teachers/index.html)

# Crooked Lake fifth-graders make t-shirts for children in Uganda



Crooked Lake fifth graders, from left, Mackena Bouchard, Jacob Marcoux, and Suntronia Norholm, work on t-shirts that they sent to children in Uganda.

*Derrick Williams*  
Communication Specialist  
Anoka-Hennepin School District

Crooked Lake fifth grade teacher Jenni-

fer Bicknese wanted to do something different to ring in the holidays with her students and school.

“I got to thinking . . . wouldn’t it be neat

if instead of a gift exchange — to do something that involved giving back? That’s where this all started,” she said.

What she’s talking about is a holiday project where all of Crooked Lake’s fifth-grade students — including those in her own classroom — made t-shirts for children in Uganda. But a personal connection made this project even more meaningful, according to Bicknese.

“Oh, it was awesome,” Bicknese said. “The kids — they just loved it.”

## Getting started

A couple years ago, Bicknese’s father met a man named Frank Tibigandika at a global education conference. Tibigandika, who is from Uganda, runs a private school program in a small village in the African country.

“My dad and (Tibigandika) hit it off,” she said. “So a few years ago, we traveled together to Uganda to visit him and do some work.”

Fast-forward to a Culturally Responsive Training (CRT) meeting Bicknese went to last year. “They were talking about making t-shirts for children in other parts of the world. It was a great idea,” she said. “For us, Uganda was a natural choice for such a project thanks

to (Tibigandika).”

It also worked out because Tibigandika was going to be in Minnesota over the holidays, Bicknese said. “He’d be here to see the kids and bring the shirts back right away,” she said.

## Getting kids on board

In early December, after getting approval from Sam Anderson, Crooked Lake’s principal, Bicknese and the other fifth-grade teachers talked to students about the project.

“We let the kids decide — we asked them if they’d like to have a traditional end-of-school party, or if they wanted to do this? They chose to be philanthropic and give,” she said. “That was the really cool part. We left it up to them and they chose to give.”

The next step was getting materials and funds to pay for it. “We asked the kids to donate toward supplies in order to feel ownership toward the project,” Bicknese said. “But instead of asking their parents for \$5, we asked them to earn it with service — do an extra chore or something. That way, they’d understand their own work and service went to the supplies.”

**Continued on Page 17**

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- Kit Luedtke, Principal  
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# A Teacher Who Never Stops Learning

**Andrea Schueler becomes district's second National Board Certified Teacher**



Carissa Keister  
Community Engagement Coordinator  
Stillwater Area Public Schools

Though she's been a high school Spanish teacher in the Stillwater Area Public School District for 16 years, Andrea Schueler still views herself first and fore-

most as a student.

Her curiosity and never-ending quest for knowledge is what prompted her to become the district's second teacher to earn National Board Certification, an advanced teaching credential held by about three percent of the nation's teachers.

National Board Certification is a rigorous, peer-reviewed process that ensures that Board-certified teachers have proven skills to advance student achievement.

"I was ready for something else professionally and just knew this was the next step," Schueler said.

During the 2014–2015 school year, while her students were doing their homework to perfect Spanish words and phrases, Schueler spent much of her free time engaging in her own learning adventure. As part of the process to earn certification she needed to complete four separate portfolio projects, pass six intense exams, and be observed and evaluated by her peers and students. She watched videos of herself teaching and critiqued everything – from the content she taught to the ways her students engaged with their classmates during lessons.

"Did I learn a new teaching strategy? No," Schueler said. "But I learned to be reflective and to think about what I am doing and the effect of what I am doing. It led me to make changes in the way I was instructing students and that benefits everyone."

This year Schueler is able to share all

that she learned through the certification process with other high school teachers in her new role as an instructional coach. She spends her days working with teachers to improve their craft, using strategies such as self-reflection and peer-observation. She's also able to share her love of learning by helping her colleagues develop new skills, consider new ideas, and implement new teaching techniques.

"The more I work with teaching, the more I appreciate it as a craft that melds art with science," she said. "It is this wonderful, beautiful, sometimes messy mix of knowledge, relationship, adventure, trial and error that results in the sparks and 'ahas' of learning, whether I am working with students or other teachers. That's what I love."

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## STEM – Is it Everything They Say it is?

Continued from Page 10

beginning to open to the power of STEM integration in the science classroom.

As part of the grant, fellows were assigned “coaches” that they would meet with throughout the school year to discuss best practices, professional development, and to plan for the implementation of the STEM unit that had been designed during the summer months. While this work was variable in its effectiveness and value, the work of preparing and implementing the unit in my regular classroom with real students was invaluable and exciting. With any idea in education, just because it sounds good or has solid theory and intellect behind it, does not mean it is going to be successful when introduced into a real classroom. However, aside from typical minor setbacks and detours, the STEM unit was an extreme success. The level of engagement I witnessed from nearly every student was quite astounding and unlike anything I had seen before. I attribute this not to my group’s ability to write an engaging unit, but rather to the natural engagement invoked by the incorporation of STEM components. I am not suggesting that high quality teachers with an ability to design engaging lessons isn’t valuable or important, but rather that there is something inherently motivating about an assignment or task that the students find relevant, realistic, and stimulating. Obviously a skilled teacher is able to create lessons that engage students in these ways, however, until now, I had not realized how effective STEM is at combining all of these aspects of learning into one unit.

As I continue to grow as a teacher, I continue to put effort into taking my units and

lessons and making them STEM units and lessons. Using the guiding principles I learned from my summer experience I am working to enhance lessons. Making a science lesson a STEM lesson does not take away the science content or diminish the depth of science learning, but to the contrary, it makes it more accessible and interesting to students. From designing a self-sustaining container that can travel through space for our ecology unit, to building a fish fitness test during our evolution unit, students in my classroom are getting exposed to the science content in relevant engineering design tasks which they are able to fully engage in and experience. Using technology such as handheld GPS devices and data collecting probes, students are able to collect and analyze data through the lens of an engineer, which means not only adhering to the constraints of their client, but also making an argument justifying why their products design is the best. It is through this vital argumentation step that the demonstration of learning is provided.

STEM education is very effective. It is very real. It is not just a trend. It is a venue for highly engaging and stimulating science lessons which allow students to maximize their potential and gives teachers a unique opportunity to witness learning and acquire strong evidence for this learning through the engineering design process.

[www.sowashco.k12.mn.us](http://www.sowashco.k12.mn.us)  
(651) 458-6300

## T-shirts for Uganda

Continued from Page 15

### Making and giving

The Friday before the holiday break, Dec. 19, all of the fifth-graders got together and made their shirts. Most were brightly colored t-shirts — pink and red and blue and orange — and the students bedazzled them with glitter and colorful gel that they could draw with.

“We worked with the students and really focused on the Ugandan culture — we made sure the shirts were appropriate for the conservative culture. We talked about it,” she said. “It made for lots of animals on the shirts.”

On Jan. 8, when all of the students were back from the holiday break, Tibigandika, who was in Minnesota for the holidays, came to the school to speak and talked to the fifth-graders about what school is like in Uganda and the challenges.

They also talked about how the children in Uganda would love the t-shirts. “Each

student personally handed (Tibigandika) the shirt they made. They got to say hello and he got to say thank you to each student,” Bicknese said.

With t-shirts in tow, Tibigandika recently flew back to Uganda. He told Bicknese that once he gives the children there the t-shirts, he’ll take photos and follow up with Crooked Lake.

“The kids loved this,” she said. “And to personally give it to (Tibigandika) — you could see them beaming with pride. You could tell that it meant a lot to the kids to do that.”

[www.anoka.k12.mn.us/  
crookedlake](http://www.anoka.k12.mn.us/crookedlake)  
(763) 506-2100

# Grants

Continued from Page 4

folk and traditional arts, and media arts including animation and digital art.

Awards range from \$10,000 to \$100,000.

**Deadline:** Applications are due July 23, 2015.

**Website:** [arts.gov/grants-organizations/art-works/media-arts](http://arts.gov/grants-organizations/art-works/media-arts)

### College Board Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Arts

The College Board presents an annual award to public and private schools serving students in grades 6 through 12 that have implemented an arts program that promotes student learning and creativity in exemplary and innovative ways. Eligible arts programs must be in place a minimum of one year prior to the application date.

Three schools (one school from each category) will receive \$5,000 each, with one school named national winner to receive an additional \$2,500.

**Deadline:** Applications must be submitted online by Monday, April 13, 2015.

**Website:** [artsaward.collegeboard.org/application.php](http://artsaward.collegeboard.org/application.php)

### Library Grant Program

The Lois Lenski Covey Foundation annually awards grants to rural, urban, public, and school libraries and agencies that serve children who are economically or socially at risk, have limited book budgets, and demonstrate real need.

Awards range from \$500 to \$3,000 for the purchase of children’s books.

**Deadline:** Applications are due June 15, annually.

**Website:** [www.loislenskicovey.org/index.html](http://www.loislenskicovey.org/index.html)

### Saucony Run for Good Program

The Saucony Run for Good Foundation encourages active and healthy lifestyles for children and is dedicated to preventing and eliminating childhood obesity. In addition, the foundation acts to inform the public about the causes and prevention of childhood obesity and provide funding to optimize the impact and success of community organizations, including public schools that promote running and fitness programs for kids.

Grants up to \$10,000 are awarded. Up to seven grants are awarded each cycle.

**Deadline:** Applications are due June 13 and December 13, annually.

**Website:** [www.sauconyrunforgood.com/how-to-apply/](http://www.sauconyrunforgood.com/how-to-apply/)

### Fruit and Veggie Grants for Schools

The Chef Ann Foundation has teamed up with Skoop, a superfoods company committed to bringing the health benefits of superfoods to every American. Together we have launched Mission Nutrition: Fruit and Veggie Grants for Schools. These \$2,500 grants assist you in expanding your students’ palates, and encouraging increased consumption of and exposure to fresh produce through engagement in lunchroom education activities that encourage students to taste new vegetables and fruits offered either in a dish, cooked, or raw.

**Deadline:** Applications are accepted year-round.

**Website:** [www.chefannfoundation.org/programs/mission-nutrition/](http://www.chefannfoundation.org/programs/mission-nutrition/)

### Pathway to Financial Success Grant

The Pathway to Financial Success Grants are intended to bring financial education to classrooms to help children learn to make sensible financial decisions and reach their goals. US high schools are eligible to apply for a grant to incorporate financial education into the curriculum.

**Deadline:** Applications are accepted year-round.

**Website:** [www.pathwaytofinancialsuccess.org/apply-for-a-grant/](http://www.pathwaytofinancialsuccess.org/apply-for-a-grant/)

### United Technologies Grants

United Technologies (UTC) wants to inspire students to embrace science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It supports the development of the next generation of engineers, scientists, and finance professionals by sponsoring primary school to university-level programs that spark students’ interest and inspire innovation. The program also focuses on promoting opportunities for minorities and women to pursue careers in engineering and research.

**Deadline:** Corporate headquarters accepts online applications from January 1 to June 30, annually.

**Website:** [www.utc.com/  
Corporate-Responsibility/Community/  
Pages/Apply-For-A-Grant.aspx](http://www.utc.com/Corporate-Responsibility/Community/Pages/Apply-For-A-Grant.aspx)



## Anoka Middle School sixth-grader Alanna Worrall earns national recognition for volunteer service



Anoka Middle School for the Arts sixth grader Alanna Worrall has been named Minnesota's top middle school youth volunteer for 2015 by the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards.

*Derrick Williams, Communication Specialist  
Anoka-Hennepin School District*

In 2009, when Alanna Worrall was just a kindergartner, she underwent a surgical procedure. "It was scary," said Worrall, now 12 years old and a sixth-grader at Anoka Middle School for the Arts (AMSA). "But the nurses — I remember they gave me a blanket and a stuffed animal and blew bubbles for me. They helped me to smile and laugh."

The experience inspired her. "I thought kids should be able to be kids even when they're in the hospital," she said.

So a few months after her surgery, Worrall emptied her piggy bank and assembled her first four "Feel Better" baskets — Easter baskets for children at a local hospital, which she filled with a toy or activity, candy, a stuffed animal, and of course, a bubble-blowing kit.

Every year her Feel Better basket deliveries have grown in numbers — from four the first year to more than 40 last year and more than 300 in total — thanks in part to donations and help from her church, schools and the community. Over the years she's raised thousands of dollars with help from fundraisers. Like the \$2,000 raised at her father's company thanks to a "jeans day,"

where employees donated money for the right to wear jeans to work, and the \$500 raised during a "hat day" fundraiser at her old elementary school, Earle Brown in Brooklyn Center, where students donated money to wear a hat in school.

"We get a lot of donations from my church, too," Worrall said. "We get toys and Easter grass to put in the baskets — I think we've gotten enough Easter grass to cover my whole lawn!"

In addition, Worrall has used some of the monetary donations to buy DVDs, video and board games, and craft supplies for the hospitalized children. Target helped too, and hand-stuffed hundreds of plastic Easter eggs so the children at the hospital could have an egg hunt.

Worrall's work hasn't gone unnoticed. This month, The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards named her as Minnesota's top middle school youth volunteer for 2015. The award is a pretty big deal — it's a nationwide program honoring young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism and only 102 students — one middle schooler and one high schooler in each state — are given the award annually.

"When I found out I had won, I was shocked and excited," Worrall said. "I really didn't expect it."

For winning, Worrall will receive \$1,000,

an engraved silver medallion and an all-expense-paid trip in early May to Washington, D.C., where she will join the top two honorees from each of the other states and the District of Columbia for four days of national recognition events. During the trip, 10 students will be named America's top youth volunteers of 2015. Each will receive \$5,000, a gold medallion, a crystal trophy and a \$5,000 grant from The Prudential Foundation for a nonprofit charitable organization of their choice.

"I am really looking forward to going because I hope I can inspire others to do something similar for the community they live in," she said.

Karalynn Tyler, Worrall's American history teacher at AMSA, said she's not surprised she won. "She's an incredibly bright and mature young lady," Tyler said. "Her maturity extends beyond her academic smarts — she is sensitive and responsive to the needs of those around her. She's one of those unforgettable kids with a big heart and a personality that shines."

On tap for this year, Worrall said, is the potential for her and a group of cosplay (costume play) friends to help deliver the baskets to the Child and Family Services department at the hospital dressed as princesses.

"We recently went to another hospital and

we entertained kids with terminal diseases," she said. "It was really great."

But she ultimately doesn't get to see the faces of the children the baskets go to. "I don't get to see patients in the child and family services area — I'm too young," she said. "But I still like delivering the baskets because I see the excitement on the faces of the specialists, and I can imagine how happy the kids are when they get the baskets."

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, now in its 20th year, is the United States' largest youth recognition program based solely on volunteer service. All public and private middle level and high schools in the country, as well as all Girl Scout councils, county 4-H organizations, American Red Cross chapters, YMCAs and HandsOn Network affiliates, were eligible to select a student or member for a local Prudential Spirit of Community Award. The local honorees, like Worrall, were then reviewed by an independent judging panel, which selected state honorees and distinguished finalists based on criteria including personal initiative, effort, impact and personal growth.

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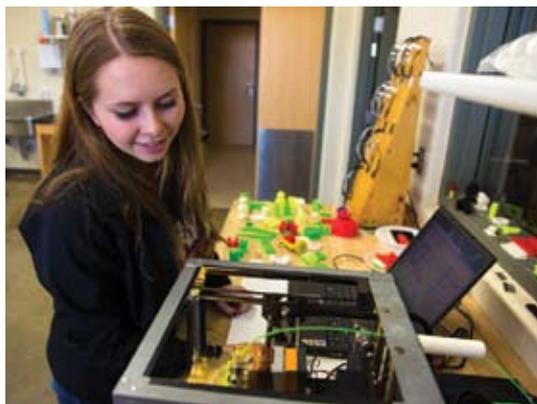
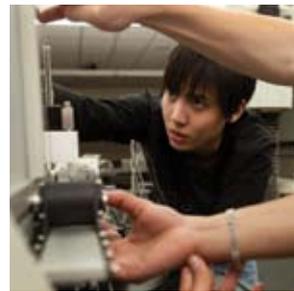
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