

The Karen Thomas Fund

Administered by
Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation

Changing Lives Through Literacy



‘The greatest gift is the passion for reading. It is cheap, it consoles, it distracts, it excites, it gives you knowledge of the world and experience of a wide kind. It is a moral illumination.’

Elizabeth Hardwick



Mission Statement

- The Karen Thomas Fund is dedicated to promoting literacy and a love of reading among elementary students (grades pre-K through 5) in the Ann Arbor area.
- The Karen Thomas Fund provides grants to teachers and other educators who seek funding for literacy-related projects
- The Karen Thomas Fund emphasizes projects targeting minorities, the economically disadvantaged and other at-risk groups.

History

- Established in 2009 in honor of Karen Thomas, writer and reading volunteer
- Originally administered by AAPS Educational Foundation
- Transferred to Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation in 2017
- Since inception, over \$116,000 in teacher grants
- Funded by private donations
- Recently received gifts from Comerica, Wacker Chemical Company

Examples Of Karen Thomas Grants

- “Real World Connections Through Informational Texts” -- Abbot
- “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors: Ensuring Students See Themselves in Literature” – Angell
- “Mitchell Early Readers Book Room” -- Mitchell
- “Reaching Every Reader” – (joint project to address COVID reading loss at Allen, Angell, Bryant, King, STEAM)
- “A Solid Foundation: Replacing Pittsfield’s Y5-5 Library Collection” – Pittsfield
- “Social Justice Read Aloud Library” – Dicken
- “Diverse, Engaging and Aligned Decodables to Support Striving Readers with Foundational Reading Skills” – Allen
- “Whole School Book Tasting” – Haisley (with Peace Neighborhood Center)
- “We Need Diverse Books” -- A2 STEAM

First Annual **MULTICULTURAL** LITERACY NIGHT

@ **A2 STEAM**

sponsored by a generous grant
from the Karen Thomas Foundation

Activities and read-alouds for all grade levels Y5-8.
Learn more about some of your favorite authors,
about other cultures and maybe something new about your own culture.

STORIES AROUND THE WORLD

Thursday,
March 20, 2025
5:00pm - 7:00pm

Themes in KT Grants

- Emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity
- Strengthen links between classroom and community
- Expand and update media center materials to reflect a rapidly-changing world
- Address setbacks to reading proficiency due to pandemic

Book Tasting Event Peace Neighborhood Center



Social Justice Read Aloud Dicken Elementary School



Karen Thomas Funds at Work Abbot Elementary School



The Teacher Perspective

Dana Gartland
Librarian, Abbot

Nicole Cooper
Title I Teacher, Haisley

Winners, 2024 Karen Thomas Grants

Reasons to Support the Karen Thomas Fund

- No marketing or salary expenses
- Targets most vulnerable students
- Helps even out inequities in resources
- Partially offsets budget cuts
- Encourages reading across many genres
- Strengthens school-community link
- Grants go directly to teachers

To Donate

- Go to AAACF.org
 - Click the “Give Online” button (upper right corner)
 - On the “Donate Now” page, go to the “Find a Specific Fund”
 - Enter “Karen Thomas Fund”
 - Select and add to your shopping cart
- OR – Simply write a check to “AAACF”, add “Karen Thomas Fund” in the memo section, and mail to:

AAACF
301 N. Main Street, Suite 300
Ann Arbor MI 48104

Questions?