



**WACO ISD EDUCATION FOUNDATION
COVER SHEET – PART II
Application for Grant:
2025-2026 Funding Cycle**

Assigned Grant Proposal #: _____

Project Title: _____

Grade Level(s): _____ **# of Students DIRECTLY involved:** _____

Subject Area(s): _____

Amount Requested: \$ _____

Grant Focus Area(s): In order to be considered, Waco Education Foundation Innovation Grant proposals must fall under one or more of the E4 focus areas: early childhood development, enhanced programming for advanced students, extended education for staff, and emphasis on student performance. NOTE: In addition to meeting one of the E4 focus areas above, grant readers are especially interested in creative and innovative grant requests that target fine arts, STEM, literacy, or enrichment.

(check all that apply)

Early Childhood Development

Enhanced Programming for Advanced Students

Fine Arts

Literacy

Extended Education for Staff

Emphasis on Student Performance

STEM

Enrichment

ENHANCING EARLY LEARNING: A SENSORY TABLE FOR EXPLORATION AND GROWTH

Project Description

The "Enhancing Early Learning: A Sensory Table for Exploration and Growth" project aims to provide a dedicated space for children to actively explore various textures, materials, and objects through hands-on play. A sensory table can greatly benefit kindergarten children by engaging their senses and encouraging hands-on exploration, which is crucial for early childhood development. It allows children to manipulate different materials, such as sand, water, rice, or other textured objects, helping them improve fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. By investing in a sensory table, a classroom can provide an enriching, multi-dimensional learning environment that supports children's overall development.

Rationale

The "Enhancing Early Learning: A Sensory Table for Exploration and Growth" project aligns with the funding focus area of the Waco Education Foundation Creative Classroom Project by fostering hands-on, experiential learning, which stimulates creativity and engagement. Sensory tables encourage students to explore different textures, shapes, and materials, helping to develop cognitive and fine motor skills. This aligns with the foundation's goal to enhance student learning in innovative ways. In relation to the campus or district improvement plan, the project addresses the need for differentiated instruction, especially for early learners or students with special needs. A sensory table creates a dynamic learning environment that caters to various learning styles, supporting goals to increase student engagement. This project is essential for our school because it provides an inclusive, interactive tool that supports students in developing essential skills through creative, hands-on learning experiences.

Goals

The goals of this project are to foster sensory exploration, promote hands-on learning, and support the development of fine motor and cognitive skills in students. Specifically, we expect to:

- **Enhance Student Engagement:** Provide a space for students to actively engage in tactile learning experiences, promoting curiosity and exploration.
- **Support Development of Key Skills:** Help students develop sensory processing skills, fine motor skills, problem-solving abilities, and spatial awareness.
- **Cater to Diverse Learners:** Address the needs of students with varying learning styles, including those with developmental delays, by offering differentiated instruction through interactive learning activities.
- **Encourage Creativity:** Create an environment that stimulates imagination and fosters creative thinking in young learners.

Over time, we expect students to demonstrate improved fine motor skills and cognitive development over time. This sensory table is not just a tool for play, but a purposeful, educational resource that aligns with our district's focus on enhancing learning experiences that cater to individual needs. By incorporating this project, we aim to create an inclusive and dynamic classroom environment where all students can thrive.

Plan of Operation

The "Enhancing Early Learning: A Sensory Table for Exploration and Growth" project is designed to provide students with a dynamic, interactive learning tool that stimulates sensory exploration, cognitive development, and fine motor skill enhancement. This project will offer students a variety of materials, textures, and objects in a safe, engaging space to explore with their hands and minds. By incorporating tactile activities into the classroom, the sensory table will support differentiated instruction and contribute to a more inclusive learning environment.

Activities:

- **Sensory Motor Center:** The sensory table will feature themes based on the Waco ISD Science Kindergarten Units. The materials used will include sand, water, textured fabrics, rice, beans, playdough, leaves, rocks, and/or other sensory manipulatives. Students will engage in activities that promote sensory processing and hands-on learning.

- **Fine Motor Skill Development:** Activities such as pouring, sorting, and manipulating objects in the sensory table will enhance students' hand-eye coordination and dexterity.
- **Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking:** As students engage with materials, they will solve simple problems related to volume, shape sorting, or creative building with natural items, encouraging logical thinking.
- **Creative Play:** Using the sensory table, children will be encouraged to build structures or create imaginative stories based on the objects in the table, fostering creativity and language development.

Objectives:

- To enhance cognitive, motor, and social-emotional skills through sensory exploration.
- To engage students in collaborative activities, promoting teamwork and communication.
- To cater to diverse learning needs and abilities, offering an inclusive learning space for all students.

Strategies:

- **Differentiated Learning:** Activities will be tailored to meet the needs of different learners, including students with developmental delays, gifted students, and English Language Learners (ELLs).
- **Data-Driven Adjustments:** Teachers will assess students' progress using observational data and adjust the types of sensory activities provided based on students' needs and developmental milestones.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Students will work in pairs or small groups to encourage communication, sharing, and joint problem-solving, developing social skills in addition to academic learning.

School Community Partners:

- **Parents:** Parents will be involved in contributing materials to the sensory table (e.g., sand, rice, natural objects) and participating in volunteer days, assisting teachers with guided sensory play sessions.
- **Local Businesses:** Partnerships with local stores and farms will be sought for donations of materials such as natural stones, sand, plants, or textiles.
- **Community Volunteers:** High school students or local community members will be invited to assist with maintaining the sensory table or engaging with younger students in guided activities.

Detailed Timeline/Calendar:

Month 1: Planning & Set-Up

- **Week 1:** Order supplies for the sensory table
- **Week 2:** Set up sensory table in the classroom. Prepare the Sensory Motor Center with a variety of sensory materials.
- **Week 3:** Introduce the project to all grade-level teachers and instructional aides. Train staff on how to use the sensory table as a teaching tool.
- **Week 4:** Launch sensory table activities with the students. Collect feedback from teachers and students on their first experiences.

Month 2-4: Implementation

- **Weekly:** Sensory table activities will rotate based on the Science themes (e.g., "Properties of Objects," "Everyday Force and Energy," "Our Natural World"). Activities will be documented, and students will complete mini-projects or journals reflecting their experiences.
- **Ongoing:** Encourage parents to bring in materials (e.g., small pebbles, leaves, etc.) that align with Science themes.
- **End of Month 4:** Create a "Sensory Table Showcase" presentation for parents and community members to see how students have engaged with the table and demonstrate what they've learned.

Month 5-6: Reflection & Community Engagement

- **End of Month 5:** Review student progress and gather feedback from parents and teachers. Adjust sensory activities and strategies as needed based on assessment data.
- **Month 6:** Host a community event, inviting local businesses, families, and volunteers to see the impact of the sensory table project. Provide a reflection on how the project aligns with the school's educational goals and student success.
- **Ongoing:** Continue inviting parent and community participation for the remainder of the school year.

Communication & Dissemination

Foundation Involvement: We will actively include the Waco Education Foundation in the "Enhancing Early Learning: A Sensory Table for Exploration and Growth" project by inviting Foundation representatives to observe the project in action. This will provide them an opportunity to see firsthand how the funding from the Foundation has been used to enhance student learning and engagement.

- **Invitation to Observe:** We will extend a formal invitation to the Foundation members to visit the classroom and observe the sensory table in use. During the

visit, we will provide a brief presentation on the goals of the project, how it is being implemented, and the impact it has had on student development. This will also be an opportunity for the Foundation representatives to interact with students and see how the project aligns with the Foundation's mission to support innovative learning environments.

District-Level Dissemination: At the conclusion of the project, we will prepare a comprehensive report or slideshow detailing the outcomes and impact of the sensory table on student learning. This report will be shared with district administrators and teachers as well as presented at a faculty meeting or professional development session. The presentation will include:

- Pictures displaying student engagement and development related to sensory play.
- Teacher feedback on the effectiveness of the sensory table.
- Success stories from students who benefited from the project.
- Lessons learned and best practices for integrating sensory play into the classroom.

Evaluation

To determine whether the sensory table project is successful and effective, we will implement the following:

- **Observation Logs:** Teachers will maintain detailed observation logs throughout the project, recording students' levels of engagement, participation, and behavior during sensory table activities. These logs will track the frequency with which students engage with the table and note any signs of increased enthusiasm or curiosity in the classroom.
- **Behavioral Checklists:** A checklist will be used to assess students' participation in collaborative activities at the sensory table. Teachers will monitor whether students work well together, share materials, and follow instructions, reflecting the social and emotional benefits of the project.
- **Pre- and Post-Assessment:** Teachers will conduct a pre-assessment of students' fine motor skills at the beginning of the project (e.g., hand-eye coordination, ability to manipulate small objects) and a post-assessment at the end. This will involve activities such as sorting, pouring, and threading beads, which will be scored using a rubric that evaluates skill development.
- **Progress Tracking:** Students' progress in activities like sorting, stacking, and manipulating materials will be tracked throughout the project to observe growth in fine motor skills.

- **Student Journals:** Students will document their experiences and discoveries related to sensory table activities in a journal or through drawings. Teachers will review these journals periodically to assess students' ability to reflect on their learning, think critically about the materials, and solve problems creatively.
- **Observation of Cognitive Growth:** Teachers will observe how students approach problem-solving during sensory exploration, such as sorting by shape, color, or size, and assess their ability to organize and categorize materials. Growth in these areas will be indicative of cognitive development.
- **Student Interviews:** Students will be asked to reflect on their experiences with the sensory table through informal interviews or group discussions. They will share what they enjoyed, what they learned, and how the activities made them feel.

Long Term Implications

To sustain the "Enhancing Early Learning: A Sensory Table for Exploration and Growth" project after 2025-2026 school year, we plan to integrate it fully into our classroom routines. The materials for the table are largely reusable, and we will seek to refresh them through low-cost or no-cost options, such as community donations, repurposing materials, or using everyday items. Additionally, the project will become part of the school's long-term instructional resources, maintained through general classroom funds.

Key Personnel

Classroom Teacher

Responsibilities:

- Plan and integrate sensory table activities in daily lessons across subjects.
- Supervise and guide students during sensory play to ensure safety and learning.
- Maintain sensory table and materials, ensuring they are clean and well-organized.

Qualifications:

- Experience with differentiated instruction and hands-on learning.
- Strong classroom management and creativity in developing engaging activities

Literacy Assistant/Paraprofessional

Responsibilities:

- Provide additional supervision and support for students.

Qualifications:

- Experience with differentiated instruction and hands-on learning.
- Strong classroom management and creativity in developing engaging activities.

Waco Education Foundation

Grant Budget Form

Assigned Proposal #	42
Project Title:	Enhancing Early Learning: A Sensory Table for Exploration and Growth
Number of Students Served by Grant:	46

Qty	Budget Item	Verify Vendor (Y or N)	\$ Requested from the WISD Foundation	Other Secured Source	\$ from Other Source (if applicable)	Total Amount
Consumable Supplies						
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Consumable Supplies			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
Technology						
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Technology			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
Long-Term Supplies / Equipment (items that will last beyond the grant year)						
2	Light Table Sensory Bundle	N	\$ 2,000.00			\$ 2,000.00
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Long-Term Supplies			\$ 2,000.00		\$ -	\$ 2,000.00
Contracted Services						
						\$ -

						\$ -
total Contracted Services			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
Personnel						
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Personnel			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
Travel / Other						
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Other			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
Totals		Total Requested from the WISD Foundation		Foundation Cost Per Student	Total from Other Sources	Total Cost of Project
		\$ 2,000.00		43.47826087	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00