



**WACO ISD EDUCATION FOUNDATION
COVER SHEET – PART II
Application for Grant:
2026-2027 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 | Extended Education for Staff |
| Enhanced Programming for Advanced Students | Emphasis on Student Performance |
| Fine Arts | STEM |
| Literacy | Enrichment |

Assigned Proposal #: 60

Hardcovers & Heroes: The Quest for the Literary Cup

Project Description

This initiative gamifies literacy by launching a "Battle of the Books" competition across our District's three middle school campuses. Students form teams to read 36 diverse, high-interest novels, culminating in campus-level qualifiers and a district-wide championship. Funding provides each campus library with a complete set of the "America's Battle of the Books" (ABB) list, ensuring equitable access to high-quality literature. By blending athletic-style competition with academic rigor, this project re-engages middle schoolers in reading for pleasure, improves reading comprehension, and builds a district-wide culture of academic excellence through collaboration and critical thinking.

Rationale

This project aligns with the Waco Education Foundation focus area of Emphasis on Student Performance. It directly supports District Improvement Plan goals to increase literacy scores by targeting the middle school slump in reading engagement. While students have the capacity to read, many lack the social motivation to do so; this program provides a sport for readers. By providing 36-book sets to each campus, we address the need for equitable access to high-interest, diverse titles that are not currently available in uniform sets across the district.

Goals

- Increase Engagement: Achieve a participation rate of at least 15% of the total middle school student body.
- Improve Comprehension: Demonstrate measurable growth in reading comprehension and analytical skills through high-stakes questioning.
- Celebrate Literacy: Establish a sustainable, district-wide event that rewards academic achievement with the same fervor as athletics.

Plan of Operation

The project employs a divide and conquer reading strategy to manage the 36-book list. Teams of 4–6 students will assign specific titles to "experts" within their group, fostering interdependence and collective accountability.

Detailed Activities & Strategies

- Literacy Scrimmages: During the November–December window, librarians will host monthly "scrimmages" using America's Battle of the Books question sets to build student confidence and test retrieval speed.
- Digital Study Hubs: Students will be encouraged to use district-approved collaborative tools (like Google Docs) to share plot summaries and character maps, integrating technology into their literacy preparation.
- Mentorship Rounds: High school student volunteers or "Adopt-a-School" partners will visit campuses to lead mock Q&A sessions, providing middle schoolers with positive academic role models.

Timeline

- August 2026: Submit all purchase requests for the 36-book sets and ABB membership.
- September 2026: "Kick-off" assemblies at all three campuses; distribution of books to libraries; student registration opens.
- October 2026: Official team rosters finalized; Coaches' Clinic held for parent and staff volunteers to review competition rules.
- Nov – Dec 2026: Intensive reading period; campus libraries host Lunch & Learn study sessions.
- January 2027: Campus-level Qualifying Battles (double-elimination format) to determine the top three teams per school.
- February 2027: Finalist Boot Camp where qualifying teams prepare for the complexities of the district-level question sets.
- March 2027: District Grand Championship; an Saturday event celebrating reading achievement with trophies and medals.
- April 2027: Data collection for evaluation (surveys and score analysis) and submission of the final grant report.

Community Involvement

Parental Role: Beyond mentoring, parents will be recruited as "Official Reading Buddies" to facilitate evening or weekend book discussions, ensuring the literacy focus extends into the home.

Community Partners: We will engage Adopt-a-School partners and Waco ISD District Volunteers to serve as neutral timekeepers, judges, and moderators for the final championship to maintain the professional, high-stakes atmosphere of the event.

Communication & Dissemination

We will invite the Foundation Board to observe the Grand Championship and present the 1st place trophy. Photo opportunities of teams in action will be provided for Waco Education Foundation marketing. Results will be shared with the District's Communications Department to share via WISD-TV and district social media. Data and best practices for gamified literacy will be disseminated to faculty during district-wide staff development sessions.

Evaluation

Effectiveness will be measured by:

- Participation Tracking: Total number of students and teams registered across the four campuses.
- Academic Growth: Comparison of pre- and post-program literacy assessment data (iReady and district assessments) for participants.
- Attitudinal Surveys: Pre- and post-program surveys measuring student and parent attitudes toward reading for pleasure.

Long Term Implications

The 36-book sets will remain permanent assets of each campus library. Beyond the 2026-2027 year, the project is highly sustainable, requiring only a \$100 annual district membership renewal and to receive new competition questions.

Following the 2026-2027 cycle, the applicant will collaborate with the District Head Librarian to incorporate these minimal renewal fees into the standard annual library budget, ensuring the program's longevity without further grant dependency.

Long-term, this project aims to shift the campus culture so that academic "battles" are celebrated with the same enthusiasm as athletic rivalries, creating a lasting legacy of literacy for middle school students. The framework established by this grant—including the rules, volunteer training manuals, and district coordination—can be easily replicated for elementary or high school levels in future years, expanding the impact across the entire district footprint

Key Personnel

- Campus Librarians (3): Manage book circulation, student recruitment, and campus-level qualifying battles.
- Grant Applicant: Manages the ABB membership and coordinates the Grand Championship event logistics.
- Parent/Community/District Volunteers: Provide timekeeping and judging services for the competition rounds.

Budget Narrative

1. Books (\$2,160.00): Provides 108 total books (3 sets of 36) to ensure all students have access to the materials regardless of their ability to purchase them. Price includes shipping.
2. Membership & Starter Kit (\$152): Licenses the official professional question sets, administrative forms required for a standardized competition, and shipping costs of materials.
3. Awards (\$86.40): Provides tangible rewards for 1st–3rd place teams at the campus and district level, reinforcing the value of academic excellence.
4. Plaques (196.00): Provides a 10.5”x13” plaque for each Grade Level Championship Team and Overall Champion Team to be displayed at the winner’s home campus.
5. Hospitality (\$300): Nourishment for participants and volunteers during campus and district "battle" events.

Waco Education Foundation

Grant Budget Form

Assigned Proposal #	60
Project Title:	Hardcovers & Heroes: The Quest for the Literary Cup
Number of Students Served by Grant:	750

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						
4	Campus (3) & District (1) Overall Champion Team Plaque (10.5x13)	Y	\$ 196.00			\$ 196.00
72	1st Place Ribbon	Y	\$ 28.80			\$ 28.80
72	2nd Place Ribbon	Y	\$ 28.80			\$ 28.80
72	3rd Place Ribbon	Y	\$ 28.80			\$ 28.80
1	Competition Day Snacks & Water	Y	\$ 300.00			\$ 300.00
						\$ -
total Consumable Supplies			\$ 582.40			\$ 582.40

Technology						
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Technology			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -

Long-Term Supplies / Equipment (items that will last beyond the grant year)						
3	Set of 36 books (\$20/book)	Y	\$ 2,160.00			\$ 2,160.00
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Long-Term Supplies			\$ 2,160.00		\$ -	\$ 2,160.00

Contracted Services						
1	6-8 Grade District Elite Membership		\$ 152.00		\$ -	\$ 152.00
						\$ -
total Contracted Services			\$ 152.00		\$ -	\$ 152.00

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
		\$ 2,894.40	3.8592	\$ -	\$ 2,894.40