



**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

Enhanced Programming for Advanced Students

Fine Arts

Literacy

Extended Education for Staff

Emphasis on Student Performance

STEM

Enrichment

Grant Proposal

Assigned Proposal #: 59

Title: Hands-On Learning Outdoors: Mother Neff State Park Adventure

Description:

Hands-On Learning Outdoors: Mother Neff State Park Adventure will provide 4th and 5th-grade students with a hands-on educational experience focused on science, history, and environmental stewardship. During a field trip to Mother Neff State Park, students will participate in guided nature walks, explore ecosystems, identify native plants and wildlife, and learn about the park's historical significance. Students will document their observations in mini field journals and engage in reflective discussions following the trip. Grant funds will support transportation, educational materials, student journals, safety supplies, and matching class shirts to ensure a safe, engaging, and meaningful outdoor learning experience for all students.

1. Rationale:

Hands-On Learning Outdoors: Mother Neff State Park Adventure aligns with the Waco Education Foundation's **Creative Classroom Project** focus by extending learning beyond the traditional classroom and providing students with a hands-on educational experience. This project supports district and campus improvement goals by strengthening science and social studies instruction, promoting student engagement, and encouraging critical thinking through real-world exploration.

Many students have limited opportunities to experience outdoor, place-based learning. This field trip connects classroom lessons to authentic environments where students can observe ecosystems, explore Texas history, and practice scientific inquiry. By providing this opportunity, the project enriches the curriculum, increases student engagement, and fosters environmental awareness and appreciation for local natural resources.

2. Goals:

The goal of **Hands-On Learning Outdoors: Mother Neff State Park Adventure** is to enhance student learning by providing a meaningful, hands-on educational experience that connects classroom instruction to real-world environments.

1. **Strengthen Science Understanding:** Students will explore ecosystems, identify native plants and wildlife, and observe environmental interactions to deepen their understanding of life science concepts.
2. **Promote Historical Awareness:** Students will learn about the historical significance of Mother Neff State Park and its role in Texas conservation and early settlement.
3. **Encourage Environmental Stewardship:** Students will develop a greater appreciation for nature and learn the importance of protecting natural resources.
4. **Develop Critical Thinking Skills:** Students will record observations, ask questions, and reflect on their experiences through field journals and discussions.
5. **Increase Student Engagement:** By participating in hands-on, outdoor learning, students will strengthen connections to classroom concepts and increase enthusiasm for learning.

3. Plan of Operation:

Hands-On Learning Outdoors: Mother Neff State Park Adventure will provide 4th and 5th-grade students with an immersive, curriculum-connected learning experience at Mother Neff State Park. The project integrates science, history, and environmental education through hands-on exploration and guided instruction. Prior to the trip, teachers will provide classroom lessons focused on ecosystems, conservation, and the historical significance of the park. During the field trip, students will participate in guided nature walks, ecosystem observations, and historical discussions facilitated by teachers and park educators. Students will document their learning through mini field journals, recording observations, sketches, and reflections that reinforce scientific inquiry and critical thinking.

The primary objectives of the project are to strengthen student understanding of ecosystems and native wildlife, connect classroom instruction to authentic environments, and foster environmental stewardship. Instructional strategies will include observation-based learning, guided questioning, small-group exploration, and reflective journaling to deepen student engagement and comprehension.

The project will involve collaboration between classroom teachers, school administration, and educational staff at Mother Neff State Park. Teachers will oversee instructional activities and student learning, while park educators will support environmental and historical programming during the visit.

Parental and Community Involvement will be an important component of the project. Parent volunteers will serve as field trip chaperones, assisting with supervision and supporting small-group learning activities. Their involvement will help ensure student safety and engagement throughout the experience. Following the trip, students will

share reflections and learning outcomes with families and the school community through classroom displays and discussions.

Timeline

Timeframe	Activity
May–June	Secure grant funding, coordinate with park staff, and reserve field trip date.
August–September	Recruit and confirm parent volunteers, finalize transportation arrangements, and prepare instructional materials.
Early October	Implement pre-trip classroom lessons on ecosystems, conservation, and the historical significance of the park.
Mid-October	Conduct the field trip to Mother Neff State Park, including guided exploration, ecosystem investigations, and journal observations.
Late October–November	Facilitate post-trip reflections, discussions, and student presentations to reinforce learning and share outcomes with families and the school community.

4. Communication & Dissemination:

To recognize and involve the **Waco Education Foundation**, we will:

- **Invite Foundation Representatives** to observe the field trip and interact with students during activities.
- **Provide Photo & Media Opportunities** by sharing images and highlights of the trip with the Foundation for newsletters, social media, and promotional materials.
- **Offer a Grant Presentation** to Foundation members, showcasing student learning, reflections, and outcomes from the experience.

Dissemination within the District will include:

- Sharing results and best practices with colleagues during staff meetings and professional learning sessions to encourage similar hands-on learning experiences.
- Featuring the project on **WISD-TV** and school social media platforms to highlight student engagement and curriculum connections.

- Hosting a **post-trip showcase event** where students present reflections, journal entries, and creative projects to parents, staff, and community members.

This communication and dissemination plan ensures that both the Foundation and the school community see the impact of their support and that the learning experience inspires future classroom innovation.

5. Evaluation:

The success of **Hands-On Learning Outdoors: Mother Neff State Park Adventure** will be measured using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Students will complete **mini field journals** during the trip, documenting observations, sketches, and reflections, which will be reviewed for understanding and engagement. **Pre- and post-trip surveys** will assess knowledge of ecosystems, historical concepts, and environmental stewardship, as well as student interest and participation. Teachers will evaluate **classroom follow-up activities** such as discussions, projects, and presentations to measure knowledge retention and application. Additionally, **feedback from parent volunteers and park staff** will inform the effectiveness of logistics, safety, and student engagement. Results will be summarized and shared with the Foundation to demonstrate project impact.

6. Long Term Implications:

Hands-On Learning Outdoors: Mother Neff State Park Adventure will provide lasting benefits for students and the school community beyond the 2026–2027 school year. By fostering a connection to nature, environmental stewardship, and historical awareness, students will carry these skills and values into future learning experiences. The project is designed to be **sustainable annually** by leveraging ongoing partnerships with Mother Neff State Park, parent volunteers, and local environmental organizations. Pre- and post-trip classroom lessons and student journals will be incorporated into future curriculum planning, ensuring that knowledge and engagement extend beyond the field trip. Additionally, student presentations and community showcases will inspire continued interest in outdoor learning and hands-on education for future cohorts.

7. Key Personnel:

Project Coordinator (Lead Teacher)

- **Responsibilities:** Oversee all aspects of the project, including planning, logistics, curriculum alignment, coordination with park staff and volunteers, and evaluation.

- **Qualifications:** Certified elementary educator with experience in science, history, and outdoor experiential learning.

Participating Teachers

- **Responsibilities:** Prepare students with pre-trip lessons, supervise activities during the trip, facilitate student reflections and post-trip discussions, and assist with evaluation.
- **Qualifications:** Certified elementary teachers with expertise in science, social studies, or environmental education.

Mother Neff State Park Rangers & Educators

- **Responsibilities:** Lead guided nature walks, historical tours, and conservation lessons; provide expert instruction on ecosystems and park history.
- **Qualifications:** Trained park rangers and educators with experience in outdoor instruction and student engagement.

Parent & Community Volunteers

- **Responsibilities:** Assist with supervision, small-group activities, and student engagement during the trip.
- **Qualifications:** Approved school volunteers with interest in education and environmental awareness.

School Administration

- **Responsibilities:** Provide oversight, ensure curriculum alignment, support logistics, and assist with grant reporting.
- **Qualifications:** School principal or instructional coordinator with experience managing field-based learning initiatives.

8. Budget and Budget Narrative/Justification:

- **Water Bottles line item #7:** Hydration is essential for student health and safety during outdoor activities. Providing each student with a personal water bottle ensures they stay hydrated throughout the trip.

- **Backpacks line item #8:** Students will need a sturdy, reusable backpack to carry field journals, supplies, and personal items during the trip. This helps keep materials organized and protects student belongings.
- **Class Shirts line item #9:** Matching class shirts enhance student safety by making students easily identifiable in a public park setting, while promoting school spirit and group cohesion.
- **Bus Transportation line item #40:** Safe, reliable transportation is necessary to ensure that all students, teachers, and chaperones can access Mother Neff State Park. Bus rental provides access to the field trip for the entire class, supporting full participation in hands-on learning experiences.

Waco Education Foundation

Grant Budget Form

Assigned Proposal #	59
Project Title:	Hands-On Learning Outdoors: Mother Neff State Park Adventure
Number of Students Served by Grant:	150

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						
6	Water Bottles	Y	\$ 50.00			\$ 50.00
10	backpacks	Y	\$ 200.00			\$ 200.00
150	Class Shirts	Y	\$ 1,650.00			\$ 1,650.00
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Consumable Supplies			\$ 1,900.00		\$ -	\$ 1,900.00

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

Long-Term Supplies / Equipment (items that will last beyond the grant year)						
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Long-Term Supplies			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -

Contracted Services						
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Contracted Services			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -

Personnel						
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Personnel			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -

Travel / Other						
4	Bus	Y	\$ 1,200.00			\$ 1,200.00
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Other			\$ 1,200.00		\$ -	\$ 1,200.00

Totals		Total Requested from the WISD Foundation	Foundation Cost Per Student	Total from Other Sources	Total Cost of Project
		\$ 3,100.00	20.66666667	\$ -	\$ 3,100.00