



**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                      |

## #86- Art for Everyone

**Project description:** The **Sensory-Inclusive Art Studio** at Tennyson Middle School is a targeted initiative designed to transform the traditional art room into an accessible, therapeutic, and high-success environment for students with diverse cognitive and sensory-motor needs. Currently, students in our special needs program often face significant physical and neurological barriers when using standard classroom supplies. Thin brushes, resistant clay, and messy liquid paints can lead to frustration, muscle fatigue, and sensory overwhelm. This project removes those barriers by introducing a curated collection of **adaptive art tools** and **sensory-integrated media** tailored to individual student profiles.

The core of this program centers on the implementation of **Independent Exploration Centers** and **Tactile Learning Stations**. We will incorporate a variety of specialized tools, such as **palm-grasp crayons** and **spring-assisted scissors**, which allow students with limited fine motor dexterity to achieve artistic autonomy. For students with tactile defensiveness or sensory processing disorders, we will provide "clean-entry" materials like **solid paint sticks**, **spill-proof paint sets**, and **sensory dough sand**. These materials offer the necessary proprioceptive input to help students remain regulated and focused, turning art into a tool for emotional stabilization rather than a source of stress.

Beyond the physical tools, this project utilizes **evidence-based learning strategies** to meet individual **IEP (Individualized Education Program) goals**. By shifting the instructional focus from "standardized output" to "process-based exploration," we provide a vital non-verbal communication outlet for students who struggle with traditional speech. This program isn't just about crafting; it is about fostering self-esteem, enhancing social skills through collaborative sensory play, and ensuring that "Art for Everyone" is a practiced reality at Tennyson Middle School. Through this grant, we will provide the resources necessary for every student to feel the pride of creation and the dignity of independence.

**Rationale:** For students with sensory processing disorders or motor delays, traditional art supplies can be a source of frustration rather than joy. By introducing adaptive tools, we shift the focus from "struggling with the medium" to "mastering the expression."

- **Fine Motor Development:** Using palm-grasp crayons and weighted brushes builds hand strength and coordination.
- **Non-Verbal Communication:** Art serves as a vital emotional outlet for students who may struggle with traditional speech.
- **Sensory Regulation:** Materials like "sensory sand" and soft dough provide tactile input that can help de-escalate anxiety and improve focus.

Middle school is a pivotal time for identity formation. When a student cannot participate in a classroom activity due to a lack of adapted tools, it reinforces a sense of "otherness."

- **The Solution:** Independent crafting centers with **paint sticks** and **accessory tools** allow students to create without constant adult intervention.
- **The Impact:** Success in an independent task builds profound self-esteem. It reinforces the message that they are capable, creative individuals who belong in the artistic community.

**Goals:** To establish a **Sensory-Inclusive Art Studio** at Tennyson Middle School. This project aims to remove physical and cognitive barriers to creativity by providing adaptive tools and a structured, low-stimulation environment for students with diverse needs.

**Plan of Operation:** Integrating art for students with special needs isn't just about "making things pretty"—it's a powerful tool for sensory integration, fine motor development, and emotional expression.

When building this plan, the gold standard is **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**: creating a flexible environment where the activity adapts to the student, rather than forcing the student to adapt to the activity.

Standard brushes and pencils can be frustrating. We will swap them for "low-barrier" alternatives:

- **Grip Aids:** Use egg-shaped chalk, foam tubing on brush handles, or "adaptive" loop scissors that spring back open automatically.
- **Stabilizers:** Tape the paper to the table or use non-slip shelf liners so the canvas doesn't move while the student works.
- **Sensory Alternatives:** For students who dislike the feeling of wet paint, use "paint sticks" (solid tempera) or provide nitrile gloves.

**Communication & Dissemination:** Waco ISD has a Facebook fine arts page as well as our school. Waco ISD has their own television station. Our student work is photographed and put on display for the public to view. I love sharing the talent of our students with the community. Students and especially parents love seeing their work displayed. Many art contests like Heart O' Texas Fair have the students' artwork displayed for all of the public to see in person. Partnership with the Waco Education Foundation would be more attainable for student artwork to be displayed.

**Evaluation:** The success of this program will be measured through a multi-faceted evaluation of student development, focusing on both physical mastery and emotional expression. We anticipate significant **Fine Motor Progress**, which will be documented through clinical observation of grip evolution—tracking a student's transition from a basic palm grasp to a more refined pincer grip using our adaptive tools. Beyond physical skills, the project aims to bridge the gap in **Communication** by providing a non-verbal outlet for students; we will measure this increase in expressive output through pre- and post-activity check-ins using visual emotion boards.

Furthermore, we expect to see a marked increase in **Student Engagement**, quantified by classroom logs that track "time-on-task" and the duration of focus during independent center exploration. Finally, the ultimate goal of this initiative is **Total Inclusion**. We will evaluate our success by the frequency of student participation in school-wide art shows, ensuring that every student at Tennyson Middle School—regardless of their cognitive or motor needs—has their work displayed in common areas. This visibility not only validates their creative efforts but also fosters a school culture that celebrates neurodiversity through the universal language of art.

**Long Term Implications:** The acquisition of a sensory-inclusive art collection at Tennyson Middle School serves as a foundational investment in our students' future independence and quality of life. By providing adaptive tools today, we are fostering **lifelong motor proficiency**; the skills gained by transitioning from palm-based grips to refined pincer movements translate directly to essential daily living tasks, such as self-feeding, dressing, and eventually, vocational skills.

Furthermore, the program builds a durable **Emotional Regulation Toolkit**. Research consistently shows that students who learn to use art as a sensory-modulation strategy in middle school are better equipped to manage anxiety and sensory overwhelm as adults. This early exposure to "art-as-communication" provides a permanent alternative language for neurodivergent individuals, reducing the long-term risk of social isolation by giving them a reliable medium to share their inner world with the community. Ultimately, this grant moves us toward a model of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** that empowers students to see themselves not as individuals with limitations, but as capable creators with a permanent seat at the table of cultural expression.

**Key Personnel:** The **Sensory-Inclusive Art Studio** will be executed by a cohesive team of educational professionals, ensuring a high level of individualized attention and instructional safety for all students.

- **Project Lead:** The program is directed by a Lead Art Instructor with a **Degree in Graphic Arts from Baylor University** and **20 years of classroom experience**. This deep background in design and long-term pedagogical expertise ensures that the art curriculum remains rigorous while being expertly adapted for students with diverse learning profiles.
- **Collaborative Support Team:** Success is further bolstered by the presence of **three dedicated Special Needs/Achieve Aides** who accompany students into

the art studio. This results in a highly favorable 4-to-1 professional-to-student support structure during key instruction periods. This collaborative environment allows for immediate, one-on-one intervention and redirection, ensuring every student can navigate the sensory materials safely and effectively.

- **Mentorship and Life-Skill Integration:** The primary goal of this four-person team is to mentor students in the functional mastery of adaptive tools. By providing consistent supervision, the staff will teach students how to correctly utilize specialized supplies—such as spring-assisted scissors and palm-grip media—and help them **implement these creative strategies into their daily lives**. This focus on "studio habits" ensures the sustainability of the materials and, more importantly, fosters the physical independence and self-advocacy of the students.

**Budget and Budget Narrative/Justification:** The requested funds are directed toward high-impact, durable materials specifically engineered to bridge the accessibility gap. Unlike standard classroom supplies, these **adaptive tools** are essential ergonomic interventions that allow students with limited fine motor control to engage in the curriculum with the same level of autonomy as their peers. By investing in **professional-grade sensory media**—such as non-toxic sensory dough and textured rubbing plates—we are prioritizing both student safety and classroom sustainability.

Standard art supplies often require a level of precision that can lead to frustration and "off-task" behavior; however, the items in this proposal are selected to provide **immediate sensory feedback** and success-oriented outcomes. This strategic selection ensures that the grant is not merely a one-time purchase of consumables, but a long-term investment in a **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** framework. By providing the right tools for the right tasks, we ensure that every dollar spent directly translates into increased student independence and a more inclusive environment.

Thank you for considering the gift of these much-needed **adaptive tools, which will empower our students to communicate, create, and thrive with independence.**

**Waco Education Foundation**  
**Grant Budget Form**

Assigned Proposal # **86**

Project Title: **Art For Everyone**

Number of Students Served by Grant: **16**

Qty	Budget Item	Verify Vendor (Y or N)	\$ Requested from the WISD Foundation	Other Secured Source	\$ from Other Source (if applicable)	Total Amount
<b>Consumable Supplies</b>						
1	Crayola Model Magic	Y	\$39.99			\$ 39.99
	Play Doh Modeling Compound 24 pack	Y	\$43.98			\$ 43.98
3	Crayola Quick Dry Paint Sticks (12ct)	Y	\$34.00			\$ 34.00
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Consumable Supplies			\$117.97		\$ -	\$ 117.97
<b>Technology</b>						
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Technology			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
<b>Long-Term Supplies / Equipment</b> (items that will last beyond the grant year)						
20	Crayola Light-Up Tracing Pad	Y	\$603.80			\$ 603.80
2	U.S. Art Supply 10 Piece Children's No Spill Paint Cups with Colored Lids and 10 Piece Large Round Brush Set with Plastic Handles	Y	\$39.98			\$ 39.98
8	Air Dry Clay Tools	Y	\$79.90			\$ 79.90
1	Paint Sponge Art Tool Kit, 53 pieces	Y	\$13.99			\$ 13.99
1	Honoson 10 Packs Loop Scissors for Kids 5.5 Inches Grip Self Opening Adaptive Special Needs Mini Easy Grip Scissors Right and Lefty Support for Teens	Y	\$9.59			\$ 9.59
5	The Pencil Grip Original Pencil Grippers 6 Pcs	Y	\$70.00			\$ 70.00
3	Crayon Silicone Mold Sets	Y	\$35.00			\$ 35.00
2	10Pcs Paint Brushes for Kids, Anezus Kids Paint Brushes Toddler Large Chubby Brushes Round and Flat	Y	\$14.00			\$ 14.00
4	DOODLE HOG Set of 8 Art Trays for Kids, Great for Lego, Sand, Crafts, Painting	Y	\$147.96			\$ 147.96
3	YGDZ Kids Paint Brushes, 12 Pack Washable Painting Brushes for Toddlers Kids Early Learning Toys	Y	\$33.83			\$ 33.83
2	Foam Roller Sponge Arts Crafts Dough Tool Set, 49 Pcs	Y	\$33.98			\$ 33.98
total Long-Term Supplies			\$ 1,082.03		\$ -	\$ 1,082.03
<b>Contracted Services</b>						
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Contracted Services			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
<b>Personnel</b>						
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Personnel			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
<b>Travel / Other</b>						
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
total Other			\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
<b>Totals</b>			<b>Total Requested from the WISD Foundation</b>	<b>Foundation Cost Per Student</b>	<b>Total from Other Sources</b>	<b>Total Cost of Project</b>
			\$ 1,200.00	75	\$ -	\$ 1,200.00