

2026-2027 Grant Funding Cycle

The Waco Education Foundation and its SurPRIZE Patrol recently visited 15 Waco ISD campuses. The group surprised 51 teachers with the exciting news their 45 grant applications were approved for funding for the 2026-2027 school year. This year, the foundation is awarding \$155,003 back to the district, bringing the total amount of grants funded over the past decade and a half to more than \$2.6 million.

District teachers and staff had the opportunity to apply for funding through the foundation's Innovative Grants program at the beginning of December. The program annually awards approximately \$100,000 in grant funding in the four focus areas of early childhood development, enhanced programming for advanced students, extended education for staff, and emphasis on student performance.

This year's grant projects span a wide array of topics and areas from a district-wide speech-language initiative, reading clubs, performing and visual arts, to expanding the audio/visual program's professional filmmaking equipment, and immersive learning through virtual, augmented, and mixed reality for healthcare education.

A list of grant recipients can be found below, and photos are available at the following link:

2026-2027 Innovative Grants Photo Album

[SurPRIZE Patrol - Day 1](#)

[SurPRIZE Patrol – Day 2](#)

Maria Aguilar

Waco High School

“3B Scientific Patient Basic Care Manikin”

\$2,568

Named in honor of: Southern Careers Institute

Hayley Ballesteros

Provident Heights Elementary

“Drafting Dreams: Integrating Engineering Foundations into Fine Arts Stations”

\$1,256

Hayley Ballesteros

Provident Heights Elementary

“Seek, Sort, and Solve: Sensory Scientist Lab”

\$1,402

Diana Barnes

Mountainview Elementary

“Lunch and Learn Living Lab”

\$1,050

Brently Bartlett & Emily Chandler

Waco High School

“Harmony In Hand: iPads for Choral Learning”

\$8,359

Named in honor of: Educators Credit Union

Will Burney

Waco High School

“Student Voices Through Film”

\$8,490

Named in honor of: O’Connell Robertson

Sage Cavazos

Brook Avenue Elementary

“Goals for Growth”

\$5,635

Named in honor of: Raising Cane’s Chicken Fingers

Kimberly Daniel

J.H. Hines Elementary

“Social Connections”

\$2,219

Named in honor of: The Prince Family

Kimberly Eickholt

Mountainview Elementary

“Foundational Skill Building”

\$1,058

Angie Fetsko

Greater Waco Advanced Health Care Academy

“Pulse of the Future: Immersive VR Simulation in Healthcare Education”

\$8,500

Named in honor of: H & B Packing Co., Inc.

Sean Fisher

Tennyson Middle School

“Building Beyond the Page: Literacy Inspired by *The Stars Beneath Our Feet*”

\$1,441

Renee Garrett

Lake Air Montessori Magnet

“Roots, Rivers & Wildlife”

\$3,324

Named in honor of: Ascension Providence

Denae Gerik & Crystal Stanford

Lake Air Montessori Magnet / Advanced Academics

“From Clues to Conclusions: Texas History Through Museum Inquiry for Gifted Learners”

\$2,003

Named in honor of: Central National Bank

Allie Gillaspay

G.W. Carver Middle School

“Hardcovers and Heroes”

\$2,312

Named in honor of: Keurig Dr Pepper

Allie Gillaspay

G.W. Carver Middle School

“The Sunrise Series”

\$1,250

Erin Halley & Maria Chapa

Kendrick Elementary

“The Magic of Listening: Transforming Literacy in the Pre-K Classroom”

\$2,797

Named in honor of: The First National Bank of Central Texas

Jennifer Hanson

University High School

“Speed of Sound and Resonance”

\$200

Bonnie Holmstrom & Holly Kvapil

University High School

“Hot of the Presses!”

\$8,500

Named in honor of: TFNB Your Bank for Life

LaQuan Hughes

Provident Heights Elementary

“The Social Studies Podcast”

\$2,000

Named in honor of: First Financial Group of America

LaQuan Hughes & Karen Estrada

Provident Heights Elementary

“Pequeños Creadores”

\$1,300

Lisa Hughes & Jamie Rosario-Cruz
Tennyson Middle School
"Roots of Inclusion: Common Ground Hydroponics"
\$1,184

Holly Kvapil & Bonnie Holmstrom
University High School
"If You've Got It Flaunt It"
\$8,500
Named in honor of: McCreary, Veselka, Bragg and Allen, P.C.

Marissa Licea
G.W. Carver Middle School
"Empowering the Next Generation"
\$8,500
Named in honor of: Keurig Dr Pepper

Jordan Meza & Kimberly Tucker
Tennyson Middle School
"Marching Forward: Investing in Percussion for Our School & Community"
\$3,500
Named in honor of: H-E-B

Kelsi Miller & Lisa Hughes
Tennyson Middle School
"Beyond Horizon: A Unified Approach to Inclusion Reinforcement System"
\$730

Paula Miller
Advanced Academics
"Expanding the Minds through Real World Applications"
\$10,000
Named in honor of: H-E-B

Cathy Montemayor
Provident Heights Elementary
"Hands-On Learning Outdoors: Mother Neff State Park Adventure"
\$1,200

Joy Moreno
Tennyson Middle School
"The Scribble Squad: Scribes & Scholars"
\$3,750
Named in honor of: Lucas Janda

Mandy Moss & Debra Augeri

Waco High School

“Wrap It Up”

\$3,300

Named in honor of: Rogers-O’Brien Construction Company

Krista Ogden & Jana Ziegler

Crestview & Mountainview Elementaries

“Turn up the Brain! The FORBRAIN Project”

\$4,037

Named in honor of: Lochridge-Priest

Sally Peavy & Amy Garrison

Tennyson Middle School

“Art for Everyone!”

\$1,200

Sarah Pittman

Tennyson Middle School

“AVID Book Study”

\$203

Michelle Powell

Cedar Ridge Elementary

“SpellBound: Building Confident, Capable Spellers”

\$472

Sherry Prather

Tennyson Middle School

“Think It, Build It, Switch It: Magnetic Dry-Erase Blocks for Hands-On Learning”

\$2,700

Names in honor of: Volvo & Mack Trucks of Waco

Barbara Redenius & Kaitlyn Shamburger

Parkdale Elementary

“Pint Size Pioneers with Phonological Awareness”

\$2354

Names in honor of: Sheehy, Lovelace & Mayfield

Toni Rejcek

Bell’s Hill Elementary

“Lits and Bits”

\$5,500

Named in honor of: Sturdisteel

Selena Rivas

Provident Heights Elementary

“Hidden Worlds, Big Learning”

\$1,610

Named in honor of: Lowe’s of Waco

Cyndy Rojas

Lake Air Montessori Magnet

“Our Culture, Our Stories: Artifact-Based Writing for Bilingual Learners”

\$1,200

Jamie Rosario-Cruz & Lisa Hughes

Tennyson Middle School

“Daily Grinds & Big Dreams: A Stepping Stone to Independence”

\$980

Jo Spark

Tennyson Middle School

“The Power of I³ ~ Inquiry, Innovation, and Impact”

\$8,433

Named in honor of: Cargill Protein

Monica Toby

Crestview Elementary

“Hands on Learning Stations for Creative Exploration”

\$510

Kimberly Tucker & Jordan Meza

Tennyson Middle School

“Doubling the Groove: Expanding Access & Sound in our Middle School Jazz Program”

\$3,821

Named in honor of: Sally and Johnny Bledsoe

Elizabeth Updegrove

Cedar Ridge Elementary / Speech Therapy Department

“From Symbols to Success”

\$9,970

Named in honor of: Lowe’s of Waco

Jeremy Wallace

Mountainview Elementary

“Ukuleles for Engaging Upper Elementary Students”

\$3,000

Named in honor of: Baylor Scott & White-Hillcrest

Traci Winter & Joel Colosimo

Waco High School

“Framework for the Future”

\$2,685

Named in honor of: O’Connell Robertson