



PRESS RELEASE

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Education Foundation of Odessa Awards More Than \$120,000 to ECISD Teachers

(Odessa, TX.) The Education Foundation of Odessa is excited to award **44 grants** totaling **\$121,515.44** to Ector County ISD teachers for the 2026-2027 school year through its Grants for Inspiration & Innovation program!

The Education Foundation Grants Committee approved the funding of:

35 Elementary Classroom requests totaling \$87,819.12

9 Secondary Classroom requests totaling \$33,696.32

See attached list of grant awards.

“Teacher grants are at the heart of the Education Foundation,” says Education Foundation Executive Director, Celeste Potter. “Each year it brings the Foundation Board and Grants Committee members joy to be able to award these special grants to our hard working and dedicated teachers in Ector County. We are grateful to our donors who help ensure that the Foundation has the necessary funds to help our teachers make a positive impact on student learning in our community.”

“Each year, the Grants for Inspiration & Innovation program reminds us of the incredible creativity and dedication of our ECISD teachers,” says Education Foundation Board President, Kayley Howard. “Since launching the grants program in 2001, this program has invested more than \$3.1- million in creative, student-centered projects across ECISD. Every grant represents an investment not only in innovative teaching but also in the future of our students and our community.”

About the Grants Program

Each year, teachers, principals, and administrators from across the district submit proposals to the Education Foundation. A committee made up of Foundation board members reviews each grant and comes to a consensus on which projects to fund. Grants are evaluated on their innovation, creativity, student need being addressed, sustainability and content.

Since the Foundation’s inception, and including this year, the Education Foundation has awarded more than \$3.1-million to fund innovative and creative projects in the classroom for ECISD students. Additionally, the Foundation continues to provide additional monetary support to ECISD through support of special programs and incentives that result in student success.

The Grants Committee is made up of Education Foundation Board Members and community volunteers who take time to review each grant proposal and evaluate based on innovation, how the project relates to curriculum objectives adopted by ECISD and overall project budget.

About the Education Foundation of Odessa

The Education Foundation of Odessa is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax-exempt, philanthropic organization of citizens who share a vision of enhancing education in ECISD.

The Education Foundation of Odessa provides a new and innovative source of funding to support the school district's educational plan. The Foundation does not attempt to replace lost state funding, nor does it attempt to take the place of the district's operating budget. When considering the level of funding required to educate students, the Foundation can expect only to provide funds for those projects and activities that go beyond the normal classroom experience. Such initiatives provide enrichment, research opportunities, teacher training, intervention and prevention strategies and extend the educational effort. Funding for the Grants Program and other Education Foundation supported projects stems from community support through donations.

The mission of the Education Foundation is to create opportunities for education in Ector County ISD. Our vision is that every student in ECISD will be school-ready, college-ready, work-ready... WORLD-READY!

Website: www.educationfoundationodessa.org

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Spring 2026 Grant Recipients

Burleson EEC

Title: **Little Artists, Big Masterpieces**
Amount: \$3,997.93
Teacher: Tanya Galindo, Alondra Sandate, Rebecca Tucker

Carver EEC

Title: **How Do We Get There?**
Amount: \$2,152.86
Teacher: Priscilla Aguilar

Title: **Let's Get Creative!**
Amount: \$104.92
Teacher: Karla Ortiz

Title: **Carver Safety City**
Amount: \$4,107.08
Teacher: Shirley Hardee

Lamar EEC

Title: **Cooking Up Communication**
Amount: \$700.00
Teacher: Kristin Medina

Title: **Once Upon a Tonie**
Amount: \$2,156.60
Teacher: Cindy Olivas

Title: **Nibble, Nibble, Read!**
Amount: \$3,100.00
Teacher: Kristin Medina

Title: **Calm Everywhere We Go**
Amount: \$3,030.00
Teacher: Alexia Campos

Title: **Bugs Bugs Bugs**
Amount: \$1,500.00
Teacher: Kristin Medina

Title: **Camp Learn-a-lot**
Amount: \$3,597.00
Teacher: MaryJane Hutchins

Title: **From Farm to Table: Growing Minds Through Play**
Amount: \$3,006.00
Teacher: MaryJane Hutchins

Title: **Building Bright Minds Through Sensory Play**
Amount: \$517.00
Teacher: Jennifer Merriman

Title: **Innovators in Action**
Amount: \$2,166.00
Teacher: Jennifer Merriman

Title: **Sensory Explorers: Building Early Learning Through Play**
Amount: \$5,500.00
Teacher: Jessica Estrada, Samantha Gomez, Karyna Olson

Title: **Rhyme Time Theatre**
Amount: \$2,292.25
Teacher: Johanna Sotelo

Title: **Careers in Costume: Building Real-World Connections Through Imaginative Play**
Amount: \$3,112.50
Teacher: Jessica Estrada

Title: **Creating, Exploring, and Learning Through Loose Parts Play**
Amount: \$387.00
Teacher: Jennifer Merriman

Blackshear Elementary

Title: **Small Rockets, Big Possibilities**
Amount: \$534.00
Teacher: Ashley Redman

Burnet Elementary

Title: **Pop2Read: A Gamified Literacy Lab for Struggling Readers**
Amount: \$565.91
Teacher: Barbara Hirst

Gonzales Elementary

Title: **Curiosity in Motion: A Field Trip Designed for Every Learner**
Amount: \$1,224.72
Teacher: Maeghan Medrano, Valecia Chambers, Alexandra Gonzalez

Title: **Cultivating Growth: Greenhouse Revitalization & Student-Led Agriculture Initiative**
Amount: \$1,646.96
Teacher: Pinky Calumpag

Ireland Elementary

Title: **News & STEM in the Science Classroom – Real World Connectionsom**
Amount: \$1,288.44
Teacher: Michelle Alvarez

Title: **Texas Outdoor Learning Lab: Bringing Science to Life**
Amount: \$1,300.00
Teacher: Karen Cole

Title: **Southwest Museum**
Amount: \$800.00
Teacher: Kirsten Molby

Johnson Elementary

Title: **The Math Discovery Lab**
Amount: \$8,234.00
Teacher: Dr. Zenovia Crier

Title: **Weekly Wins for Learning**
Amount: \$1,752.00
Teacher: Dr. Zenovia Crier

Title: **Spectrum Serenity Garden**
Amount: \$7,500.00
Teacher: Dr. Zenovia Crier

Jordan Elementary

Title: **Inclusive Learning Centers for Diverse Learners**
Amount: \$3,057.66
Teacher: Madison Vega, Zara Baquiro, Jozi Barrientos

Pease Elementary

Title: **Growing Minds Outdoors: An IB PYP Outdoor Library & Literacy Learning Commons**
Amount: \$3,877.75
Teacher: David Cupp, Micah Arrott, Jamie Anderson

STEM Academy

Title: **Building Bright Futures Through Kindergarten PBL**
Amount: \$870.00
Teacher: Patricia Gaytan

Title: **Empowering Diverse Learners – Organizational EDL Boxes**
Amount: \$449.72
Teacher: Rebecca Herrera

Title: **Innovation Across the Curriculum: A 5th Grade Invention Convention**
Amount: \$1,100.00
Teacher: Sandra Jimenez

West Elementary

Title: **Team Read**
Amount: \$1,000.00
Teacher: Tasha Mathis

Alamo, Austin & Cameron Elementary

Title: **Amazing Art**
Amount: \$6,148.92
Teacher: Julia Carrasco

Ector Middle School

Title: **The Eagle Newsroom: Building Real-World Literacy Through Scholastic Scope**
Amount: \$5,232.34
Teacher: Cristina Gonzalez

New Tech Odessa

Title: **Etched in Success**
Amount: \$2,484.00
Teacher: Jesus Valeriano

Odessa High School

Title: **Leveling the Lens: Hands-On Science for Every Student**
Amount: \$8,170.00
Teacher: Stephanie Marin, Karen Wilson, Kendra Williams, Kristi Williams, Rochelle Manalastas, Catherine Pamandanan, Yarely Orona, Samuel Mota

Title: **Let's Read Without Tears**
Amount: \$4,642.20
Teacher: Cheryl Sellars, Chyree LeMaster

Title: **Butterfly Life Cycle**
Amount: \$1,540.00
Teacher: Amanda Cantu

Permian High School

Title: **Mixed, Matched, Together & Apart**
Amount: \$3,194.34
Teacher: LaRee Morris

Alternative Education Center

Title: **Learning in Motion: Hands-On English Stations**
Amount: \$1,530.00
Teacher: Marilou Jane Duran

ECISD Academics Department

Title: **Kids, Kows, and More**
Amount: \$5,041.90
Teacher: Stephanie Wright

Title: **YT Ranch Experience**
Amount: \$2,682.44
Teacher: Stephanie Wright

Transition Learning Center

Title: **Venture to the Capital**
Amount: \$4,221.00
Teacher: Dallas Kennedy