



## Wilson Education Foundation Venture Grants 2015-2016

The goal of the Venture Grant Program is to enhance and to expand educational experiences and opportunities for the students of the Wilson School District by providing grants to individual teachers, groups of teachers, departments, and other professional employees that support creative and innovative programs that would not normally be funded through the school budget. Grants are awarded semi-annually to enable unique programs, teaching strategies, and learning experiences to become a reality in the classroom or through support services where they can influence the learning climate and directly benefit students. During the 2015-2016 school year, the Foundation awarded over \$7,000 in Venture Grants to support the following programs/activities:

### Fall 2015



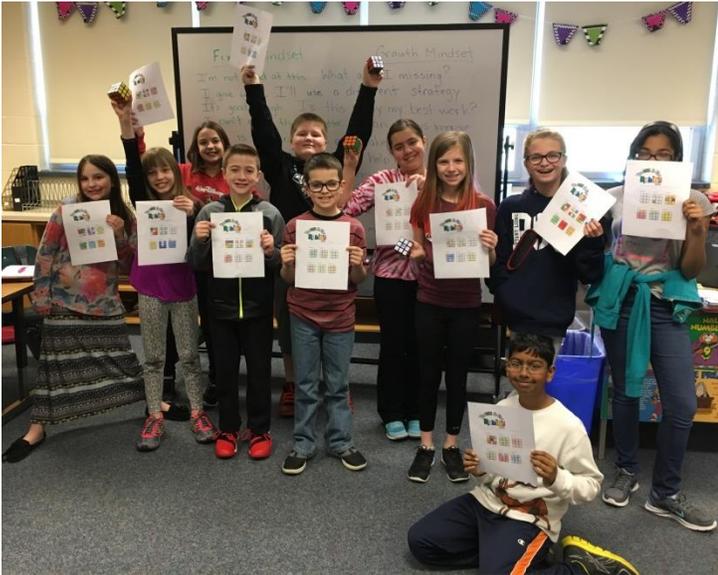
**Elementary Reading Olympics:** Wilson School District hosted its 2<sup>nd</sup> annual elementary Reading Olympics! This exciting opportunity for 4th and 5th grade students in the District motivates students to read independently, and it then allows them to collaborate with their classmates to comprehend different aspects of books. The team format encourages students to share the challenge of reading a wide selection of books with their friends. The grant was used to purchase eBooks and audiobooks from the Reading Olympics' list and were available in each of the elementary school libraries. All students, including those who are not participating in Reading Olympics, have access to these books.

**ISTEM Earthquake Testing:** 9th grade students participated in a project about the construction of earthquake-resistant structures. Students designed and built structures to meet the needs of the society and the environment in which we live. This grant helped support the cost of the earthquake shake table, which allows for the testing, evaluation, and reflection of student-built structures.

The goal is to expose students to an inquiry-based environment, where they are free to design and create without restriction, then observe and analyze the stability of their structures. Throughout this project, students also learned effective teamwork skills and problem-solving strategies.

**Project to Performance Long-Term Theatre Arts Residency (Whitfield/High School Drama Project):** In partnership with the Yocum Institute for Arts Education, Whitfield elementary students learn about science and language arts through watching and performing different theatre pieces guided by Wilson High School's drama students. This program allows students to work together in a positive ensemble and teaches them how to present their ideas in various theatrical ways. After watching the high school students perform, the elementary students reflect on what they have learned and create their own performance. In past years, elementary teachers have enjoyed seeing students collaborate and discover new ways to express their ideas. This program is also supported by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.





**Rubik's Cube Challenge** provides Wilson's QUEST elementary students the opportunity to figure out different techniques to solve the Rubik's Cube. Students use hands-on discovery and higher-level mathematical skills to "unlock the solution" of the Rubik's Cube. They have to use critical thinking, as well as take risks and make mistakes, which are both obstacles that lead to solving the Challenge. Group and one-on-one lessons that correlate to Common Core Standards were available for students to discover the most efficient way to solve this problem by analyzing their mistakes. This grant covered the costs of three Rubik's Cube Kits for Gifted Support at Spring Ridge, Shiloh Hills and Whitfield Elementary Schools.

If a student's basic need is not being met, how can we expect him/her to achieve academically? **Wilson High**

**School's Care Closet** that provides everyday necessities like personal hygiene and clothing items for less fortunate students, and also encourages them to create a positive future, starting with their high school experience. This grant helped support the cost to design the Care Closet with bright paint and inspirational décor, as well as to purchase items to help stock the closet. The closet and its location is not advertised. Teachers can refer students to the Care Closet through counselors or administrators. Additional donations from high school faculty, staff and clubs as well as community businesses and organization helps the Care Closet continue to serve as a comforting outlet for Wilson students.

**Wilson High School Literary Magazine Publication *Ink*** provides aspiring writers and artists a voice, the opportunity to be published, and allows other students to read their classmates creative work. The production of the literary magazine teaches students the fundamentals of good writing and publishing and fosters a community of young writers and artists to come together and celebrate their accomplishments. *Ink* is comprised of short stories, poetry, photography, artwork, and personal essays. Published twice a year, each issue invites students from diverse backgrounds to submit their work, and staff use predetermined criteria to select which pieces to publish. This grant helps the magazine get published in a bound book form so that it can be kept in the library and be available for purchase by students, parents, and community members.

## Spring 2016

**3-D Printing for STEM:** This grant supports the costs of a 3-D printer for students to use in elementary school classrooms. The purpose of this project is to provide students with STEM-based learning activities. Students will learn how to use computer software to design a given object while utilizing skills learned in math, science, reading, and technology.

**Early Literacy Learners Summer Reading:** This grant supported the costs of books at various reading levels allowing elementary students to continue to read over the summer. The purpose of this project is to have students increase their reading proficiency. Over the summer, reading workshops were held by reading specialists, and students were asked to keep reading logs.

**Elementary Engineering Drone:** One of the main goals of the Wilson School District is to empower students to create their own future. An ambitious third grader who loves technology wants to build his first drone with the help of his teachers and classmates. This student aspires to one day be an engineer, and he is determined to start his career early. This Venture grant will help to cover the costs of various parts needed to complete the drone as well as inspire students to create their future.

**Kindergarten Reading Workshop:** to provide resources to implement a reading workshop for kindergarten students and to offer a variety of books to choose from based on their reading level, which will allow them to improve their reading sufficiency. This grant will benefit current kindergarten students and many upcoming kindergarten students. Studies have shown that the amount of time students spend reading strongly indicates vocabulary development and reading achievement gains. Money from this grant will be used to purchase RR Reading Books from level A to C that are visually friendly for beginning readers.

**You Can Do the Rubik's Cube! Elementary:** Elementary Quest students at Cornwall Terrace will now have the opportunity to use higher-level critical thinking skills, and they will also use hands-on discovery to solve the Rubik's Cube. The Rubik's Cube presents students with a challenge, allowing them to learn by trial and error. This venture grant supports the costs of the Rubik's Cube Kits and helps to ensure that all elementary Quest students receive equal opportunities.

**You Can Do the Rubik's Cube Program Wilson West:** Wilson's elementary and middle schools have held "in house" Rubik's Cube competitions where gifted students use their previous learning to complete the challenge. Wilson West has used Rubik's Lending Library, a program that lends Rubik's Cube sets to students for six weeks to prepare students for the competition. Because students have shown great enthusiasm when working with the Rubik's Cubes, this grant will allow West to purchase Rubik's Cubes kits for students to use throughout the school year. Solving the Rubik's Cube challenge encourages students to use critical thinking, collaboration, and advanced mathematical concepts.

**Wilson High School Literary Magazine:** Wilson High School's literary magazine *Ink* gives aspiring writers a voice while being published, and it allows other students to read their classmates pieces. This grant helps the magazine get published in book form so that it can be kept in the library. The magazine will also be sold to the community. "Ink" is comprised of essays, short stories, and poems from students who are eager to share their works with their peers who are looking to enjoy a good read.

**Wilson Paw Print:** This is online school newspaper written about current events by students for other students and the Wilson community. This grant will support the costs of upgrading the website, memory cards, and competition entrance fees. Student writers of the *Paw Print* are given the opportunity to showcase their voice while learning about the writing process.