



## **TOTAL EDUCATION GRANTS AWARDED 2024-2025**

**(TOTAL = \$43,891)**

## **TOTAL PROFESSIONAL GRANTS AWARDED 2024-2025**

**(TOTAL = \$29,645)**

### **EDUCATION GRANTS AWARDED SPRING SEMESTER, 2025 (Total = \$17,636)**

- **Vending STEM Experiences (SES)**

This grant builds on the reward system for positive behavior at Somers Elementary. Students earn tickets for the school store or tokens for the Book Vending Machine. This grant adds a vending machine containing STEM (science technology, engineering, and math) activities. Students can earn tokens to access a hands-on engineering type activity to build, create, problem solve, and explore. The kits redeemed from the machine include STEM activities such as coding challenges and interactive projects that reach students on their individual level of learning.

- **Learning Games (SHS)**

These games will support student learning in the longer blocks of the new high school schedule. They will encourage and develop critical thinking, communication, creativity, and collaboration. Learning games will also be available in the media center for use during study blocks. The list was built from teacher brainstorming sessions in all departments.

### **EDUCATION GRANTS AWARDED FALL SEMESTER, 2024 (TOTAL = \$55,900)**

- **Attendance Matters (SHS)**

Schools have found that, Post Covid, chronic absenteeism has increased. This grant supports a school counseling initiative to respond to individual problems with chronic absenteeism by using goal setting and positive reinforcement.

- **Xylophone Troop (SES)**

Many research studies have shown that singing and playing an instrument are beneficial for brain development. This grant focuses on students not in chorus or band programs. This pilot program will include xylophone/percussion sessions after school for upper elementary students to experience a musical ensemble.

- **History Challenge (MBA)**

This is an added effort to encourage student interest in learning about history. This grant supports student participation in The Great History Challenge, a nationwide online competition. It creates a unique question-and-answer game based on the National Social Studies Curriculum Standards. The competition is available to all students grades 6-8 and can lead to regional and national levels of competition.

- **Inspiring Kindness (SES)**

Schools in Somers continue to work on encouraging respectful and thoughtful student behavior. This grant underwrites a speaker, Brad Montague, renowned for his ability to foster kindness, creativity, and empathy in his audience. Preparatory activities will prepare students for the visit, and follow-up activities will build on the speaker's message and unique ability to connect with his audience. The goal is to further nurture caring and considerate behavior.

- **Voice Recorders (MBA)**

This grant focuses on students who are ahead of their English class and need more advanced activities to further their learning. The students will use the voice recorders as a part of a project in which they record interviews with people outside of class and synthesize the information into a paper or presentation. The grant underwrites the cost of the recorders.

- **Soundproofing for Music Practice (MBA)**

The music program in the Somers is growing and the middle school needs practice rooms. This grant will underwrite soundproofing for the Music Library at Mabel B. Avery School, so that it can double as a practice room without disturbing adjoining music classrooms.

- **Mobile Makerspaces (SES)**

The High School and Middle School each provide a Makerspace in the media center, which students can access during study halls. Elementary students have no study halls, so these Mobile Makerspaces will come to classrooms and support the core curriculum by providing opportunities for project-based learning, using high-tech, low tech, and no-tech tools. Students will be introduced to design thinking as a problem-solving framework.

- **Nonfiction Books for the LMC (SHS)**

This is not a traditional area for the Foundation to fund, but the Library Media Center has been using almost its entire budget renewing databases and yearly subscriptions. As a result, the LMC's nonfiction selections are drastically outdated. This grant will begin to bring the collection up to date so that it provides accurate, current information and is usable for student research projects.

Professional Development Fall 2024 Although this initiative was formulated in Spring 2024, all the grants were awarded during the fall grant session beginning on July 1, 2024. Twenty-three Somers Elementary School teachers were awarded SEF professional development grants allowing them to participate in LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) literacy training. LETRS provides comprehensive, intensive, in-depth training in brain science, phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and written language. With LETRS training, teachers gain a deeper understanding of the research behind the Science of Reading, empowering them to engage in meaningful discussions about instructional strategies and student outcomes. Teachers are not only prepared to employ evidence-based practices in their classrooms, but they understand the why behind the instructional practices. One result of this initiative will be close coordination between teachers and across grades as they implement the reinforcing strategies and approaches from their in-depth training.