

Vision Foundation Professional Development Grants

Liz Whorley Bradley Professional Growth Grant

Rebecca Taylor, Alpha Lambda

“Innovative Schools Summit: Nashville, TN”

The Innovative Schools Summit on June 19-23, 2024 allows teachers to network with fellow educators and learn from nationally recognized speakers who share their experiences and proven strategies to help them succeed in the classroom and in their career. The Nashville Summit features access to 4 Education Conferences, including: Innovative Teaching Strategies Conference, At-Risk Students Conference, School Discipline Conference and Social-Emotional Learning Forum.

Dorris Ann Hendrix Professional Growth Grant

Tonya Dolman, Alpha Lambda

“Joint TCTE and NCTM Conference”

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) are pleased to announce the creation of a joint conference on K-5/elementary literacy and mathematics to be held June 17-19, 2024, at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans. The joint NCTE-NCTM conference will provide elementary teachers and leaders with the opportunity to develop their skills in mathematics and language arts as well as engage in teaching practices and strategies that support connected learning and engagement in both domains. Elementary teachers are critical in supporting students' language and mathematics development during these formative years of education. Language arts and mathematics provide the tools to apply critical thinking skills to question and make sense of the world around us.

Vision Foundation Classroom Grants

Nancy Davis Project Grant

Jill Renfro, Gamma Alpha

“Engage Yourself in a Book”

My goal as a librarian is to make life long readers of all my students. In order to do this, I need to reach all reading levels. In middle school, there is a vast range of reading levels and many reluctant readers. My main focus this year is our reluctant readers, and I want to create a positive relationship with reading and these students. Having a wide selection of graphic novels will encourage my reluctant readers to select a book to read. Sometimes a chapter book can be daunting for a student who struggles with reading, but if you put a graphic novel in their hands, the words along with the pictures help them understand a story.

Graphic novels help develop verbal and visual literacy. Just reading a graphic novel is not enough to get the full story, you much look for clues from the images to understand

the characters and plot development. The pictures help set struggling readers up for success, making them more likely to read the book because they have additional tools that will help their understanding of the overall story.

Janice Enck Project Grant
LaSheba Hilliard, Alpha Lambda
“Empowering Future Transition Fair”

The funds from the Vision Foundation Grant will help organize and host a Transition Fair for High School Students with Disabilities in our community on the campus of the University of Memphis. This fair is designed to provide vital resources, information, and support to local high school students with disabilities as they prepare to transition from the educational system to adulthood. I am requesting funds to make this event a success. The Transition Fair is a one-day event that will bring together high school students with disabilities, their families, educators, service providers, and community organizations. The fair aims to address the critical need for comprehensive transition planning and support for students with disabilities, ensuring they have access to the tools and knowledge needed for successful post-secondary life, especially those who live in poverty-stricken neighborhoods. It is important to note that this will be a pilot transition fair co-facilitated by pre-service special education teachers and members of the chapter of the Council for Exceptional Students at the University of Memphis.

Dorris Ann Hendrix Project Grant
Kristi Hargis, Beta Phi
“Boosting Confidence with Decodable Readers”

Students at LaFollette Elementary School in LaFollette, TN love to read. However, for students not on grade level, there is a need for more engaging decodable readers. This year my school purchased the first-grade level of “Dynamite Decodables” from Benchmark Education (our current Reading series). When they came in, all students were amazed at the beauty of them. They are attractive and colorful. However, struggling readers are frustrated they cannot read the on-grade level text. If I receive this grant, I will purchase a set of Benchmark Education’s “Dynamite Decodables” for Kindergarten level for my striving readers to have in hand so they feel just as accomplished as my on grade level readers. Decodable readers are aligned to the Sounds First Reading approach. The goal is to create engaged readers at whatever the current level. In my class of 17 students, half are not reading on grade level and need access to high quality, below grade level, decodable books.

Marilyn Ivy Project Grant
Amy Flippin, Gamma Alpha
“Circuit for High School Business CTE”

A Cricut Maker 3 will be purchased to be used in High School CTE classrooms and clubs. In addition to the cutting machine, tools and a bundle of starter materials will be purchased. Clarksburg school is the smallest K-12 facility in the state. There is one class per grade. At the high school level, over 50% of the staff has less than 2 years of experience in the classroom. In addition, over 40% of those teachers are taking classes to secure their licensure. Each of these teachers has 3-4 preps each semester. The scarcity of time and resources weighs heavily and leads to poor morale and teacher burnout.

Kathy McCullough Smith Project Grant
Jill Scott, Gamma Alpha
“Resources for Childhood Apraxia Speech (CAS)”

Resources for Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS) will be utilized during Speech Language Therapy for ages three to ten in the McKenzie Special School District, McKenzie Elementary School. It will benefit approximately 70 students who present with CAS along with other speech disorders which affect the oral motor functioning and intelligibility of children. The Kaufman Speech Praxis Test (KSPT) is needed to help diagnose developmental apraxia. It will help measure responses of the students and pinpoint the breakdown of the speech system. Treatment can be determined by these results. Materials to help strengthen oral motor movement are needed to help improve oral-motor functioning. Various other materials are needed to help support and reinforce oral movements and syllable shapes needed for children to become effective verbal communicators. As a School Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), over the last three years, post-COVID, I have seen an increase in the number of students who present with Childhood Apraxia of Speech or some other speech disorders which affect the oral motor functioning and intelligibility of children. The requested resources would help with diagnosing and treating these children more effectively.

Vicki Sewell Project Grant.
Carol Nanney, Gamma Alpha
“A new Way for News”

I would like to install large screen tvs in two hallways, the cafeteria, and the back lobby along with the Optisign system to display school announcements and for news broadcasts. Many of our students are on adjusted schedules in our school (especially our seniors) which makes it very difficult for everyone to hear the school announcements. This would enable us to have the announcements scrolling on the TVs in multiple areas of our school. They would be controlled through one device using Optisign.

Mary Jane Thompson Project Grant

Kelli Myers, Rho

“Engagement Lab”

“Provide an uncommon experience for your students and they will reward you with uncommon effort and attitude.”-Dave Burgess

I serve new teachers in Williamson County, TN as a part of a seven-man team of District Mentors. Together, we coach, encourage, support close to 300 teachers in elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as student support teachers. My vision is to create an inventory of materials that new teachers could borrow using a check-out system. These would be materials that are popular for creating engaging learning experiences for students. For example, a class set of highlighters and small, inexpensive blacklight flashlights can turn a reading or writing lesson into a Neon Read-On, Amazing Annotations, or Write Bright Lesson! I could carefully curate the items that teachers would love to have but are hindered by the out-of-pocket expense and allow them to check them out for their lesson and then return. New teachers spend so much of their own money, especially when they first set up a classroom. This would allow our newest educators to provide dynamic, memorable learning experiences that will stick with students that would normally be cost-prohibitive. The items would be cataloged, cleaned, and stored before being shared with the next teacher. We will model using these items in professional development. New teachers do not have the funds needed for engagement tools to enhance their lessons, yet they are constantly buying items with their own money. While these items are sometimes seen as unnecessary, they completely change the learning experience for students. This grant would positively impact almost 300 teachers and an exponential number of students. Learning and teaching should be filled with joy and wonder. This grant would allow for some of that without the added burden to new teachers.

Dr. Elaine Vaughn Project Grant

Debbie Jacobs, Beta Epsilon

“Smart Integration Transforming...Interactive Board”

Integration of the Viewsonic interactive smart board into the computer science classroom at Siegel Middle School in Murfreesboro, TN for grades 6-8 will transform traditional teaching methods by fostering an interactive and engaging learning environment. The technologically advanced interactive display will allow for seamless integration of multimedia resources, dynamic presentations, and collaborative activities, transcending the limitations of traditional whiteboards. The smart board will cater to diverse learning styles, enhancing visual and auditory learning through interactive lessons, videos, and real-time demonstrations. The tactile nature of smart board interaction will promote student participation encouraging a hands-on approach to learning. Additionally, content can be customized, lessons adapted on the fly, and

feedback received instantly, tailoring the educational experience to meet the unique needs of each student. The smart board, as a versatile educational tool, will not only enhance teacher-student interaction but will also cultivate a tech-savvy, collaborative learning environment that prepares students for the challenges of the modern world. The integration of smart boards into the middle school computer science classroom is a strategic and pedagogically sound decision that enhances the learning experience in several ways. Smart boards provide a dynamic platform for showcasing coding concepts, algorithms, and programming languages fostering a visually immersive understanding of abstract coding principles. The interactive nature of smart boards allows students to actively participate in coding exercises, manipulating code elements directly on the board. This hands-on engagement not only makes coding more tangible but also encourages collaborative problem-solving among students. Moreover, teachers can seamlessly switch between various coding environments, share live coding demonstrations, and annotate code snippets, catering to diverse learning styles. Smart boards facilitate real-time feedback, enabling teachers to address coding challenges promptly and creating an interactive and adaptive learning space that aligns with the dynamic nature of computer programming.

Leigh Workman Project Grant
Chastity Ragsdale, Alpha Rho
“Breaking the Cycle: Ensuring Period Equity”

The “Breaking the Cycle” project aims to address a critical issue affecting the education and well-being of female students in my community. Period poverty, the lack of access to menstrual hygiene products, often leads to missed school days and/or class time, decreased self-esteem, and compromised education opportunities. My project seeks to break down these barriers by providing free feminine products to female students, empowering them to confidently pursue their education without the worry of inadequate menstrual hygiene. My aim is to provide free menstrual products in the girls’ restroom at Hampshire Unit School. These products will include tampons and pads that will be available in a dispenser free to any female student in the school that may need one. The initial project will run for one full school year and will benefit approximately 150 female students. To ensure the long-term success of the project, I am exploring avenues for ongoing funding, establishing partnerships with local businesses, and integrating the initiative into existing school programs. Period poverty is a prevalent issue that disproportionately affects young girls and women, hindering their educational progress. Research indicates that a significant number of students miss school during their periods due to the inability to access affordable and reliable menstrual hygiene products. In my own classroom, I have witnessed the strain the lack of access to feminine hygiene products puts on my students. If they are present at school, they spend a large amount of class time trying to borrow these items. The school nurse does keep pads in her office, but students are limited to one per day. Female students should not have to sacrifice essential class time in order to fulfill their basic needs. This project recognizes the urgency of addressing this issue to ensure that no student is left behind due to period-related challenges.

Vision Foundation Committee Grant

State Projects Committee

“From Surviving to Thriving: Survival Kit for Early Career Educators”

The TNSO State Projects Committee plans to offer 3 regional one-day free workshops [East, Middle, West TN] for new teachers with less than 5 years of teaching experience. Mentors from the State Projects Committee and other TNSO leaders will provide a workshop from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. to support struggling educators who do not have to be members of DKG. The training team will provide strategies and tips for classroom management and organization as well as personal mental health and well-being activities. Tentative dates are September 21, 2024; October 26, 2024, and November 16, 2024 [booked at Fall Creek Falls State Park]. With Vision Grant funding and the Cornetet Award, the workshops might be held in Middle TN at Henry Horton or Montgomery Bell State Park and in West TN at Natchez Trace, Paris Landing or Pickwick State Park for a total of 100 participants statewide. The natural beauty of these TN state parks would enhance the experience for these early career educators who may be struggling just to survive the challenges of the classroom. Wherever possible, we plan to provide professional development certificates for those who participate in the six-hour classroom management workshops [Each school district has different criteria for offering PD credits.]

Statistics show that we are struggling to retain classroom teachers. Many drop out during the first five years of teaching. Others have been embedded in classrooms without extensive training in classroom management and behavior management. They may not have anyone else in their discipline at their school or they may be fearful of admitting to their supervisors and administrators that they need help just to survive. Some school districts do provide mentors and coaches, but others rely on informal local mentoring which may not be sufficient. The TNSO State Projects Committee would like to help meet the need for additional training and support for these early career educators free of charge for up to 100 new teachers.

Furthermore, President Marsha Brewer has charged the TNSO State Projects Committee with this new state project in conjunction with the work of our current Education Excellence Committee [EEC]. The current budget for State Projects goes mostly for cash prizes for our annual essay contest winners, so more funding is needed to offer up to 3 free regional workshops for Early Career Educators. We would like to provide a venue that reflects the renewing effects of being in nature. Our state parks have excellent conference rooms and other venues with stunning views that will enhance the training that we plan to provide. For example, the Rec Hall at Fall Creek Falls has now been reserved for Nov. 16, 2024, for \$550/day [total: \$603.63 with state taxes]. Depending on availability, similar space at Montgomery Bell State Park or Paris Landing State Park is \$700/day [\$2000 total for rent at 3 venues]. We want to have lunch catered for up to 30 participants at each site. Most of the training team will have to drive up and spend Friday night at the Lodge prior to the Saturday workshops. We hope to use any state discounts that we can apply [based on age or state of TN employment] to reduce the lodging cost of up to 4 rooms @ \$200 each for a total of \$800 per event. The lunch buffet at each of these state park restaurants costs up to \$25 per

person. We may find a local caterer who can deliver meals to each venue for less. Food for up to 100 persons at all 3 workshops would be at least \$25-\$30 per person for lunch and snacks/drinks for breakout sessions or \$3000/ total. [We still have to reserve venues for Middle and West TN in Sept. and Oct.].

Approximate costs for Nov. 16, 2024, at Fall Creek Falls State Park [currently reserved]

RENT: \$603.63 [includes state taxes; Rec Hall rents for \$550 per day]

LODGING FOR TRAINING TEAM: \$800 for up to 4 rooms/8 presenters

FOOD: \$900 [includes a catered lunch, water and soft drinks, breakout snacks]

SUPPLIES/MATERIALS: \$200 [for notebooks, handouts, brochures, applications, etc.]

Total: \$2500/ per workshop X 3 dates = \$7500