Zionsville Education Foundation
2026 Spring Grants - $72,913.95 awarded

Special thanks to the Community Foundation of Boone County, the Boone REMC Community Fund, a wonderful and anonymous family in the community, and Gregg Barth in memory of Anne Barth for the support of this grant cycle.

Classroom Grants

Tools of the Trade: Building an Industry-Level Jewelry Classroom ($4,854.30)
Grace Fletcher – Zionsville Community High School
Professional-grade tools funded through this grant will elevate a new and in-demand ZCHS art course, enabling students to create industry-level work while developing critical STEAM skills. By providing access to real-world equipment and processes, the project empowers students to think creatively, solve complex problems, and produce high-quality pieces that reflect both technical skill and artistic vision. Its impact extends beyond the classroom by strengthening career readiness, fostering innovation and independence, and reinforcing the vital role of arts education in preparing students for opportunities in both creative and technical fields.

Brain Work Block ($1,671.70)
Madalyn Jacobs – Trailside Elementary
The fourth grade teachers at Trailside Elementary will use this grant to purchase strategy-based board games carefully selected to build students' executive functioning skills. Students will play these games during a weekly "Brain Work Block," practicing essential skills like planning, self-control, and time management while deepening their ability to solve problems and collaborate with peers. By fostering reflection, collaboration, and a sense of belonging, the initiative equips students with lasting strategies they can apply across academic, social, and real-world situations.

Supporting Readers from Foundational Skills to Comprehension ($9,822.16)
Christine Squier, Casey Allen, Katie O'Brien – All Elementary Schools
This grant provides targeted literacy resources to bridge the gap between foundational reading skills and grade-level comprehension for students who need additional support. The research-based books funded by this grant will allow students to continue building reading skills while exploring the same information-rich content their classmates encounter in more complex texts. This approach builds student confidence and reading proficiency, helping more learners meet critical benchmarks and supporting the district's goal that every child becomes a proficient reader.

Kindergarten Pushes and Pulls Celebration ($1,325)
MacKenzie Luse – Boone Meadow Elementary
This grant brings the STEM-focused educational organization SciKidz to Boone Meadow Elementary for an in-school science experience that extends kindergarten students' Pushes and Pulls unit. Through hands-on

labs and design challenges, students will explore how forces and motion work in the world around them. These interactive investigations will help students strengthen scientific reasoning, problem-solving, and collaboration while building confidence and curiosity as young learners.

Supporting Self-Regulation through Classroom Calming Toolkits ($1,126)
Jessica Wetzel – Stonegate Elementary
School counselor Jessica Wetzel will use this grant to equip every K–4 Stonegate Elementary classroom with calming toolkits that support student self-regulation and create inclusive, supportive learning environments. Each classroom will receive the same set of tools, along with guidance for teachers on how to use them to help students manage emotions and stay focused on learning. By providing consistent resources and training across all classrooms, the initiative will empower teachers to proactively support student well-being and long-term success.

Lego Education Science & Lego Education CS and AI ($8,237.80)
Angie Miller, Kathleen Evans - Zionsville West Middle School
LEGO® Education Science and CS & AI kits funded through this grant will enhance existing 5th-8th grade science and computer science curriculum by allowing students to build and test models connected to topics they already are studying, such as energy transfer, forces and motion, ecosystems, and Earth systems. By turning abstract concepts into physical models students can build, test, and refine, the kits encourage experimentation, collaboration, and problem-solving. These durable, reusable materials will support engaging STEM learning experiences for years to come.

Imagine Professional Development Grants

Building Educator Capacity and Educational Practice Through Executive Functioning Skills PD ($2,442.58)
Amy Ertel - Zionsville Middle School
This grant enables ZMS teacher Amy Ertel to attend the Learning and the Brain Conference, deepening her expertise in adolescent executive function and translating neuroscience research into practical classroom strategies to strengthen student attention, emotional regulation, cognitive control, and flexible thinking. The knowledge gained will extend beyond a single classroom through teacher-led professional development, building educator capacity and helping bring research-informed practices to colleagues across the school and district.

Growing Strong: Early Childhood Professional Learning Project ($5,395)
Martha Farley and the Universal Preschool Team of Lead Instructors – All Preschools
This grant will send all 15 ZCS Universal Preschool Lead Instructors to the Indiana Early Childhood Conference, which is Indiana's largest professional learning opportunity dedicated specifically to early childhood educators. Participants will engage with current research and practical strategies that support language development, early literacy, foundational skills, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for young learners. The experience also will bring together preschool leaders who currently work in six different ZCS buildings, strengthening collaboration as the district prepares to unite its preschool programs in the new Early Learning Center, ultimately benefiting students across the district.

Professional Experience Leading AI-Focused Instructional Learning ($1,500)
Stevie Frank – All Schools
Through this grant, all ZCS educators will be invited to participate in an on-campus, in-person professional learning experience with author Matt Miller, centered on his "Tomorrow Glasses" framework for thinking about artificial intelligence in education. Mr. Miller's work helps educators thoughtfully examine how AI is shaping teaching and learning while building confidence to make ethical, future-focused instructional decisions. By fostering shared understanding and ongoing dialogue across the district, the project will

support more intentional learning experiences that encourage critical thinking and adaptability in an AI-integrated world.

Roots and Routes: Place-Based Professional Development in Nez Perce Homelands ($9,000)
Allison Hagerty, Christine Milligan, Trish Shera - Zionsville West Middle School
This grant funds a place-based professional learning experience in the Nez Perce (Nimiipuu) homelands to deepen teachers' understanding of the people and history explored in the Wit & Wisdom Grade 5 "Cultures in Conflict" module. Firsthand experiences, multimedia resources, and shared instructional tools developed during the trip will enable teachers to create richer, more culturally responsive instruction. These resources will help students connect historical concepts to real places and perspectives while strengthening engagement, comprehension, and empathy for the history and perspectives of the Nez Perce people.

Reading Science 2.0 - Leveling Up! ($2,225.41)
Marissa Argus – Trailside Elementary
Trailside literacy coach Marissa Argus will use this grant to attend the Plain Talk Literacy Conference, deepening her expertise in research-based literacy practices. At the conference, she will learn practical strategies to guide teachers in aligning classroom teaching and intervention, making informed instructional decisions, and supporting students as they develop their reading skills. The knowledge gained will help ensure more consistent literacy practices across classrooms, support earlier identification of reading needs, and provide opportunities for students across the school community to strengthen their reading proficiency.

Dino Dig ($2,758)
Melissa Weipert – Zionville Middle School
ZMS math and science teacher Melissa Weipert will use this grant to participate in an educator-focused dinosaur dig in Wyoming, an opportunity made possible through her acceptance to a competitive STEM partnership program between The Children's Museum of Indianapolis and Butler University. By working alongside professional paleontologists and other educators in a real field setting, she will observe firsthand how scientists investigate evidence and build explanations about the past. Students will benefit from engaging, firsthand examples of how science works in the real world, helping them explore how scientists ask questions, analyze evidence, and draw conclusions based on their findings.

The 2026 VEX Robotics Educators Conference ($1,620)
Michael Murphy, Michael DeLand – Zionsville West Middle School
ZWMS PLTW teachers Michael Murphy and Michael DeLand will attend the 2026 VEX Robotics Educators Conference, a three-day professional development event held alongside the VEX Robotics World Championship. Through hands-on workshops, expert-led sessions, and collaboration with STEM educators from around the world, they will gather classroom-ready resources and strategies to enhance robotics and engineering instruction in PLTW units such as Medical Detectives, Design and Modeling, Flight and Space, and Automation and Robotics. The experience will help strengthen robotics and PLTW programming, as educators bring back research-based teaching strategies, advanced coding techniques, and competition-ready design practices that build students' problem-solving, collaboration, and real-world engineering skills.

Stories Beneath the Torch: Exploring Immigration Through History and Art ($3,950)
Katie Werner, Annette Sinsko, Callie Surface – Eagle Elementary
This grant enables Eagle Elementary's third-grade teacher team to deepen their understanding of immigration history and art through an immersive professional learning trip to Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, the Tenement Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The teachers will document their experiences through photos, videos, and artifacts so all students can virtually explore these historic sites. By connecting real places and immigrant stories to literacy, social studies, and art lessons, the project will

help students better understand immigration experiences while building empathy, cultural awareness, and communication skills.

Developing Museum-Based Strategies for Teaching Modern and Contemporary Art ($3,000)
Emily Parker – Trailside Elementary
This grant provides Trailside Elementary art teacher Emily Parker with the opportunity to participate in the Connecting Collections Summer Institute, a professional development program hosted by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in partnership with the Museum of Modern Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Through workshops and gallery discussions led by museum educators and curators, she will explore object-based teaching strategies that help students analyze, interpret, and engage more deeply with works of modern and contemporary art. These approaches support students' visual literacy, critical thinking, and confidence expressing their ideas, while also fostering arts integration across classrooms.

Affirmation, Empowerment, and Connection for Colleagues: The 2026 ACTFL National Convention ($5,126)
Christopher Hindsley, Soledad Saldias Thiel - Zionsville West Middle School
This grant supports ZWMS world language teachers Christopher Hindsley (French) and Soledad Saldias Thiel (Spanish) in attending the ACTFL National Convention & World Language Expo, a premier national professional development event for language educators. Through sessions focused on proficiency-based instruction, authentic communication, and culturally responsive teaching, they will gain practical strategies to strengthen language learning in their classrooms. The experience will equip them with inclusive, communication-focused approaches that foster meaningful connections for their students across languages and cultures.

Where Learning Thrives: Exploring Finland's Approach to Education ($6,000)
Andrew Foreman, Tom Hundley – Eagle and Boone Meadow Elementary
Eagle Elementary Principal Andrew Foreman and Boone Meadow Elementary Principal Tom Hundley will attend the LIFE 2027 Conference in Finland, an immersive professional learning experience featuring workshops, school visits, and collaboration with global educators. By studying Finland's internationlly recognized education system, they will explore how prinicples such as trust, equity, collaboration, and student well-being shape teaching and learning. The insights gained will inform instructional leadership and professional learning across ZCS, as they share strategies and reflections with educators throughout the district.

Texas Music Educators Association Conference, 2027 ($2,860)
Sarah Wright, Ashley Murray, Megan Brenton, Madeline Edwards, Keegan Lammers – Zionsville Middle School, Zionsville West Middle School, and Zionsville Community High School
This grant supports all five orchestra teachers across ZCS in attending the Texas Music Educators Association Annual Clinic/Convention, the largest music education conference in the country. The event brings together thousands of music educators to share strategies for string pedagogy, repertoire, classroom instruction, and ensemble development. By attending together, ZCS orchestra teachers will strengthen alignment across the district's 5th-12th grade orchestra program while bringing back practical techniques and resources to support more than 650 orchestra students.