

Wyoming Education Trust Fund Grant

REPORT TO THE WYOMING LEGISLATURE

WYOMING
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

October 1, 2018

HISTORY

The statutory authorization for this program and the application requirements are contained in Wyoming Statutes 21-22-101 through 21-22-107. In 1991, the 51st Wyoming Legislature established a trust to be held in perpetuity titled the Wyoming Education Trust Fund. Interest earned from the corpus of the trust is to be distributed to districts as innovative program grants to fund programs providing innovation in or improvement to public education.

The Trust Fund legislation was amended in 1997, 2001, 2005, and 2008. Most of the amendments related to the maintenance of the trust itself. The 1997 amendment pertained to the distribution of funds to the University of Wyoming and community colleges. The 2008 amendments adjusted the funding mechanism to narrow the purpose to provide innovative grants to districts only along with an annual conference on innovative education.

Currently, the Trust balance is \$10,000,000. By statute, the Governor is required to recommend an additional \$10,000,000 appropriation to the fund until the balance reaches \$50,000,000. In the history of the trust, no additional funds have been appropriated.

The law allows for grants to be approved in the following categories: curriculum development, operational initiatives, administrator and staff development improvement programs, acquisition of technology equipment, applied science and technology programs, and technical preparation programs. Priority is given to those programs which supplement, not supplant, existing courses and curriculum and are easily transferred or duplicated by other districts, provide matching funds from non-state sources and demonstrate the ability of the recipient district to continue the programs after Trust Fund monies are exhausted.

2017-18 AWARD YEAR

GRANTS AWARDED

In the 2017-18 grant award year, there were a total of 24 grants received from 20 districts, with the grant requests totaling more than 1.1 million dollars. Due to budget constraints and the unfortunate financial climate of the state during this time, there was only two hundred thousand dollars available to award for the fiscal year. Out of the 24 grant applications that were received, four grants were selected for funding by the Wyoming Education Trust Fund Grant Reader Review Committee. The top scoring grant application in each classification (I-IV), was ultimately chosen to receive an award for that classification.

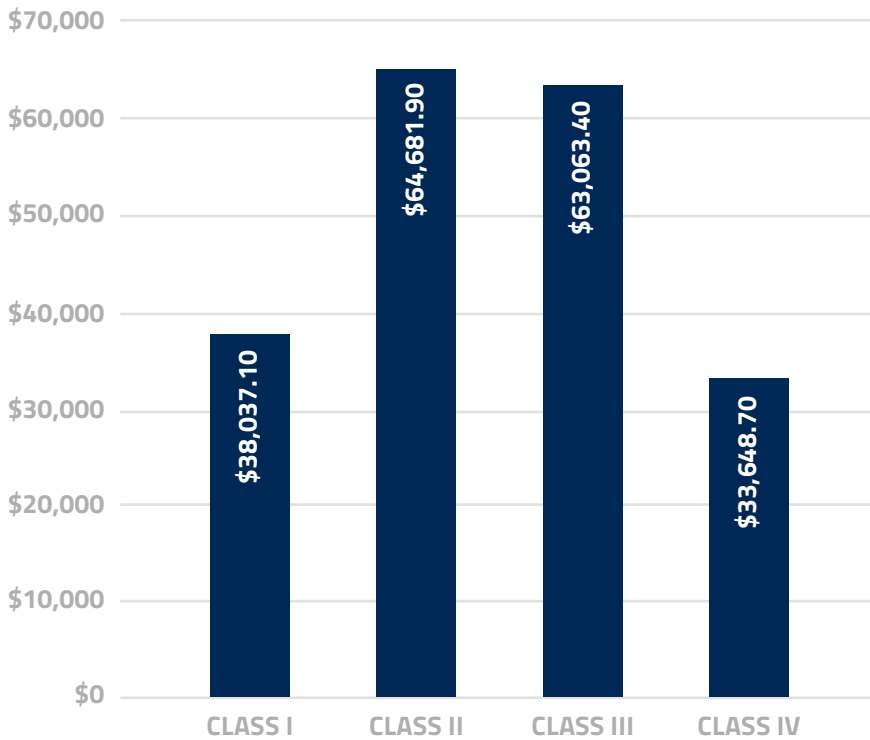
The total amount of funding requested from the selected top four grant applications totaled \$240,278.42,

which is in excess of the available \$200,000.00. As such, the grant readers had the difficult task of reducing the amount requested by awarded districts. After lengthy conversation, both virtually and in person, the grant reader review committee unanimously agreed to award the top scoring districts on a percentage basis. In order to stay under the \$200,000.00 amount available to award. The scoring committee determined that each district would receive 83% of their requested amount. Upon acceptance by the district of the lesser grant award amount, all applicants were informed of the decision of the grant reader review committee.

Total Funds Requested: \$240,278.42

Total Funds Awarded: \$199,431.10

Chart 1: 2017-18 Trust Fund Grant Awarded by Class



2017-18 PROJECT OVERVIEWS AND OUTCOMES

CLASS I

WESTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #7 "CREATING A CUSTOMIZED LEARNING SYSTEM FOR THE FUTURE"

Amount awarded: \$38,037.10

Description

Weston County School District #7 has been awarded the Wyoming Education Trust Fund Grant to increase the blended and customized learning opportunities for students at K-12 schools by providing professional development for district educators through the Technology In Education (TIE) Customized Learning Series during the 2017-18 school year. Through this training and acquired advanced knowledge, Weston County School District #7 will focus on developing a Strategic Structural Rebuild Plan, which will alter the traditional school model and structure and create a Curriculum Redesign Plan offering students personalized learning opportunities. This initiative will help support a customized learning environment and provide a proficiency-based system for measuring student progress in grades K-12.

Evaluation

Weston County School District #7 utilized the Trust Fund grant to increase professional development opportunities for their educators around customized learning by completing TIE learning modules and attending conferences. The educators are then using what they learned from the professional development to transform their classrooms. The educators in this district continue to face the challenge of not having experienced blended learning environments when they were in school. The district has developed a Structural Redesign Team (SRT) and they are continuing to work on action steps to alter from the traditional school environment into the world of personalized learning. The district is a Future Ready School District and will continue to integrate new techniques and digital tools into the classroom to teach new tech literacy, increase personalized learning and competency-based learning opportunities, and foster innovations in learning. In addition, the district has completed stage one of their curriculum redesign that has aligned the standards into the Curriculum Learning Continuum.

CLASS II

BIG HORN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #2
“LOVELL HIGH SCHOOL TINY HOUSE PROJECT”

Amount awarded: \$64,681.90

Description

Big Horn County School District #2 was awarded the Wyoming Education Trust Fund Grant to plan and implement a cross-curricular project of designing and constructing a mobile “tiny house”. The creation of this program promotes student engagement through real-world experiences, while also providing the opportunity for students to earn postsecondary credits and have direct experience with industry experts. This project will also provide students with the chance to understand how the content and skills they learn each day translate to the real world and result in a successful and valuable product. The “Tiny House” project will involve numerous courses and content areas at Lovell High School including: Construction Technology, Computer Aided Drafting, Interior Design, Video Production and Journalism, Environmental Science, Geometry, and Statistics.

Evaluation

Over this grant period, Lovell High School was able to complete 90 percent of their tiny house project. Approximately 50 students were involved in this project and most of them received the OSHA 10 certification, an industry certification that can benefit students throughout their career. The district found it difficult to incorporate all five subject areas into the final project with the short time frame. They also encountered difficulties in getting the tiny house certified due to the mobility nature of the house, however, they still managed to incorporate many green technologies such as solar panels and LED lighting. This project is almost completed. When the tiny house is finished, the district will sell the house and roll the proceeds into the start of a new tiny house for the students to work on.

CLASS III

JOHNSON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #1
“THE CODING APPRENTICESHIP PROJECT”

Amount awarded: \$63,063.40

Description

Johnson County School District #1 has been awarded the Wyoming Education Trust Fund Grant for the 2017-18 year to fund the creation of Coding Apprenticeship Project (CAP) in the district. The first group of students will begin meeting in the fall of 2017 and the second group of students will begin meeting in January of 2018. Both programs will run for six months, with all students receiving three months of intensive training in coding followed by three months of a coding apprenticeship with industry experts in Johnson County. The goal of this project is to provide real world training in coding for a minimum of 10 students per apprenticeship group and provide viable career opportunities for all students completing the program.

Evaluation

Johnson County School District was successful in offering their CAP project, as well as raising awareness to the importance of computer science. There was overwhelming student response from students to participate in the CAP, especially those from Buffalo High School. The county courthouse provided opportunities for students to gain hands on experience from an industry professional. Unfortunately, due to time constraints in students schedules or other conflicts only about one third of students were able to obtain this experience. Another challenge was the high-stress work environment of the industry professionals and many onsite technical issues, students were only able to receive a basic level of training during the project. Students received a MacBook, paid for by the grant funds, to help prepare them for a future in coding. Several of the first students to receive their MacBooks took the initiative to create setup guides to ensure each student was prepared for success. Students recognized that the MacBook allowed for a deeper education in coding over the district's traditional Chromebook student devices. In addition to the CAP success, the district was also able to create interest in computer science courses and have had to add a second course offering for coding. Students also took the initiative to create a "Girls Who Code" coding club at Buffalo High School. This club is still up and running and had created an application that would assist the Meals on Wheels volunteers by displaying customer information and routes.

CLASS IV

NATRONA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #1 "FINANCIAL LITERACY"

Amount awarded: \$33,648.70

Description

Natrona County School District #1 was awarded the Wyoming Education Trust Fund Grant to create financial literacy curriculum which will provide skills to Natrona County students, parents, and teachers while encouraging all participants to make smart financial decisions. The creation of this curriculum will help participating students to meet the Wyoming State Standards for Career and Vocational Education and prepare them to earn proficiency in the Wise Financial Literacy Certification exam. The goals of this program are to: prepare students to succeed in the national certification exam, increase community involvement by encouraging participants to create household budgets, provide staff development dedicated to financial literacy and responsibility, and increase the number of students that have access to computers in the business lab.

Evaluation

Natrona County School District #1 used the Wise's Financial Literacy Program (FLCP) pre-tests as a tool to measure students' financial literacy knowledge ensuring the first week of the instruction. The average pre-test score was 46 percent. By the end of the semester, the average test score was 81 percent. In addition to increasing students' financial literacy knowledge the district also increased parent involvement by holding informative session where course content was explained, steps to create a household budget were demonstrated, and time to allow parents to create a spreadsheet during the session. The district also provided learning opportunities for teachers by having after hours financial literacy workshops for teachers. In addition, the district purchased computers and added appropriate software for support the FLCP.