

# INNOVATION

## Grant Awards Reception November 1, 2023

Grants Sponsored by FCSS Employees & Friends



THE FOUNDATION  
@  
FCOE



# WELCOME

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**Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher**  
Fresno County Superintendent of Schools

Welcome, 2023 Innovation Grant Awards recipients and congratulations on your successful grant proposal! We are so excited about the projects you have planned in the coming year to impart innovative learning in the classroom. The Foundation @ FCOE believes that education is preparation for life and that excellence, access and innovation can change the life trajectory of Fresno County students. This brochure has the collective list and a brief description of all the awarded grants, illustrating the breadth and depth of innovative teaching and learning occurring in Fresno County classrooms.

The grant recipients span broadly from small rural schools to large urban ones, from transitional kindergarten to adult transition programs. The funded projects are just as robust and include projects that focus on mental health, agriculture, arts, science, career technical education, and so much more. In each innovative program, students will be challenged to expand their traditional thinking and perceived limitations. The amazing projects funded through the annual Innovation Grants help increase student engagement, develop creativity, encourage collaboration, and foster a deep understanding of real-world issues through hands-on, innovative learning models. They also foster new techniques, new tools, new methods, and new promising programs, which will serve students well. You should feel very proud of the commitment you have demonstrated to fostering innovation in your classrooms.

We celebrate the educators who applied for the Innovation Grants. They are the type of educators who no doubt inspire students to achieve their dreams, building them up in the process and potentially transforming their future.

This grant program is made possible by the generosity of dedicated employees and friends of the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools. These folks made a commitment to support innovation in Fresno County schools, mostly through monthly payroll deductions, and have collectively funded these grants. Together, they are to be celebrated for the impact they make on the future of Fresno County students. This investment will equate to better teaching and learning with increased student engagement.

These shared sentiments are expressed on behalf of the FCSS employees, the Fresno County Board of Education, and the Foundation Board of Directors. We believe every student can fulfill their potential and this is at the core of the Foundation's mission.



**MaryEllen Galvan**  
Executive Director, The Foundation @ FCOE

# INNOVATION GRANT AWARDEES 2023

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## **Alvina Elementary Charter School District** **Vincent Watkins, Teacher** **3D Printing in the Classroom**

With today's rapidly evolving technological world, students need to have the skills and knowledge to excel in the 21st Century. The *3D Printing in the Classroom* project will incorporate 3D printing activities to provide a rare and ingenious hands-on learning opportunity to gain experience. Students will participate in STEAM activities and cross-curricular integration that will foster creativity within the classroom. By using 3D programs, such as Tinkercad, students will gain the necessary knowledge to use their creativity to turn their ideas into tangible objects. The project will also provide teachers with a chance to bridge learning gaps by printing specific manipulatives that will cater to the individual needs of the students.

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## **Big Creek Elementary School District** **Laura Troll, Teacher** **FIRST Lego League Robotics**

The *FIRST Lego League Robotics* program involves robotics, programming, technology, research, innovation, presentations, and teamwork. Through this project, students will develop a project that they present to a panel of judges, and they will work in teams to compete in a robotics competition. This is an incredible learning opportunity. The goals of this project include increasing student participation in learning about programming and robotics and to develop their teamwork and presentation skills.

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## **Burrel Union Elementary School District** **Melanie Tatco, Special Education Teacher** **Literacy Night Family**

Burrel Elementary is excited to launch *Family Literacy Night*. The objective is to equip students with literacy materials and resources to assist them with their academic pursuits at home. Activities, including bookmaking, clay character creation, escape room challenges, scavenger hunts, and family kit crafting, will be plentiful and diverse. Engaging conversation starters and book-naming activities will also be available. Simultaneously, families can use the bookmobile and sign up for library membership. The project's primary objective is to enhance the literacy rate of the Burrel Elementary School community.

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## **Caruthers Unified School District** **Rebekah Wukits, Music Teacher** **Learning Music with Floor Pianos**

The *Learning Music with Floor Pianos* project will provide students the opportunity to engage with 15 floor pianos in the music program. The pianos will help teach and demonstrate a variety of musical concepts, such as creating a steady beat along with a song or by creating their own "Steady Beat" dance. Students can also demonstrate a variety of rhythm patterns, record their own music, and then playback their music to practice and refine their work. The goal of this project is for students to gain a firm understanding of musical scales that can be applied to learning to read music and play an instrument.

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## **Central Unified School District** **Dawn Donat, Teacher** **Pause. Breathe. Repeat.**

The *Pause. Breathe. Repeat.* project involves strengthening the current Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum and incorporating more ways to bring SEL into the classroom. Some of the activities include acquiring picture books to reinforce lessons and aid in explaining SEL concepts through engaging discussions; community coloring and creating sticker posters; and creating a calming corner for students who need a place where they can go that is visually calm. These activities will remind students to take deep breaths, reset their feelings and emotions and allow them to practice mindfulness and reflective writing.

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**Clovis Unified School District**  
Dina Emerzian, Special Day Class Teacher  
101 Dalmatians School Drama

The *101 Dalmatians School Drama* will give children the opportunity to explore and the freedom to imagine. Through drama, children express themselves using different facial expressions, voices and tones, and body language. Drama empowers children to communicate confidently and studies have demonstrated that drama supports student achievement by aiding in brain development and helping students learn teamwork and discipline. The drama production will allow students to discover their talents and explore their creative sides in ways they may not get to experience. Students will foster and expand all aspects of a drama production, from try outs, set building, rehearsals and the excitement of an opening night. The goal is to encourage more students to participate in the school drama to ignite their creativity, communication, confidence, and teamwork.

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**Coalinga-Huron Unified School District**  
Kelley Mellott, Ag Teacher/FFA Advisor  
Laying Hens

The *Laying Hens* project will help support the establishment and growth of the FFA program. Students will have the opportunity with this project to be involved in all stages of the laying hens development from the time that they are incubating the eggs until they are producing eggs. Students will be responsible for the care and maintenance of the birds, including feeding, cleaning up after them, determining needs, and the sale of unfertilized eggs. The goals for this project are to give students hands-on experiences in working with poultry, provide students with SAE projects to further their FFA careers and to establish a fresh market egg business for students to sell to school employees and the local community.

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**Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified School District**  
Alex Gutierrez, Teacher  
Technology on the Diamond

Students love to participate in extra-curricular activities and one of those is the game of baseball. Over the years with advancements in technology, the game of baseball has been changing like no other sport. This summer the National Federation of State High Schools approved the “Electronic Monitor of Signal Calling” for catchers. This device has been implemented at the collegiate and professional levels for the last two years. Through the *Technology on the Diamond* project, coaches will be able to significantly enhance the high school baseball programs with this device. Signal calling will now be done through an electronic wristband or a headset where the coach and the catcher communicate. The goal is for us to train our kids how to communicate efficiently on the ball field without affecting their performance.

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**Fowler Unified School District**  
Paul H. Magill, FHS Agriculture Department Head  
FHS Poultry Project

The *Fowler High School Poultry Project* will help organize a structured poultry facet for the agriculture department. Students will help design the facility for maximum efficiency, construct the site, and care for the various birds that will be housed in the new facility. Students will feed, clean pens, collect eggs, clean and sanitize the eggs, and deliver the dozens of eggs to local teachers and school officials. A few students are planning on having their own layer project where they could generate revenue from selling eggs. This will be a great real-life, hands-on experience that will allow them to gain leadership skills and self-confidence.

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## **Fresno County Superintendent of Schools** **Jacob Cavazos, Welding Teacher** **Future Pipe Welders**

Welding is one of the fastest-growing fields in construction and manufacturing, and pipe welding is a specialized subset of that field, which is in high demand. The *Future Pipe Welders* project will help students prepare for work in the field right out of high school. In order to accomplish these goals, a pipe welding area will be constructed in the outdoor welding shop. This area will include all the necessary equipment to pipe weld, while keeping students safe. The area will mimic real-world situations for students so they can learn to work within the constraints that they would face when out on an actual welding job. Teaching students in an environment that is as close to real-world as possible enables them to be more marketable when it comes time to get a job.

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## **Fresno Unified School District** **Peter Chaney, Teacher** **Molecular Gastronomy in the Science Classroom**

The recent STEM and NGSS initiatives have encouraged educators to create innovative and engaging teaching methods to bring some excitement to learning science into the classroom. One approach, particularly for chemistry, is the integration of Molecular Gastronomy. This is a unique, cutting-edge culinary discipline that pushes the boundaries of food preparation and the science behind food. Through the *Molecular Gastronomy in the Science Classroom* project students will engage in activities, such as a Spherification Lab, which teaches students how to create different types of spheres using spherification techniques using sodium alginate and calcium chloride. They will also experiment with various flavors and liquids, with the opportunity to create flavored caviar-like spheres or larger spheres, like Boba, with liquid centers. Other activities include a Foam Formation Lab, Gelification Lab, Emulsification Lab, Texture Modification Lab, and a Molecular Mixology Lab.

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## **Golden Plains Unified School District** **Andrea Flores, Dual-Immersion Teacher** **Building a Dual-Language Classroom Library**

This project is designed to support the K-4th grade students at San Joaquin Elementary in the Dual-Language program. Because the students in this program are learning two languages, it is essential to have fiction and non-fiction books that are enticing and academically intriguing in both languages. Students will be able to access books that are written in both English and Spanish in their very own classroom. The students will be able to utilize the books from this project for several activities, such as book reports, literature read out-louds, and independent reading.

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## **Kerman Unified School District** **Nancy Sanchez, TK Teacher** **Creativity and Imagination Brought to Life**

This project will bring student-created artwork to life by designing a cute, custom soft plushy-based on the student's creative artwork. Students will draw a character that can be a real person, a pet, an animal, or a fictitious character of any kind. This character will then be transformed into a 100% custom and handcrafted plushy. This project will bring the student's artwork to life as a unique stuffed animal. Details and color choices are reproduced as closely as possible so that the stuffed plushy that arrives in the mail is immediately recognizable to the student who designed it. The goal is for students to develop self-pride and self-esteem that will help them build self-confidence and self-motivated learning.

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**Kings Canyon Unified School District**  
**Natalia Navarro, Teacher**  
**Bringing History to Life**

The *Bringing History to Life* project will bring to life the content students are learning in Chicano and Latin American History and Government/Economics with a storage chest with history-inspired aesthetics, including a variety of costumes and accessories (i.e. Lincoln's hat, shawl). These items will be used by students taking on the persona of historical figures involved in the U.S.- Mexico War. Each student is assigned a historical figure with a description of their background and their perspectives on the U.S.-Mexico War. They will also participate in a re-enactment of the California desegregation case, Mendez v. Westminster.

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**Laton Unified School District**  
**Ruth Vanessa Monarrez, Drama Teacher**  
**Anything from Stage to Tradition: Theater and Folklorico**

This project is an ambitious endeavor aimed at preserving, celebrating, and promoting the rich cultural heritage of traditional Folklorico dance and its intersection with the dramatic arts. This project seeks to bridge the gap between theatrical storytelling and cultural preservation by exploring the vibrant world of Folklorico dance and its profound impact on our shared cultural heritage. It also provides students the opportunity to explore other cultures and different forms of the arts to open them up to new possibilities.

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**Mendota Unified School District**  
**Raul Covarrubias, Teacher**  
**Christmas Con Carino**

Mendota High School's Career Technical Education/Regional Occupation Program (MHS CTE/ROP) in Business will establish Christmas Con Carino, an annual children's Christmas giveaway. MHS CTE/ROP Business students will design school spirit sweaters and hoodies for children from the community in need of warm essentials. Business students will utilize classroom machinery and their very own student-driven school spirit store, the Aztec Shop, to design and decorate garments. After garments are created, students will wrap each item and deliver them to the community church for distribution to children in time for Christmas.

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**Monroe Elementary School District**  
**Gabriel Robles, Teacher**  
**Science Renovation**

*Science Renovation* will improve the science equipment for Monroe Elementary by adding newer microscopes, scales, and concrete models. This will be an overall improvement in science equipment that will be available for the students to access. The goal of this project is to improve student learning with the use of more high-quality science equipment for models and demonstrations to better engage students in science.

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**Orange Center School District**  
**Patricia Bloodgood, ELD Coordinator**  
**Multicultural Dance**

Orange Center Elementary has a Mexican Folklorico dance group and has transitioned it into a multicultural dance group to reflect the student population. The Multicultural Dance group is open to students in grades 2-8 who would like to learn about the beauty of cultural dances. Students will have the opportunity to gain experience in dances from diverse cultures, highlighting dances from Mexican and Hmong cultures. The goal of this project is to continue educating the school community on the multicultural influences that exist in their student population.

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**Pacific Union Elementary School District**  
**Amanpreet Gill, Teacher**  
**Cricut and Color for the Classroom**

The *Cricut and Color for the Classroom* will brighten up student learning with a Cricut machine and a color copier. Students will have access to color-printed materials in class, such as game boards and vocabulary cards to help make learning more engaging. The teachers will be able to use the Cricut machine to create engaging bulletin boards in their classrooms and the hallways, making the school warmer, more welcoming, and more engaging for students.

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**Parlier Unified School District**  
**Cristina Aguilar, Principal**  
**Culture Pride**

Increasing cultural awareness through Folklorico is important to the Mathew J. Brletic Elementary School community as it builds pride in the cultural richness of Mexico. This type of dance reflects the traditions, cultures, and beliefs of people in a particular region. Students will have access to other types of dances throughout Mexico's regions, and they will understand their meaning by reading books, viewing videos, and listening to Folkloric music. This project will also contribute to positive health outcomes by getting students physically active and moving with a purpose.

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**Pine Ridge Elementary School District**  
**Lindsey Flanigan, Teacher**  
**Kinder "Garden" Community Garden**

The *Kinder "Garden" Community Garden* project has been designed to encourage a sense of community, cooperation and understanding at Pine Ridge Elementary. Students will be introduced to basic gardening as one of their first educational experiences. Students will plant a group of carefully selected crops in the spring for eventual harvest in the fall. Every student will be given the opportunity to enrich their minds with information on irrigation, soil, sun and the impact of weather on plants. Throughout the project, older students will be paired with the younger students, creating a sense of mentorship, connection and responsibility.

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**Riverdale Joint Unified School District**  
**Trina Kloster, Library Media Clerk**  
**Vending Unlimited Possibilities**

A Book Vending Machine captures students' interest and excitement while keeping students engaged with books and characters they are eager to read about. The device will be a visual enticement, not only utilized to promote positive behaviors, but also to demonstrate how using appropriate, responsible actions can introduce you to new possibilities. In addition to providing students with a resource to obtain narrative items that they can own, a Book Vending Machine is a motivating learning tool that everyone can use. Giving students the freedom to select and own a book of their choice enhances their reading experiences. Giving them choices enhances their relationship with books.

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**Sanger Unified School District**  
**Traci Tucker, RSP-Mild/Moderate Specialist**  
**Being Together Builds Strong Knights**

This project will help students get out of the one-on-one zone with technology through tablets, social media and cell phones, into a place that is one-one-one with an actual physical person or with groups of people in person. *Being Together Builds Strong Knights* will incorporate board games and art clubs for students, staff and families to promote personal interaction with one another. Three activities will be available for everyone to participate in before school, during breaks, lunch recess and after school. The overarching goal is to get students, staff and families to meet face-to-face to communicate, solve problems and enjoy one another.



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## **Selma Unified School District**

**Antonio Lopez Jr., Teacher**  
**Reader's Theater**

Students at Eric White Elementary will engage in reading activities through *Reader's Theater* books and props. With the expansion of resources, students will enjoy reading and acting during small-group reading instruction. This is a great way for students to learn valuable literacy skills, while keeping them engaged by acting out scenes from the stories. The goal of this project is to help students feel more confident in their reading ability, increasing their reading level, and to find a joy in reading.

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## **Sierra Unified School District**

**Candice Corn, Academic Intervention Specialist**  
**Knowing Native Ways**

*Knowing Native Ways* will enhance the availability of Native American Literature books for the Foothill Elementary School's library and classrooms. It is important for Native American children to see themselves portrayed authentically in stories and for kids of all races to gain an authentic view of the Native American culture. The books purchased will feature accurate and tribally specific portrayals of Native people both past and present using books from the The Native Ways of Knowing book list. The books will be available for check-out through the school library and some will be placed in classroom libraries. Books will also be included in school's book vending machine for students to purchase with behavior incentive tickets.

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## **Washington Colony Elementary School District**

**Lili Espinosa, Teacher**  
**Thinking In the Classroom**

This project aims to facilitate the goal of developing critical thinkers and problem solvers by using researched methods to help students develop these critical skills. Students will use vertical reusable writing surfaces in math to get students thinking in new ways. Using vertical surfaces is one of the most crucial components of these practices. Teaching in this way requires students to get out of their seats, work in two to three-person groups, and solve a problem vertically. Using vertical surfaces in the classroom to teach problem-solving in math is an innovative step towards teaching students to think.

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## **Washington Unified School District**

**Kelly Wall, Special Education Teacher**  
**Trout in the Classroom**

This project involves raising trout eggs in a classroom and watching them develop into fry. The students will maintain the aquarium, journal the development of the eggs, measure water temperature and record data. When the fish are old enough, students will take a field trip to the river and release them. Students can read about the ecosystem and learn about how various changes in the ecosystem affect plant and animal life, which impacts the trout's ability to survive.

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## **Westside Elementary School District**

**Lalo Gonzalez & Jaymian Campbell-Milner**  
**Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator; Ed Tech Instructional Specialist**  
**Life Skills Through eSports**

eSports is a rapidly developing industry providing thousands of new career and educational opportunities. *The Life Skills Through eSports* will help bring opportunities to students by providing them with real-world experiences and a skill-based curriculum. In the Life Skills courses, students will work on character building, collaboration, communication, problem solving, and leadership skills. Students will engage in discussion and the application of skills through gameplay for 50 hours over a 20-week period. Students who successfully complete the Life Skills courses will be eligible to join their sites' competitive eSports Team, which competes with teams from schools from across California as part of the Central California eSports League.

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## **Non-Traditional Schools Category**

### **Aspen Meadow Public School**

Paige Mason, Teacher

**Next Generation STEM Applications: 3D printing**

In the 21st- Century job landscape, early familiarity with groundbreaking technologies like 3D printing and 3D modeling is essential. This project aims to introduce 3D printers in the classroom to unlock a multidimensional world for students to explore art, science, and mathematics in tangible ways. 3D printing allows students to translate their imaginative designs from virtual models into physical realities. By integrating 3D modeling, students will evolve from passive users to active creators. They will design projects, foster a profound understanding of the design process, and hone in on crucial skills for modern STEM careers. Through this hands-on approach, teachers will not only educate, but also cultivate the next generation of innovators.

# THANK YOU

The 2023 Innovation Grants are made possible by the generous contributions from monthly payroll deductions of FCSS Employees.

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## About The Foundation @ FCOE

The Foundation @ FCOE is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and the fundraising arm of the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS). The Foundation exists to call attention to educational needs in Fresno County and to solicit tax-free gifts from private sources. All gifts are used to fund programs, activities and improvements beyond the scope of school tax dollars to improve the quality of education for more than 200,000 students served by FCSS.

## Mission

The mission of The Foundation @ FCOE is to ensure students reach their full potential by supporting exemplary educational programs and services through a shared community responsibility.

## Belief

Guided by the belief that education is preparation for life, The Foundation @ FCOE pledges to promote excellence, access and innovation in education for all students.

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