

19 Great ideas from Helena public school educators



Helena Education Foundation awards Fall 2023 Great Ideas and Spark grants

Novel Effect

Teacher: Rochelle Brower, Rossiter Elementary
 Novel Effect purchases an app that adds interactive music and sound effects as teachers or students read aloud to give students a more immersive experience that promotes literacy and engagement, supports imagery and visualization, provides a multi-sensory experience, and encourages fluency and accuracy with all readers.

Sponsor: In Memory of Jan Peccia

Collaborative Coding in 1st Grade

Teacher: Mikayla Nickol, Four Georgians Elementary
 Eight collaborative coding games and activities will introduce students to coding without adding more screen time; facilitate problem-solving, communication, persistence, teamwork, and creativity; and promote reading, direction following, and social emotional skills.

Sponsor: Ed Clinch, Edward Jones Investment

PRIME Time Music: Play, Read, Imagine, Move and Experience

Teacher: Sarah Dramstad, Four Georgians Elementary
 Storybooks, puppets, and movement manipulatives will make elementary music an even more inclusive, inviting learning environment, in particular for Functional Life Skills students.

Sponsor: Andrew Pida and Dr. Sri Vellanki

Making Space for Creativity

Teacher: Kim Helseth, Jim Darcy Elementary
 A portable makerspace for third graders at Jim Darcy will extend topics in the reading curriculum with hands-on creative challenges to increase student engagement and foster critical thinking, teamwork, and creativity.

Sponsor: Intrepid Credit Union



Plumbing Interest in the Trades through Yard Games

Teacher: Tom Kain, Capital High School
 Students in carpentry class will cut and fit PVC pipe and copper tubing, learning plumbing skills as they build two different yard games: ladder ball and ring toss.

Sponsor: Nitro-Green of Helena

Orffing Around

Teacher: Jennifer Skogley, Smith Elementary
 New mallets and stools will help students be more comfortable while they play the xylophones and tubano floor drums, offering a better playing angle, allowing more successful and accurate playing and a more resonant, immediate sound on the barred instruments.

Sponsor: Sue and Duane Wright

Tile by Tile: Building Phonemic Awareness

Teacher: Amber Byrd, Broadwater Elementary
 Manipulative, magnetic phoneme tiles will benefit struggling learners and make abstract concepts (different vowel patterns) more concrete.

Sponsor: CWG Architecture In Memory of Jim Brown

First You Have to Find It!

Teacher: Hope Morrison, Smith Elementary
 Shelf labels, plastic frames for promotional and informational signs, and wooden racks for high circulating book sets will ensure that students are easily and independently able to locate the books they are looking for in the Smith Library.

Sponsor: Sid Armstrong



Future Forecasters

Teacher: Diloné Mouledous, Kessler Elementary
 An interactive weather station to collect data for use with grade specific lesson plans will incorporate science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) standards using a hands-on data collection system for elementary students.

Sponsor: Sandy Wikle



The Gold Nugget Idea

Teacher: Ellie Fjeseth, Capital High School
 The Special Education department will gain two Nuggets, part furniture and part game, to be used as a safe, cozy spot for students overwhelmed with sensory seeking behaviors or anxiety, or transformed in countless ways, such as into a stage for public speaking, or a counter for role-playing real-life financial interactions.

Sponsor: Montana Broom and Brush

The Wonderful Wizarding World of 4th and 5th Grade

Teacher: Kellen Alger, Jefferson Elementary
 Decking this classroom out in Harry Potter themed décor will support both academic and social emotional growth of students, creating an engaging environment, instilling pride and belonging, and fostering opportunities to explore and connect.

Sponsor: Dr. Rich and Sue Buswell

Montana Youth Climate Summit

Teacher: Claire Pichette, Helena High School
 HHS Green Group students and HHS AP Environmental Science attended the first annual Montana Youth Climate Summit sponsored by Park High School students in Livingston, meeting kids from schools around Montana to think of creative solutions for schools and communities moving forward.

Sponsor: Hugh and Karen Zackheim

Resource Room Sensory and Calm Down Corner

Teacher: Joshua Jones, Hawthorne Elementary
 A space for students to learn and practice social emotional skills—particularly those for self-regulation when experiencing difficult emotions such as anger, sadness, or anxiety—will be available to all students and stocked with sensory tools such as fidget toys, stress balls, and kinetic sand as well as timers, posters, and other tools to promote social emotional learning.

Sponsor: Dave and Sandi Ashley

Perfect Pitch...or...Pitch Perfect

Teachers: Jake Spearson and Kacey Askin, Helena High School
 The Fastbind Elite Hot Melt Perfect Binder ELT110 machine will bind professional portfolios for projects, semester theses, and more for students in Fundamental Drafting, AutoCAD, Architecture, Mechanical Engineering, DECA, Marketing, and Mock Trial.


To date, the Helena Education Foundation has awarded

506 grants

totalling more than \$865,321

195 High School Grants
 14 PAL Grants
 77 Middle School Grants
 227 Elementary Grants

The Helena Education Foundation Grants programs enhance the education and experiences of virtually all of Helena's nearly 8,000 students.




Sponsor: HHS Class of 1962

Unity Threads: Dressing Our School Spirit

Teachers: Kellie Boedecker and Amber Byrd, Broadwater Elementary
 School gear creates and fosters a greater sense of pride, community and inclusiveness in a school. T-shirts for all students will boost students' feelings of belonging and launch a tradition that the Parent Council will continue.

Sponsor: In Memory of HEF Founding Board Member Jim Brown

Get Active!

Teachers: Chelsey Davis, Jody Branting, Severena Samuelson, Jenna McBride, Gail McMahon, Four Georgians Elementary
 Academic and physical education programs collaborate with new books and equipment to encourage students to Get Active! Students will research opinion papers about healthy sports, activities, and hobbies while enjoying the activities in physical education.

Sponsor: The Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation

Deepening an Understanding of European History

Teacher: Bob Poelking, Helena High School
 The Advanced Placement European History class at HHS will enjoy supplemental books to accompany the standard textbooks with the goal of deepening their compositional and analytical skills.

Sponsor: William and Judy Walter

Connection Kits

Teacher: Sean Morrison, Rossiter Elementary
 "Connection kits" feature stationery, playing cards, coloring books and other activities that staff and volunteers who mentor students can use during daily check-ins.

Sponsor: Shodair Children's Hospital

Trekking and Tracking 2.0

Teachers: Emily Petersen and Ryan Cooney, Project for Alternative Learning
 Boots, clothing, equipment, and gear needed to enjoy, survive, and thrive in the great Montana outdoors will improve field trips for the Trekking and Tracking class and will be available for students to check out for their own winter adventures.

Sponsor: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana

Thank you grant sponsors:

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Great Ideas and Spark Grants empower educators to go beyond what's expected to create novel and foundational experiences for Helena students. All grants are named for major donors to the Helena Education Foundation; please contact HEF if you are interested in sponsoring a Great Ideas or Spark Grant.

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