



## Helena Education Foundation awards 8 Spark Grants for Winter 2024

# 8 Sparks of enrichment from Helena Public Schools teachers



### Creative Movement for Focused Learning

**Grant recipient:** Janna McBride  
Four Georgians Elementary School

Creative Movement encourages motor skills development, social connection, emotional and physical confidence, joy, focus, and cognitive engagement. This grant brought instructors from the Cohesion Dance Project into Four Georgians Elementary where they used movement patterns to improve readiness to learn and taught tools for managing stress, anxiety, and strong emotions. These outreach classes incorporated dance activities and movement exploration for students of all ability levels. Students took on several collaborative challenges requiring them to move outside of their comfort zones, to cooperate and build relationships, and to connect with their bodies.

**Grant sponsor:** Skye Hatten



### Teamwork with a Drum on Top

**Grant recipient:** Sarah Dramstad  
Four Georgians Elementary School

Group drumming is a cool avenue for building teamwork and respect. It generates incredible participation, even from students who normally self-select out of music activities. But when it comes to drums, size matters. At least, it should. This fall, 4Gs students discovered that their smallest drums, which should be the highest in pitch, produced a dull, thud-y, low pitch. Teamwork with a Drum on Top brought a high-quality, high-toned drum to their classroom, as well as two modern, durable West African rattles called shekere.

**Grant sponsor:** Quinn Erwin Dental



### Expand the Library to Expand their World

**Grant recipient:** Liesel Loveridge  
Central Elementary School

Central School's library has expanded their collection of books about countries around the world to enhance students' understanding of the people and places beyond their own neighborhoods. Students learn about other countries and cultures as they improve their language skills, develop a broader understanding of our world and, most importantly, develop a love of reading!

**Grant sponsor:** Alvaro Freyre

### Bird Buddies

**Grant recipient:** Kellen Alger  
Jefferson Elementary School

Funds from this grant purchased an interactive bird feeder and field guides of Montana birds. Students now use these materials as part of a science and social studies unit focusing on Montana wildlife. The bird feeder allows students to collect data on the types of birds found here in Helena and to learn to use the field guides to identify birds. This particular bird feeder has a built-in camera that can record video/photos of the birds that visit it, and it allows AI to help identify the specific species observed.

**Grant sponsor:** In Memory of Mignon Waterman



### A Day at the Bray

**Grant recipient:** Shana Berry  
Rossiter Elementary School

This grant will help fund a field trip for first graders from Rossiter to have a 'Day at the Bray' including a 50 minute tour to learn about brick making, the various artists, and pottery; a sack lunch outside on the historic art grounds surrounded by hundreds of ceramic artifacts and site-specific sculptures created by former resident artists; and a two-hour art lesson resulting in a piece of art that students can take home. The trip will open students' eyes to part of Helena's history and expand their knowledge of art and culture.

**Grant sponsor:** In Memory of Jim Brown,  
CWG Architecture



### Lunch and Literature

**Grant recipient:** Mary Pat Penley  
Helena High School

The Lunch & Literature program aims to create an inclusive, student-led book club at Helena High School for high school students to meet during lunch. This club offers students a chance to read, discuss, and explore literature in a relaxed and social setting. The hope is to foster a love of reading, critical thinking, and community among students while providing an enriching, low-pressure alternative to the traditional lunch period. By empowering students to lead the book selection and discussion process, this initiative also encourages the development of essential social, communication, and leadership skills.

**Grant sponsor:** Opportunity Bank



To date, the  
**Helena Education Foundation**  
has awarded

**567 grants**  
totalling more than \$930,490.64

★  
**212 High School Grants**

★  
**17 PAL Grants**

★  
**83 Middle School Grants**

★  
**266 Elementary Grants**

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

### A Boost for Book Groups

**Grant recipient:** Brenna Stefanik  
Jim Darcy Elementary School

A Boost for Book Groups provides a variety of high-interest audiobook sets to improve comprehension and vocabulary acquisition and promote a love of reading as well as a shelf for storage of books. Students can comprehend two grade levels above their own reading level when listening to a book read aloud. With more complex text, students are exposed to a wider range of vocabulary as well as stories that are more involved and lead to deeper levels of thinking.

**Grant sponsor:** Ascent Bank



### Story Time Fun

**Grant recipient:** Talor LeBrun  
Jim Darcy Elementary School

This project created an independent reading center through the use of Tonies. A Toniebox, also known as a Tonie, is a screen-free listening experience for students. Students can listen to stories, songs and more through the use of a unique Tonie character. Whether the students are able to read independently or need support, the Toniebox allows all students in class the ability to engage in reading and open their imaginations to a whole new world.

**Grant sponsor:** Stockman Bank



### Thank you grant sponsors:

Alvaro Freyre

Ascent Bank

In Memory of Jim Brown,  
CWG Architecture

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Quinn Erwin Dental

Skye Hatten

Stockman Bank



The Helena Education Foundation awarded **8 grants** for a total of more than **\$3,700** in the second quarter of this school year. These grants funded educator-proposals at **6 schools** and enriched the educations of students from **Kindergarten to 12th grade**. Thank you to our generous community partners who make these grants possible.

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EDUCATION FOUNDATION

