

Rockland Education Foundation

Robots, drones, virtual reality...

all state-of-the-art technology made available to the students of the Rockland Public Schools through the Rockland Education Foundation. This past year, over \$48,000 was awarded to teachers and administrators whose grants were chosen for funding; and, since its inception, the Foundation has distributed over \$612,000 in grant awards. From preschool to high school, the Rockland Education Foundation has made an impact in the classrooms throughout the system.

The following is a brief summary of those grants and the impact they had on the students of the Rockland Public Schools.

This year a special grant was created to honor **A. SCOTT MACKINLAY**, the founder and past president of the Rockland Education Foundation. The first recipient of the A. Scott MacKinlay Impact Grant was **LISA RYAN**, Instructional Technology Interaction Specialist for the Rockland Public Schools. This \$10,000 grant funded *"Google Expeditions"*, – a virtual reality program that took students in Grades 2-12 to other countries, under the sea, and even within the human body to see first-hand the world around us and all its wonder! Abstract concepts come to life in classrooms and there are currently over two hundred tours available for teachers to utilize. Tours are collections of virtual reality panoramas, 360 degree photo spheres, 3D images and videos, and ambient sounds combined with details, points of interest and questions to engage students. Mrs. Ryan also provided instructional support and training to teachers in the use of the program. When Mr. MacKinlay visited a classroom to see this program in action, he was so thrilled with the possibilities it presented to the students in Rockland that he proposed to the Foundation's directors that additional funding be found to expand this program to allow more student participation. As a result, a generous donation from the Rockland Trust Company was used to expand Google Expeditions.

At Rockland High School **JONATHAN ROBIN'S** grant award allowed for the purchase of a *Quadcopter Camera Drone*, which was used in the Earth Science and Physics classrooms last year. The drone was used to record aerial footage of the middle school and high school buildings for future trigonometry studies, and aerial photos of local environmental areas such as Jacob's Pond and Accord Pond will provide students with data on local geophysical landforms and local environments.

STEPHANIE PALMER and **MELISSA SHAUGHNESSY** used computer technology to teach Spanish and French to their students.

The purchase of seventeen iPads, in addition to the fourteen already housed in the World Language Department, made technology available to all students in a classroom and enabled them to have equal access to the learning process. In addition to visual review, students could hear the language spoken and practice proper pronunciation. The Voicethread App allowed students to create their

own slideshow presentation in the target language, which the teacher reviewed. This project-based learning enhanced communication, listening, speaking, writing, reading and critical thinking skills.

The music department was also enriched with the implementation of a music technology studio. Music Teacher **DAVID ARRUDA** bought *Yamaha Piaggero Piano Studio consoles* which enabled the students to create their own compositions by combining this new technology being used in professional music production along with existing materials. This technology was made available to both high school and middle school students.

Music Director **JOHN PIAZZA, JR.** brought *"Talkin' About Jazz"* to Rockland High School and Rogers Middle School. This is a lecture series consisting of concerts and clinics exposing students to the fundamentals of jazz and its contribution to the American music scene. Joining students from the East Bridgewater schools, students in grades six through twelve attended an all-day clinic where they received step-by-step guidance by trained clinicians in creating music by ear and developing their listening skills. In the evening, a Jazz concert was held for the community with over three hundred people in attendance. A second concert was held in the Rockland High School lecture hall featuring regional musicians, teachers David Arruda and John Piazza Jr., Superintendent of Schools Alan Cron, and Big Band leader and drummer Kenny Hadley. More concerts and lectures are planned for the students and community in the future.



Also housed in Rockland High School is the E.A.S.E. Preschool Program, an integrated program serving students of all developmental levels. Teachers **MAUREEN BARRETT**, **HEATHER MACDONALD**, **ELISA REINBOLD** and **JENNIFER ROBACK** have experienced first-hand the benefits of pretend play in relation to students' communication skills, social interactions, and problem-solving skills. The purchase of *a mobile dress-up station* to be shared by all classrooms included dress-up and community helper clothing. Children developed their own play themes and also built play around teacher directed themes. Students were engaging in imaginary play to express their feelings, ideas, and to role play independently and with their peers. As beloved television personality Mr. Fred Rogers once said, "Play gives children the chance to practice what they are learning."

At Rogers Middle School, **ELLEN SMITH** brought the world of robotics to her students. With the purchase of three *First Lego League competition mats* with mission models, various challenges at a variety of different levels were introduced to her seventh grade students. Mrs. Smith stated that "students worked hard to program their robots and make attachments to complete their missions and were constantly using iterative testing to reach their goals." Last March, students were able to present and demonstrate their models at the monthly Rockland School Committee meeting.

Students in **SUSAN LONERGAN'S** fifth grade classrooms learned *"There is Water All Around Us"* through a program by the same name sponsored by the North/South River Watershed Association. Parents were invited to participate by being trained to run six water stations in the classroom.

Students rotated among the stations, which included information on water conservation, runoff, pollution, filtration, taste, and the topography of Rockland. Students then boarded buses and visited Sandy Bottom Pond to see where water comes from, and how it is processed for use in Rockland.

Esten School teachers were the recipients of three grant awards last year. **KATHLEEN FERRY** brought *"In-House Field Trips"* to her students in the form of Hightouch/Hightech, a vendor who brought hands-on science activities into the classrooms. The first was *"Matter Matters"*, where students worked collaboratively to problem solve and explore the properties of matter. They built bridges using Solo cups, newspaper, and tape during *"Beams, Bridges and Columns."* A highlight of this program was building supports from cardstock and stacking textbooks on them to determine their strength. The anticipation was exciting as more than twenty books were placed on the supports before their collapse. The third presentation was *"Extreme Science"* where children learned about the earth's extreme environments: deserts, rainforests, oceans and arctic zones. Third grade teacher **SUSAN WELLS** also received a grant for Hightouch/Hightech to bring *"Smarty Plants"* to all the grade three students. All five classrooms learned about photosynthesis, germination, and plant life cycles. The presenter demonstrated the process of a plant's water absorption using chromatography paper and a marker, after which students all received a bookmark memento of the presentation. Each child was given a seed for planting, and monitored its growth and development.



Also in third grade, teacher **CHANTELLE KAVKA** received funding for *curricular ELA and Social Studies materials*. According to Mrs. Kavka, "Students in grade three were very eager to learn about the colonies in the 1700s from the texts that were purchased, and they took great pride in developing their own opinion about which side was more justified, the Patriots or the Loyalists." Their opinions were formed in part by taking on the role of a "character" during this time period (cabinet maker, redcoat, blacksmith, errand boy, shipbuilder, etc.). Students also compared maps of Boston in the 1700s with those



of today, and learned about what life was like in the colonies during that time.

At the Jefferson School **EMMA RAY, LAURA LEANDER,** and **WENDY SAVAGE-CAPRIO,** first grade teachers, purchased classroom licenses to *"Raz-Kids"* and a shared subscription to *"Reading A-Z"*. With Raz-Kids, each child was given an account from which they could access texts at school on computers and iPads. Integrating technology into the reading block enabled differentiated instruction and small group instruction and intervention. The accounts also allowed students to access books at home to practice reading and comprehension. The A-Z subscription supplied teachers with printable resources to use for guided reading and assessments.

LYNN NELSON, music teacher at Jefferson School, along with **JEFFREY POPADIC,** music teacher at Esten and Memorial Park Schools, were awarded a grant to purchase six *Tubano drums*. Last year, the Rockland Education Foundation granted the funds to Mr. Popadic to purchase six drums for Esten School students. This year's grant awards made the drums available to students at both the Jefferson and Memorial Park Schools as well. Ms. Nelson, a percussionist with formal training in African drumming, said the children were able to express themselves musically, create their own original works, and to learn and practice steady beat and rhythmic patterns. At last year's annual spring concert first grade students used the drums to create a rhythmic ostinato accompaniment for the song "Heigh Ho" from Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs movie. Also at Memorial Park School Principal **JAN SHEEHAN** worked in collaboration with the Rockland Daycare Program's after school staff to provide enrichment opportunities for their students. A traditional *"Chess and Checkers Club"* was formed and ran for eighteen weeks to an enthusiastic response. Through a contracted vendor, the children also worked with Lego WeDo 2.0 engineering programs. Four Stack Up! Games sets were also purchased for students which provided materials, teaching guides and activities appropriate for early learners. Second grade teachers **MICHELE BISSONNETTE,**

MARIA COVENEY and **JENNA MULLEN** had their students *"Walking Like a Penguin"* when the New England Aquarium visited their classrooms. This high quality presentation highlighted what the children had been studying, and, coupled with a Google Expedition to Antarctica utilizing Lisa Ryan's grant, this interactive experience was both enjoyable and educational.

Last but certainly not least, **KAREN MACKINNON,** District Literacy Coach, was able to purchase *historical fiction text sets* for fourth graders across the district. Working cooperatively in book clubs, the students had access to texts differentiated by interest and ability. Students researched the Civil War, Pioneer Days, the Revolutionary War, and the Underground Railroad and created timelines in order to put the time periods in historical perspective.

All of these wonderful grants funded by the Rockland Education Foundation would not be possible without the continued support of local business benefactors, Century Club donors, memorial donations, and the generous individual donations from the residents of our community.

Our annual "Gus Lordi Golf Tournament", which is held each June, is also a great way to support the Foundation. Visit our website at RocklandEducationFoundation.org for more information about our organization.

Our thanks to all of the administrators and staff who submit these exciting and creative grants each year in order to enhance the educational experiences of the children of the Rockland Public Schools. We can't wait to see what this school year brings!