

Summer Grants Boost Boxford Elementary Offerings

SEPTEMBER 10, 2015

BOXFORD –The Boxford Elementary Schools Trust (BEST) today announced an impromptu grant round was held this summer at the request of the elementary school faculty and staff. The summer grant applications involved funding three innovative programs that will enhance Boxford's elementary school offerings and bring novel teaching tools and techniques to the district. BEST awards total \$41,000 for science, teacher development and technology programs in Boxford. All grants were approved in early August and stand to significantly benefit students, teachers and staff throughout the 2015/2016 school year.

Approved grants include:

1. A state-of-the-art science pilot in grade 5 – Science from Scientists – that brings actual scientists into the classroom to run experiments and provide enhanced instruction every two weeks throughout the school year;
2. A comprehensive teacher development course called the Power of Our Words, which will be implemented at both Cole and Spofford Schools. It focuses on verbal communication in the school environment and how word choice impacts student development and confidence;
3. And a complete 1:1 iPad classroom for a 6th grade class.

All grants are made possible through the effort and dedication of BEST, whose members secure funding all year long from individuals, families, foundations and local businesses. "It is with deep gratitude to our community partners that BEST brings these grants to Boxford elementary schools this Fall," said Lisa Novack, BEST's grant administrator. "In particular, we'd like to acknowledge the generosity of Institution for Savings for their \$15,000 donation to enable the 1:1 iPad classroom, and to New England Biolabs for their \$8,000 donation to enable the 5th Grade Science from Scientists pilot. Our mission is to bring innovative teaching tools to our school district, and knowing we have community partners that are willing to embrace and support that mission is very inspiring."

"We are grateful for the work that BEST does to enhance the experiences of teachers, students and staff at our schools," commented Kathryn Castonguay, principal at Spofford Pond School. "Knowing that we can rely on our parent-led organizations to react quickly and support unique opportunities when they arise is truly appreciated." As part of its ongoing fundraising activities, BEST will be debuting a booth at Applefest in Boxford on Sept. 19th and invite Tri-town residents to come taste their Homemade Apple Crepes. They will also be hosting a Homes Tour on May 7, 2016 and ask anyone interested in advanced ticket sales or volunteer opportunities to visit www.boxfordhomestour.com.

About BEST

BEST is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization dedicated to fostering excellence in our public schools by raising private funds that supplement basic curriculum needs and respond to teacher requests for useful tools and strategies that enhance learning. Contributions to BEST's mission can be made in any amount at bestforboxford.com. – Whatever was supposed to come out of the graduated cylinder on the table in front of him, Evan Wini was not expecting an eruption of what looked like an oversized column of toothpaste.

"What I thought it would do is bubble a bit and go up slightly," he said of the "Elephant toothpaste" experiment – the introduction of potassium iodide to a mixture of dish soap and hydrogen peroxide. "But it just exploded."

In other words, it was maybe more fun than the fifth-grader, and about two dozen other students in the room with him at Burncoat Street Preparatory School Thursday morning, were expecting. That's the idea of the Science from Scientists program, a Boston-based school enrichment program that launched its first Worcester location at Burncoat this year.

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Screenshot of the actual news article at

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“Summer Grants Boost Boxford Elementary Offerings” Continued...

Founded by MIT graduate Erika Ebbel Angle, Science from Scientists brings real scientists to participating schools, where they have 90-minute science sessions with students. The overall goal, Ms. Angle said at a kickoff ceremony for the Burncoat program Thursday morning, is to make science less of a chore and more of a thrill.

“Growing up, I was fortunate to have positive experiences with science,” she said, which set her on a track to pursue a successful career in the field. But not every student gets that same opportunity, she added – “Science never came to life during elementary school and middle school as it did for me. And I thought about that – who will be my doctor in 15 years? Who will fly the airplane I’m in?”

The Elephant toothpaste experiment, which Evan conducted along with fellow Burncoat fifth-graders De’janique Waller and Daneishka Gutierrez under the direction of Science from Scientists instructor Amanda Schutt, is just one example of the types of experiments students at the school will do in the program. Burncoat’s visiting scientists, which include a researcher from UMass Medical School and a graduate student in physics, are scheduled to be at the school once every two weeks – roughly 18 times this school year.

Another program is slated to start at Chandler Magnet School next week as well, said Payal Patel, who is the Science from Scientists director for Worcester. The city’s programs are being funded through a two-year STEM Pipeline grant the organization received from the state’s department of higher education, she said.

“The idea is to bring in the program, and see how the students, teachers and principals like it,” she said. “Hopefully, if there’s enough interest, the district will say, ‘we need to bring this to more schools.’”

It’s no secret by now that Massachusetts has been making a major push to expand and improve STEM – science, technology, engineering and math – education in schools the past few years. State officials have said the initiative is critical not just to the success of students, who are more likely to

find rewarding, well-paying careers in the fields, but also to the future of the state’s high-tech economy, which will need well-trained, specialized workers.

Lt. Gov. Karyn E. Polito, who attended Thursday’s event at Burncoat, said it’s especially important to get girls more interested in science.

“I worry about them – as they grow a little older, they tend to say things like, ‘Oh, I’m not good at math, I don’t really like science,’” she said. “The point of today is you have to know science and math, and if you have to know it, then you should love it.”

She didn’t need to convince Evan, who said he’s already thinking of becoming a scientist.

“I’m having trouble (deciding) what kind,” he said, after Thursday’s experiment. “But this is kind of fun.”

Science from Scientists’ mission is to improve the attitudes and aptitudes of 4th-8th graders in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Our goal is to ensure our nation’s youth is competitive globally in STEM fields through exciting, informative and engaging training by practicing scientists. Our lesson topics are informed by MCAS requirements and other relevant curriculum frameworks. Science from Scientists harnesses the passion of real-world scientists to bring measurable results to school systems across the country.

About Power of Our Words

Since 2007, thousands of educators have used the Power of Our Words as their guide to getting the most from positive teacher language. Teachers can use language—words, tone, and pace—to increase student engagement, build a positive classroom community, and more effectively manage behavior by helping children develop confidence, competence, and self-control.