

# Comal Independent School District

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **More than \$76,000, thousands of students, and 127 teachers later: The Comal Public School Foundation's 9<sup>th</sup> Prize Patrol**

Nearly 130 teachers in the Comal Independent School District received more than \$76,000 in grant money during the Comal Public School Foundation's 9th Prize Patrol. The grants will be implemented in 2007-08.

"Our teachers deserve all the support they can get," said Klaus Weiswurm, Foundation president. "These grants will help them go above and beyond to help our students."

To date, the Foundation, only in its sixth year, has already returned about \$415,000 to Comal ISD classrooms.

The money was awarded to 20 groups of teachers on 11 different campuses. The process began earlier this semester when teachers wrote grant proposals for innovative projects and programs to enhance learning. A committee of grant reviewers rated each grant, and teachers will implement the strategies this school year. The grants are:

"Students Must Investigate Laboratory Experiments" at Bill Brown Elementary, \$5,000 (Merrie Petmecky, Maureen Alaniva, Sandra Kilpper, Trish Lowe and Marcia McDonald) Students must investigate with laboratory experiences in order to fully understand science concepts. Science is such an interesting subject for children, and hands-on activities move abstract concepts to more concrete ideas. FOSS (Full Option Science System) kits that are aligned with state-mandated TEKS are available. These kits give teachers everything they need to teach specific objectives in a lab-like setting.

Canyon High School received three grants. "A Blast From the Past" \$2,502 (Heidi O'Keefe, Sandra Cadena and Karen Stephens) Students experience the sights and sounds of classical Rome, Pompeii, Roman Britain and Africa as they converse in Latin

with fellow cyber-travelers in this virtual world. The students experience the culture of the ancient peoples while developing language skills in Latin and acquiring a strong foundation in English.

“Promethean Active Classroom in Action” \$4,879 (Bonnie Weed, Michelle Koehl, Jamey Lagleder, Ken Weatherspoon and Sharon Streger) The Promethean interactive whiteboard system is designed by and for teachers to create a more engaging and “Activclassroom.” The activclassroom takes math lessons to a whole new level. The Activote gives instant student feedback, encourages whole class participation, helps to gauge if students understand concepts and holds all students accountable for their responses. The Activslate allows teachers and students to control the whiteboard from anywhere in the classroom making it a powerful classroom management tool. It is an all-in-one solution!

“Comal ISD on the Weatherbug Map” \$4,730 (Larry Anderson, Mary Anderson, Joanna Henry, Kathy Simmons and Ron Rychel) Students are able to tap into real-time weather conditions all over the United States and beyond. The program includes software that allows students to view graphs of past conditions for stations or conditions at the present time.

Canyon Middle School received two grants. “Attacking Adolescent Struggling Readers” \$1,763 (Vanessa Brown and Becky Kusak) Kylene Beers, a famous speaker, teacher, author, and president of the National Council of Teachers of English, is presenting a workshop in collaboration with other authors and teachers. This experience provides cutting edge, innovative, researched-proven strategies to implement in classrooms and share with colleagues.

“Science Alive Podcast Academy” \$4,998 (Stef Paramoure, Sara Hays, Steve Namba, Penny Lindsey, Steve Rutledge, Mary Kay Covington, Christine Colson and Patti Vlieger) This grant targets unmotivated students of science. Creating a podcast to help teach others gives students a focused purpose, adds value to self as the student experiences assisting others, and provides a creative outlet to show what they know. Podcasting combines these in a constructive way to energize and improve educational experiences.

Freiheit Elementary received one grant and will collaborate with Canyon High School on another. “Writing the ‘Smart’ Way” \$4,998 (Julie Cooper, Tammy Griffiths, Kim Huffstutler, Doris Hasten, Cindy Rum, Debbi Haecker, Jennifer Saeger, Amy Miller, Whitney Tovar, Janna Smith, Stefanie Kubala and Diane Winkelmann) Teaching reading and writing using a SMART Board computerized whiteboard is as simple as

learning to touch, write and save! Students create essays, edit, and revise simply by touching their finger onto this unique white board.

“Inform. Instruct. Inspire.” \$4,939 (Teachers: Doris Hasten, Alyson Cernoch, Julie Cooper, Michael Smith, Cindy Rum, Dustie Lumpkin, Mindi Wing, Elizabeth Adams, Tammy Griffiths, Whitney Gray, Jamie Sales, Sabra Wheeler, Jennifer Saeger and Peggy Perry) The mobile broadcast cart informs students and parents by allowing newscaster-style presentations of live morning announcements. It instructs through student reports and teacher presentations, and it inspires students and staff to create innovative visual presentations of these and other special activities.

Hoffmann Lane Elementary will implement “Magnetic Minds — Attracting Students to Math and Science” \$3,993 (Amanda Partida and Amy Morgan) This project introduces students to exciting and new ways of learning difficult math and science concepts. Students are attracted to colorful, interactive lessons and games creating a fun environment for learning. These materials allow students to learn while interacting with their classmates about math and science.

Students at Rahe Bulverde Elementary will explore their Texan heritage with a \$4,471 grant. Teachers are Betty Klar, Debbie Jackson, Carol Cross, Michelle Grell, Jennifer Klar, Teresa Tyler, Beth Martin, Darcy Keller, and Michelle Smith. The objective of this grant is to not only enhance and preserve knowledge of the German founders and Texas history, but also to embrace the new cultural multiplicity within our community.

Rebecca Creek Elementary will implement “Witness the Joy of a Successful Fluent Reader” \$991 (Kay Doyle, Helen Heffner, Kim Brown, Jessica Wilson and Sharon Clifton). Responsive Reading Instruction is an early intervention program designed for children in the primary grades who require instruction at a higher intensity than classroom instruction alone. Allowing students to check out a book to read with their parents will develop fluency and encourage enjoyment of reading.

“Learning Math Through Literature” \$2,965 will be implemented at Arlon Seay Intermediate (Tamera Tidwell, Leslie Rodriguez, Melodye Revell, Peggy Martin, Nicole Scott, Debbie Dowd, Leticia Sanchez and Brenda Taylor). Learning Math through Literature is a multi-modality way to introduce, explain, and reinforce math concepts through stories and projects. For the reluctant math student, stories coupled with hands-on activities may address strengths in their learning styles.

Teachers Nicole Scott and Suzie Tull at Arlon Seay Intermediate will use “Kidspiration to Inspire Kids Learning” \$2,353. Kidspiration software is a tool students use to brainstorm, plan, visualize, organize research and complete projects successfully.

It includes a diagram or an outline view and includes a checklist and note-taking feature. This software can be integrated throughout all the content areas, aligning instruction to include the use of technology.

Smithson Valley High School was awarded "Interactive Math" \$4,810 (Linda Meyer, Carolyn Millsap, Ellen Lloyd, Lynn Skarovsky and Ann Alexander). The "Interactive Math" project provides teachers and students the ability to interact with lessons from anywhere in the classroom. Using a SchoolPad 400 and its accompanying Bluetooth technology, collective efforts are seen immediately during instruction through the use of any flat screen surface and a data projector.

"Navigating Our Way to Success" \$4,915 will be used by teachers Dean Hofer, Stephanie Pendino, Anne Morris, Kathy Anderson, Norma Allen, Julie Henry, Erin Birkhead, Corby Maurer and Amanda Bode at Smithson Valley High School. This grant connects math students and teachers with the most recent innovative technology from Texas Instruments. The TI-Navigator wireless interactive classroom promotes a dynamic, interactive and collaborative learning environment that provides instant feedback to both the students and teacher.

"When Am I Ever Going to Use This?" \$4,975 at Spring Branch Middle School will allow students to fully utilize the resources provided by the publishers and resources available through the internet. What better time to make this connection than during these formative middle school years. This technology will touch a spectrum of math students – regular, honors, inclusion, ESL, 6th/7th/8th grades – which assists in meeting "No Child Left Behind" standards. Projectors allow teachers to bring "real world" demonstrations into the classrooms which can finally answer that age-old question. . . "When am I ever going to use this?" Teachers for this grant are Darlene Hartmann, Missy Bantz, Kathleen Bryand, Jillian Glithero, Tommy Horner, Laurie Mitchell, Tena O'Connor, Barbara Skiles and Theresa Stewart.

Startzville Elementary received four grants. "Back to the Future and Then Some" \$755 (Cec Pearson, Glyniss Esmond, Barbara Taylor and Joyce Alblinger) Ever been bored to death by the mudane in a history class? Bringing history alive and keeping students engaged is just what the Civil War Living History Group does for every student as this group comes back from the past in costume, bringing their cannon, tent, flags, soldier gear, and an amazing array of artifacts. To ensure that each student takes a moment of history back to the future of 2007-08, students have the opportunity to capture it all on digital camera and then recreate their experience in a student memorabilia book.

“Imagination Stations” \$4,986 (Mary Silvers, Cathy Stelzer, Jean Startz, Caroylne Martin, Tracy Buxkemper, Abbie Barr, Matthew Herzog and Kathy Buckley) Children are by nature observers and explorers, and the most effective approach to learning should capitalize on these intrinsic abilities. Incorporating a hands-on approach to learning in classrooms requires students to become active participants instead of passive learners who predominantly listen to teachers talk or to recordings of materials, or view videos.

“Lonestar Joe: “What’s Your MO?” \$3,186 (Theresa Haag, Patrick Cervantez and Jennifer Curtis) This grant explores careers with students helping them experience opportunities they can have in the future. There are interviews, research, writing, and an opportunity to present on the morning announcements.

“Magic School Bus” \$4,575 (Carly Weiswurm, Shay Grice, Julie Page, Kathy Buckley, Diane Bouma, Ron Rychel, John Dewey and Larra Cuffley) This grant gives students the opportunity to visit the campus’ very own version of The Magic School Bus. The bus is stationary, safe, attractive and located on school property. Areas for learning extensions and future projects in and around the bus, such as a garden and back deck for outdoor observations and lessons are possible. All grade levels share, experience, and enjoy the bus.