



BERKS COUNTY
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

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NEWS RELEASE

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GRANTS ENHANCE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES IN BERKS COUNTY

READING, PA (February 10, 2022) – Despite the chilly, gray weather on a recent day, five students with bright smiles cheerily paraded around the grounds of Mifflin Park Elementary School.

They were participating in the new “Stories & Steps” initiative, a walking audiobook program that combines technology with physical activity to improve learning outcomes.

More than 70 students with specific learning needs are participating in the program in the Governor Mifflin School District. The district said studies have shown that adding movement to educational activities improves student learning, retention, and comprehension.

Students are thrilled to be part of the new program, Corinne H. Brumbach, the librarian at Mifflin Park, wrote in an email she sent recently to Berks County Community Foundation with photos of students participating in the program.

“I wish you could feel the excitement and happiness from these kids,” Brumbach added.

The program is one of three in Berks County that received a total of \$1,578 in grants this year from the Community Foundation's annual classroom mini-grants. Mifflin Park received a grant of \$500 this year. The classroom mini-grants have provided more than \$60,000 in grants to classrooms across Berks County in recent years.

Other mini-grants this year:

- \$578 to Conrad Weiser Middle School in the Conrad Weiser Area School District for a Lego Makerspace Station in the Enrichment Resource Center. The station will be used for hands-on lessons tied to classroom curricula and in independent LEGO challenges that students have been requesting. The station will also be a place for students who are feeling anxious to unwind and decompress.
- \$500 to Southern Middle School in the Reading School District for the "I Can Print a Rainbow" project. The grant is being used to purchase 3D printer filaments in a variety of colors. The printer had been equipped with only standard black filament. The upgrade will allow students to further personalize their projects.

"This program provides an invaluable bridge between school districts' budgets and classroom needs," said Kim Sheffer, the Community Foundation's Lifelong Learning Program Associate who administers the mini-grant program. "Our generous donors who made these grants possible are bringing innovation to Berks County classrooms and enhancing the learning experience for children around our community."

The Community Foundation's classroom mini-grants are supported in part by the Berks County Association of School Retirees Scholarship and Grant Fund. This fund was established at the Community Foundation in 2010 to provide mini-grants for classroom projects and an annual scholarship to a Berks County public high school senior who will major in education.

Local school retirees started the fund and they continue to contribute to it to support education in Berks County. The retirees noted that any employee at a K-12 public school in Berks County may apply for a mini-grant as long as the classroom activity or project improves student learning and enhances the existing curriculum.



Photo courtesy of Corinne H. Brumbach

The classroom mini-grants receive support from two other funds administered by the Community Foundation – the Public Education Foundation Fund for Instructional Innovation and the Ben Franklin Trust Fund, both of which were created to support education.

These funds accept donations at <https://bccf.fcsuite.com/erp/donate>.

The classroom mini-grant program will next accept applications starting November 1, 2022, with a deadline of December 15. Apply at bccf.org at that time.

Students and faculty at Mifflin Park are grateful for the mini-grant, Brumbach said.

Students in Stories & Steps take turns in small groups to participate in two 30-minute sessions during the district’s six-day schedule cycle.

Whenever possible, the students walk and listen outside. When the weather is too severe, students walk down hallways or around the gymnasium.

“We feel so fortunate the Community Foundation recognized us as recipients, believing in our program, Stories & Steps,” Brumbach said.



Photo courtesy of Corinne H. Brumbach

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Berks County Community Foundation is a nonprofit corporation that serves as a civic leader for our region by developing, managing and distributing charitable funds aimed at improving the quality of life in Berks County. More information is available at www.bccf.org.