

Give these teachers a gold star!

*The La Crosse Public Education Foundation Board of Directors
welcomes you to the*

Grants Award Ceremony

Presented by



Welcome and Introductions

**Video salute to 2020-21 LPEF Sponsored Grant Recipients
Recognition of Additional Grant Recipients**

Featured Speaker:

Dr. Aaron J.J. Engel

Superintendent of Schools

"Aligning the Arrows: A Strategic Plan for Equity"

Video salute to Major Award Winners

Mathy Construction • Corporate Partner in Education

Rachel Gundersen • Distinguished Service Award

Laura Huber • Leadership Award

*Guests are reminded to wear masks at all times, and are asked not to congregate before,
during or after the event to minimize risk.*

Special thanks to these added major sponsors



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Sponsored Grant Recipients



Classroom Technology for Blended Learning - Provide funding for instructional technology, such as wireless microphone headsets, in each middle school and high school, to assist teachers and students in hearing each other whether students are learning virtually, or whether in a blended environment where some students are in the classroom and others are attending virtually. *Recipients: Xeng Lee, Lila Planavsky, Jill Emerich*



La Crosse STEAM Accelerators - Support virtual field experiences for students and teachers in La Crosse middle schools, replacing traditional field trips that are on hold due to the pandemic. The focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) includes working with the Upham Woods Research Accelerators program of UW-Extension, plus purchase of needed technology for remote experiences. *Recipient: Tim Sprain*



Images of Us at Northside/Coulee Montessori - Support a photographer-in-residence at Northside/Coulee Montessori, teaching photo skills to students and providing 30 or more families with professional family portraits they otherwise could not afford. Several family photos will be printed, framed and hung at various locations in the school, helping connect students and families with the school and celebrating that families come in many different forms. *Recipients: Beth Hartung, Amoreena Rathke, Laura Huber*



Montessori Minded Mats - Buy lightweight, durable mats for 150 students in Coulee Montessori classrooms at Northside Elementary, allowing each student to have an independent work space befitting the Montessori style of doing “big works” on the floor. *Recipient: Sara Jorgensen*



Math Mentor Texts - Buy books to integrate reading and writing into the study of mathematics for K-2 students at Hamilton Elementary School. *Recipient: Jenn Speckeen*



Building Students’ Home Libraries with Multicultural Literature - Buy one multicultural book for each student at Hintgen Elementary, allowing them to take the book home to read and keep. *Recipient: Kris Markworth*



Racial Justice Workshop - Support 3-day sessions for all Longfellow Middle School staff to participate in the YWCA La Crosse’s Racial Justice Workshops. The interactive training, facilitated by racially diverse, skilled local facilitators, seeks to broaden intercultural and interracial awareness and to improve communication among staff, students and families. *Recipient: Matt Kitzerow and staff*



End Period Poverty - Buy dispensers and an initial set of supplies to provide free feminine hygiene products in every girls’ bathroom in District middle schools and high schools. This project completes student-led efforts at Central High and Longfellow Middle School. *Recipient: Anna Goldbeck*



All Because You Matter - Support an innovative Principal’s Book Club at Hamilton Elementary School using the book “All Because You Matter” by Tami Charles. The book deals with pride and self-esteem, mothers and fathers, and love. The book has been described as: “A beautiful love letter to Black and brown children with a nurturing message to be appreciated by all.” Each classroom gets a book to read aloud, and students will write about what makes them special, with their essays compiled into a book that will be published for each class. *Recipient: Carrie Wuensch-Harden*



Everyone’s Story is Worth Telling - Support a partnership with the La Crosse Public Library to bring award-winning author Meg Medina to La Crosse, including speaking to all middle school and high school students. Medina is a Cuban-American author who writes powerful stories to help young people “make sense of what happens to you in life.” *Recipients: Kristi Moulton, Cindy Halter, Linda Watson and Lila Planavsky*



Teaching Tolerance and Acceptance Begins with our Youngest Learners - Purchase materials and books, plus support professional development for teachers at 10 sites (plus the virtual academy) serving 4-year-old and 5-year-old pre-kindergarten students. Children will see themselves depicted positively in literature and classroom toys, plus will have access to art supplies and bandages that match a variety of skin tones. Children will learn what is fair and unfair at an early age, before racism, sexism and ableism begins. *Recipients: Jane Erickson and Tanya La Fleur*



Book Bags - Buy mesh bags and picture books for families at Southern Bluffs Elementary School to request and take home to help students dealing with tough topics, such as divorce, grief and loss, diversity and equity, gender identity, and more. *Recipient: Becky Lueck*



Kindness Matters - Bring youth speaker Brian Williams to North Woods International and State Road Elementary as part of Kindness Week activities. Students will learn essential skills to help them be safe, respectful and responsible, increasing student engagement at the start of a new school year in building friendships and processing conflicts. *Recipient: Kelsie Bolstad*



Instilling a Lifelong Love for Reading - Buy books for 3rd-5th grade classrooms at Hamilton Elementary School, with an emphasis on books on subjects of high interest to students that will help those reading below grade level who need phonics and fluency help. *Recipients: Jourdan Stacey and Mindy Court*



Let's Read! Let's Educate! Let's Celebrate! - Buy a variety of books that promote diversity to be used in a program matching Logan High School students to elementary students. The high school students will serve as a guest reader in an elementary class, providing positive role models and extending kindness along with an appreciation for reading. *Recipient: Kelly Jo Kline*



Telecollaboration (Online Inter-cultural Exchange) - Provides virtual sessions for Spanish immersion students at Logan High School, allowing them to engage with native speaking coaches from Spain, Cuba, Argentina, Guatemala and other Spanish speaking countries. Students will be able to practice speaking skills while increasing cultural competency. *Recipients: Carrie Markos, Cassie Tolvstad, Rhonda McGowan, Katie Beyer*

Grants Awarded in Honor of Retiring Educators

Sponsored by:



Awarded in honor of Randy Nelson

Act Like a Hummingbird - Support purchase of textbooks for every 7th grade social studies teacher in the District's three middle schools, tied to new curriculum that incorporates education and understanding about diversity issues, including how to think globally and act locally. The proposal is called "Act Like a Hummingbird," and references a story about a tiny hummingbird that, despite her small size, makes a huge difference in her community by taking action and convincing other animals to join her in putting out a forest fire. *Recipients: Jeanne Halderson, Christina Fenton, Scott Bagniefski*



Randy Nelson

Awarded in honor of Sandra Brauer

UW-L Connection

- Provide busing for upper-level Spanish students at Logan High School to spend a day engaged with college-level Spanish classes at UW-La Crosse. *Recipients: Rhonda McGowan, Katie Beyer, Carrie Markos*



Sandra Brauer

Awarded in honor of Lyn Halvorson

Books & Blankets

- Purchase books that will be packaged with blankets and hot cocoa mix for gifts to students in a Logan High School class focusing on teens with reading skills below grade level. The goal is to promote the joy of reading. *Recipient: Kate Keeney*



Lyn Halvorson

Awarded in honor of Kathy Wilhelmy

Windows and Mirrors

- Purchase subscriptions to a service that will deliver 2-3 diverse children's books each month for a year, along with study guides to be used by teachers in 4th and 5th grades at State Road Elementary School. *Recipient: Brittney Keach*



Kathy Wilhelmy



Grants Supported by Endowment Funds

Implementing UDL - Provide training to teachers and literacy specialists in the principles of Universal Design for Learning, which are research-based approaches providing teachers with tools to help students to become expert learners. Students learn self-assessment techniques, set goals and monitor their own progress. *Recipients: Katie Kusilek, Katherine Keeney, Ruth Baardseth* (Richard Swantz Endowment Fund of the La Crosse Community Foundation)

Hamilton/SOTA I Equity Project - Fund a series of professional development sessions for Hamilton/SOTA I Elementary staff. Staff will meet in small discussion groups led by local people of color who are trained to facilitate conversations about bias, history and its impacts on racial disparities, unconscious bias and present-day status of racism. *Recipient: Sara Jackson* (Swantz Endowment Fund)

Trojan Gym Sound - Support purchase of a new sound system for the gymnasium at Longfellow Middle School, which is the only middle school without an auditorium. The new system will enhance music performances and improve usability for assemblies and sports events. *Recipients: Charles Schreder, Matt Kitzerow* (Underwritten in part by a gift from the Tom & Judy Sleik Family Fund of the La Crosse Community Foundation)

Global Folk Dancing - Support a 6-day folk dance residency at North Woods International, culminating in a Family Folk Dance in conjunction with the school's Global Arts Night. In addition, all District elementary teachers would receive a training session on folk dancing. *Recipients: Amanda Wolfgram, Joshua Hein, Elizabeth Becker, Jill Schams, Amy Johnson-Pierce* (Underwritten in part by the LPEF Rachel Gundersen Endowment for the Arts & Humanities)

First Child in the Woods, Not the Last - Buy backpacks and a set of outdoor exploration materials, such as binoculars, magnifiers, nature guides and pedometers, for use by students exploring the unique natural setting and forest surrounding State Road Elementary School. *Recipients: Jeanie Ruprecht, Carrie Quick, Charlie Alexander* (Underwritten by the Dr. Gunnar and Mary Baldwin Gundersen Fund at the La Crosse Community Foundation)

Other Awarded Grants

Make Your Own Kind of Music - Purchase a state-of-the-art touchscreen mixing monitor and two microphone packages, providing the foundation for a sound studio at the new home of La Crosse Polytechnic (the combined La Crosse Design Institute and 7 Rivers High School). The goal is to find other grant funding and District funds to create a full studio for students to mix, create and record their own music as part of their academic experience, and to explore career pathways. *Recipient: Katy Weber*

La Crosse Polytechnic Creators Open House - Buy materials to be used as part of the grand opening of La Crosse Polytechnic in its new downtown location. Students will be developing exhibits, unique games and other experiences in partnership with Downtown Mainstreet businesses to showcase student creativity and various aspects of the project-based school. *Recipient: Joshua Wilke*

Outdoor Sensory Circuit - Support purchase of sensory playground panels and materials to improve the State Road Elementary playground and provide alternatives for students who need a more structured play time or breaks to regulate feelings. *Recipients: Jac Lyga, Chris Kjos, Julie Van Dunk*

Hmong Culture Imagery - Engage students and families in creating paintings with Hmong culture imagery to be displayed at schools throughout

the District in support of cultural understanding for all staff and students. *Recipient: NaoHoua Tony Yang*

Multi-Cultural Leveled Books - Buy leveled reading materials with multi-cultural characters to better engage a diverse student body at Hintgen Elementary during small group work. *Recipients: Kris Markworth, Kim Thornton, Karissa Gilbertson, Jenny Thill*

Eagle Bluff Group Challenge - Send Logan High special education students for a full day of training at the Eagle Bluff Learning Center, including access to the high ropes challenge course. The adventure will promote personal growth, build confidence and strengthen group bonds. *Recipients: Philip Klar, Gregory Milligan*

Two by Two - Purchase Kindhearted Kids curriculum and stuffed dogs and cats that State Road second-graders will adopt as part of a character education program teaching core values of fairness, kindness, respect, responsibility, empathy, perseverance and citizenship. *Recipients: Carrie Quick, Jeanie Ruprecht, Charlie Alexander*

Recess Communication Board - Buy a large board for the playground at Hintgen Elementary with symbols and signs to allow non-verbal communication between students and adults, helping students better communicate their needs and wants (needing help, wanting to swing, etc.) and raise awareness for students of all abilities. *Recipients: Courtney Kirker, Emily Juneau, Kali O'Neill, Jill Utz Lebakken*

Academic Biathlon - Buy materials for students in grades 3-5 throughout the District to participate in the Academic Biathlon, a creative problem-solving adventure that teaches and rewards creative thinking, cooperative brainstorming, general intellect, leadership and a flair for the dramatic. *Recipient: Archie Barribeau*

English is Murder: Mystery Literature in the Classroom - Buy copies of a murder mystery novel with a contemporary and teen-relevant plot, engaging reluctant readers in the Logan High LaCrossroads program, and concluding with a murder mystery dinner where students will practice social skills. *Recipients: Dorothy Hart and Hayley Rice McMullen*

Anime Artist in Residence - Support a visit to SOTA I by a Latinx artist who specializes in anime. He will teach students how to create their own anime characters and provide materials for this art form that is widely used in graphic novels popular with young students. *Recipient: Maria Henry*

Helping to Promote Self-Regulation Skills - Provide training for Hintgen's behavior support teacher, and buy Bal-a-Vis-X materials used in helping students with behavior issues learn to self-regulate and increase time in classrooms. *Recipient: Krista Kaminski*

Just Write Your Answer on the Wall! - Buy whiteboards and dry erase markers for installation in the Summit Environmental School gymnasium, allowing students to answer questions and assess learning, rather than using awkward paper and pencil exercises. *Recipients: Nick O'Keefe, Lisa Boyer*

Who Made Those Tracks? - Buy three trail cameras to capture pictures and video of animals crossing school grounds around Summit Environmental School. Students will be able to study wild game tracks and the animals that made them. *Recipients: Nick O'Keefe, Lisa Boyer, Tracy Taylor-Johnson, Bree Lawrence, Erica Rasmussen*

Diversity & Inclusion Novels - Buy updated sets of novels for small group instruction and independent reading for all three grades at Logan Middle School. Allow students to see themselves represented in books regardless of their racial, ethnic, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation/gender identity. *Recipient: Kristy Holinka*

Corporate Partner in Education: Mathy Construction

Mathy Construction Company, founded in 1945, is an asphalt paving company based in Onalaska. For 75 years, Mathy has maintained its long-held values of demonstrating integrity and excellence in its work. Mathy has a tradition of helping to build strong communities and its people are proud of that culture. The company says: "We give back because we believe it is the right thing to do. We are committed to the greater good of our communities and support programs in the following categories: education, children, families or individuals in need, and healthcare."



Distinguished Service Award: Rachel Gundersen



Rachel Gundersen is a retired school psychologist and joined the LPEF Board during the foundation's second year, in 1989. She quickly took on leadership roles as vice president and eventually Board president. In addition to her six years as a member of the LPEF Board, she was president of the La Crosse League of Women Voters and was involved in the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse, among many other efforts. She was valedictorian of her graduating class at Logan High School, and later returned to Logan as a school psychologist before retiring in 1993. Her LPEF endowment fund supports annual grants for the arts and humanities.

Swantz Leadership Award: Laura Huber

Laura Huber played a key leadership role in combining the former Franklin and Roosevelt schools, and led the formation of a new school that opened in 2014 as a home for Northside Elementary and Coulee Montessori Charter School. Since 2014, she has developed strong partnerships between the school and the community, and helped spearhead the implementation of a community school model at Northside in 2018. The school also has embraced the year-round school calendar, and Laura took a special interest in a collaborative project with UW-La Crosse to create a staff that is trauma-informed and takes extra steps to understand the challenges faced by Northside children and families.



Social Justice Book Club - Buy books for use by Lincoln/Coulee Montessori/SOTA II staff to read as a group, giving staff a frame of reference to examine policies and practices that may marginalize and hold back children of color, particularly Black students. The book study is the first step in a long-term program to include Racial Justice training. *Recipient: Melissa Murray*

Reading Group Virtual Book Club - Buy diverse books for use by Logan High School students with reading deficiencies. Students will get to keep these books with high-interest topics

and characters/situations that reflect the various identities of students. Students will experience the joy of owning a book and improve reading skills. *Recipients: Hayley McMullen and Kate Keeney*

Acceptance and Cultural Equity - Buy a variety of multicultural books for use in a first-grade classroom at Hintgen Elementary School. Students of various backgrounds will feel recognized, connected and understood when they can relate to strong, positive characters in books. *Recipient: Jennifer Thill*



Featured Speaker: Dr. Aaron J.J. Engel

“Aligning the Arrows: A Strategic Plan for Equity”

The featured speaker for our Grants Award Ceremony is Dr. Aaron J.J. Engel, Superintendent of Schools.

Dr. Engel is in his first full year as superintendent in La Crosse after serving five years as superintendent of the Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau School District. Dr. Engel previously served as a middle and high school principal at the Auburndale (Wis.) School District. He graduated from UW-Madison with a Bachelor of Science Degree followed by his Master of Science Degree from UW-Superior. Dr. Engel earned his Ph.D. from UW-Madison.

He also currently serves as an Army Officer in the Medical Service Corps of the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

“One of the best parts of my job as a superintendent is the opportunity to work with diverse groups of individuals to accomplish change that positively benefits our students, teachers, and our community,” Dr. Engel said last spring upon accepting the La Crosse position. “Equity is foundational to a successful educational system that supports democracy and I am committed to making this a reality in public education.”

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SPECIAL THANKS: Dan Wiese and school staff for audio-visual/technical assistance; **Anna Goldbeck and school building engineers** for set-up and safety measures; **Nick Marcou** for Supt. Engel's video.

Planning committee: **Anna Prinsen, Kathie Tyser, Byron Holz and Aaron Engel.**

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