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Mount Airy City Schools (MACS) continues to lead, innovate, and serve. The Board of Education (BOE) has recently completed a round of grants to support this work. For the first time, the MACS BOE has been able to offer teacher grants. These grants will be used for the 2018-2019 school year to foster innovation and creativity in classrooms. Through these grants the district's innovative efforts and student-centered classrooms will be enhanced and expanded to provide greater opportunities. The board strives to foster innovation in classrooms, empower ideas that MACS educators have, and promote creative student involvement for their learning.

Board of Education Chairman Wendy Carriker noted, "The Board of Education is glad to fulfill this first year of innovative and creative grants. We know that these grants will enhance the learning of our students and teachers while helping them become lifelong learners who will continue to think outside of the box."

Grants were funded based on the high impact of student learning, alignment to the district's strategic plan as well as the educator's school improvement plan, and/or ideas that support professional growth of teachers through hands-on learning which builds teacher efficacy. Twenty grants were submitted for this inaugural grant process and fifteen were fully funded totaling over \$12,000. Teachers could propose ideas to be funded starting at \$250 and reaching up to \$1,000. Tharrington Primary School had four grants funded, Jones Intermediate educators had six grants approved, and Mount Airy Middle School successfully wrote five grants for approval.

"Through my years on the Board of Education we have worked to create an environment where staff members feel safe trying new things, failing, and trying again to succeed. These grants are more examples of our staff thinking differently to enhance the learning experience for our students," stated Board of Education Vice Chair Tim Matthews.

Some of the exciting experiences coming this year for students includes green screen technology for kindergarten students at Tharrington Primary as well as students at Mount Airy Middle School. Kindergarten teachers Andrea Creech and Nicole Hooker will be leading their grade level with opportunities for students to present their learning through designing setting through artwork, writing a summary of their learning, and developing multimedia projects. Mount Airy Middle School teacher Taron Hollingsworth will use this technology to allow English Language Arts students to take on the role of a director and express their learning through the world of film. They will engage in student led learning experiences that are designed to encourage creativity, design, and inquiry.

At Jones Intermediate School teachers, Sara Key and Pam Mitchell will be enhancing their students' learning experiences by facilitating learning through the design of innovative classrooms. Both third grade teachers requested unique furniture that will support creativity, collaboration, and their inquiry-based learning environments. Down the hall in fourth grade, Adam Johnson will be engaging learners through the implementation of a new Lego wall that will allow students to express their learning through the use of building structures. This wall will also support students' personal learning and interests by allowing for artistic creativity that can display their learning throughout all content areas.

Catrina Alexander, Career Development Coordinator at Mount Airy Middle School will be creating a professional development room known as The Career Cafe and Training Center. Local business leaders will join students in this space for the Empower Lunch Series where powerful conversations will take place about entrepreneurship, career interests, and post-secondary education. This space will also allow teachers reflective time and space to master their craft of teaching through their weekly professional learning communities.

Superintendent Dr. Kim Morrison stated, "Mount Airy City Schools values our teachers and encourages them to be innovative. We are excited that so many teachers took advantage of seeking this funding. The funds will allow them to be creative with their classroom space and instruction. We hope this initiative grows larger each year and we are able to fund more projects."

Teachers were surprised Tuesday morning with the news. Each winning teacher received a visit from their administrators, Board Member Kyle Leonard, and district leaders.

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