

Foundation for Public Schools in Edgefield County (FPSEC) Continues to Provide Tremendous Support for Teacher Creativity and Innovation to Positively Impact Local Student Learning



Kristen Womack saw a little bit of magic taking place in her Kindergarten classroom at W.E. Parker Elementary School when she noticed specific items and activities that were sparking increased interest and engagement with her students. As teachers do, she began considering different ways to elevate the current experience and also solidify new educational standards for her students.

Those initial thoughts turned into an idea and the result was a 2025-26 school year Teacher's Vision Grant entitled "Light Up Learning: Sparking Creativity and Inquiry in Kindergarten" which she submitted to the Foundation for Public Schools in Edgefield County (FPSEC).

"The grant was written for a light table plus math and ELA manipulatives designed to create multisensory, hands-on learning centers," stated Womack. "I applied for the grant because I wanted to deepen emergent literacy and number sense through playful, exploratory experiences that engage young learners' curiosity and fine-motor skills. The idea grew from observing students' enthusiasm for transparent materials, pattern play, and tactile sorting activities and wanting classroom resources that make abstract concepts concrete."

Important education standards supported by the grant

include understanding the relationship between number and quantity, describing repeating patterns, describing positions of objects (such as below, above, between, inside, outside, etc.), comparing objects using words (such as shorter and longer, shorter and taller, and lighter and heavier), answering questions about materials with properties best suited to solve a problem or need, and asking and answering questions about the natural world using explorations, observations, or structured investigations.

FPSEC is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to providing resources needed to both improve and enhance educational opportunities available to all Edgefield County School District students. For FPSEC, investment in children is an investment in the community and its future. To support its mission, FPSEC positively impacts student success by focusing on the teachers and their individual classroom-specific needs.

Each year, FPSEC sponsors the Teacher's Vision Grant Program. The program is designed to stimulate creativity and encourage innovation in the classroom. The FPSEC grants support Edgefield County School District teachers with monies to either develop new programs or support existing programs. FPSEC funds as many grants as is financially feasible, selecting those meeting the creative and innovative cri-

teria and which display the best potential to improve student achievement and enhance instructional skills.

Womack's grant was fully funded by generous FPSEC supporters, and the impact immediate. Her students are indeed having even more fun, but they're also showing greater learning retention.

"They love it. Students are immediately drawn to the light table — they stay focused longer, experiment with patterns and shapes, and naturally use math and literacy language during play," commented Womack. "I've observed increased voluntary counting, richer peer conversations, more purposeful fine-motor practice improving their writing readiness, and higher risk-taking in trying new letter and word tasks. Early formative checks show stronger engagement and more accurate use of number and letter concepts during center time."

For Womack and many other teachers across Edgefield County, the Teacher Vision Grants provided by FPSEC and its supporters continue to provide educators with critical access to cutting edge learning materials and techniques.

"FPSEC's continued support is essential," she added. "These grants allow teachers to pilot innovative, classroom-level solutions that district budgets often can't pro-

itize. Continued funding helps sustain hands-on resources, scale successful practices across classrooms, and ensure equitable access to high-impact materials that directly support standards and boost student outcomes. In short: FPSEC funding transforms teacher ideas into measurable learning experiences for students."

FPSEC Co-chairs Wendi Byrd and Lori Robinson communicated that the extraordinary generosity of local non-profits, businesses, and current and former residents allowed the Foundation to fund thirty-seven grants across the district schools for the 2025-2026 school year, the most successful funding year to date.

FPSEC invites the community to join them in congratulating these teachers and acknowledging their supporters who made it all possible. Anyone wishing to contribute to the Foundation can get more information at www.fpsec.org. Tax-deductible contributions are accepted during its annual fund-raising period, February 15 through May 30, in advance of the planned grant awards for the 2026-2027 school year.

Members of the FPSEC Board are Lynn Bowie, Wendi Byrd (Co-Chair), Margaret R. Childress, Virginia Culbertson, Gaye Holmes (Secretary), Dr. Beth Jackson, Gail Jackson, Lori Robinson (Co-Chair) and Iris Spires (Treasurer).

Congratulations to FPSEC's 2025 - 2026 Vision Grant Recipients



Kristen Womack WEP



Jenny Herlong WEP



Amanda McIlvoy DES



Johnston Elementary School

TEACHER VISION GRANT WINNERS

DOUGLAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: STEM Water Exploration Kit for Pre-K Learners - *Keidra Lott*; Healthy Hearts for Life - *Teresa Martin*; X is for Xylophone - *Laura Herring*; Rolling into Learning: A Portable Whiteboard Initiative - *Abby Henry*; Sound On! - *Amy Manford*; Picture this Project - *Brooke Smith*; DES Curiosity Corner - *Shekuan Coleman*; Wheels in Motion: Bringing Playground Tricycles to our Kids - *Nicole Mance*; 3-2-1 Ignite - *Shannon Petty*; Playground Music - *Virginia Prichard*; Growing Minds Gazette: Exploring our World through Weekly Newspapers - *Amanda McIlvoy*.

JOHNSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: Xylophones at Play - *Amanda Fulmer*; Canvas of Feelings: Stories, Games, & Strategies for K-5 Small Group Guidance - *Andra Syms*; Everything Classroom - *Erin Martinez*; Functional Behavior Plan - *Mallory Reardon*; Learning through Play in 4-K - *Kim Gilley*; ABC, 123, Amp it Up for You and Me ... again! - *Angela Fallaw*; Adventure Awaits: Graphic Novel Explorers - *Stephanie Fletcher*.

MERRIWETHER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: Learning a "Merohi" is Learning a Lot! - *Becca Hamilton*; Expanding Student Learning Through Maps and Atlases in the Classroom - *Daniela Winkler*; Hit the Target ... Groups! - *Jennifer Brucker*; Articles in Action - *Amanda Harmon*; Creating an Inclusive and Supportive Learning Environment for Students in Special Education - *Shinique Quiller*.

W.E. PARKER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: Light Up Learning: Sparking Creativity and Inquiry in Kindergarten - *Kristen Womack*; Building Thinking Classrooms - *Jenny Herlong*.

JOHNSTON-EDGEFIELD-TRENTON (J-E-T) MIDDLE SCHOOL: Investigating Forces and Motion - *April Tomkinson*; Engagement and Inquiry through Informational Text - *Kristi Palma*.

MERRIWETHER MIDDLE SCHOOL: Innovate and Investigate: Science Challenges - *Rebekah Trull*; From Page to Stage: A Picture Book Theatre Initiative - *Matt Herring*; Enhancing Creativity and Engineering with Chop Saw - *Olivia Paradis*; Inspiring Creativity and Community through High Quality Photo Printing - *Savannah McKinley*; Sensory Sanctuary: Supporting Student Success through a Dedicated Sensory Room - *Meredith Wheeler*; Rescue Mission - *Rewa Milton*; Author Visit - *Kristen Taylor*.



Andra Syms JES



Douglas Elementary School



Merriwether Elementary



Johnston-Edgefield-Trenton (J-E-T) Middle School

STROM THURMOND HIGH SCHOOL: Spanish Market Day - *Diahna Krahulek*; Social Emotional Growth - *Jasmine East*.

STROM THURMOND CAREER & TECHNOLOGY CENTER: Enhancing Anatomy Instruction for Health Science Students - *Kasey Wall*.



STHS & STCTC



Merriwether Middle School



Merriwether Middle School



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