



Inquiry Grants Program Description

Purpose:

The Inquiry Grants Program promotes the incorporation of inquiry-based learning activities in the classroom through the funding of staff development and stipends for teachers to design and implement critical inquiry activities in their lesson plans. Teachers who participate in the Inquiry Grants Program are expected to be leaders in incorporating inquiry-based learning into the District 181 curriculum.

Definition of Inquiry:

Inquiry is a way of acquiring knowledge where students play a major role in answering questions regardless of the source of those questions. Therefore, inquiry-based classes promote critical thinking and habits of mind that empower students to become independent, life-long learners and teach students to confront problems, generate and test ideas for themselves, and question their assumptions about their understanding of the world.

Program Components

Staff Training

Teachers interested in participating in the Inquiry Grants Program must attend a week-long course during the summer at the Brookfield Zoo. This course is geared toward educators and focuses on how to lead successful inquiry activities in the classroom. The District 181 Foundation will pay the course fees for up to 15 teachers to attend each year. The course fee is approximately \$350. Interested teachers must fill out the Inquiry Grants Training Request form by May 1. The 2012 course is offered July 16-20.

Inquiry Stipends

*Any teacher who has completed the Inquiry Training at the Brookfield Zoo is eligible to apply for a stipend, by completing the **Inquiry Grants Application**. A completed W-9 form must be submitted with the application to receive payment.*

First Year Stipends – in the year immediately after training, \$500 stipends will be paid to any teacher who completes the training course, designs a lesson plan and submits the Inquiry Grants Application to the Foundation. After the lesson is complete, the **Inquiry Grants Final Report** must be completed and submitted to the Foundation.

Continuing Stipends – any teacher who has gone through the training course is eligible to apply for a continuing stipend of \$250, if an Inquiry Grant application is submitted. This stipend is awarded in the second fiscal year after training and beyond. To receive the stipend, a teacher must design a lesson plan different from his or her previously submitted lesson plan and submit the Inquiry Grants Application to the Foundation. No new stipend will be awarded until the Foundation has received the Inquiry Grants Final Report for the previous year's grant. Only one stipend will be awarded per teacher per year. There is no limit to the number of years a teacher may apply.

Materials & Supplies Grants

Every teacher whose Inquiry Grants Application is approved is eligible to receive a grant of up to \$250 to cover the cost of materials and supplies necessary to carry out the inquiry lesson plan that was developed. Materials & Supplies Grants are automatically awarded when the Inquiry Grants Application is approved and funds are available through the Foundation's account with District 181. Receipts and invoices for materials and supplies should be submitted directly to Kay Less in the District 181 Administration Offices.

Curriculum Enhancement

Teachers who have been through training and developed lesson plans will share their successful lesson plans with colleagues and offer guidance and support to those interested in incorporating those lesson plans into their curriculum. District 181 will use the knowledge gathered by staff members who have participated in this training when updating the Science Curriculum.

Questions regarding this program can be directed to Inquiry@d181foundation.org