



Educare Initiative Grant

Applications

**Hoover Elementary • Mankato East High School • Futures Program •
Mankato West High School**

A collection of innovative, student-centered grant proposals submitted spanning visual arts, technology, social-emotional learning, and photography. Each project expands access, builds real-world skills, and strengthens our school community.





Educare Initiative Grant Application · Hoover Elementary

Pottery Wheel Visiting Artist Residency for K-5 Students

Submitted by **Ariana Bealey**, Visual Arts Instructor · Hoover Elementary, North Mankato

Students Impacted

500 students across Kindergarten–5th grade in 19 classes at Hoover Elementary

Residency Structure

15 weeks · 3 days/week · Small group sessions for 50 minutes each providing individualized guidance and learning

Teaching Artist

Professional ceramic artist **Hannah Peterson** leads wheel-throwing instruction alongside the visual arts teacher in small-group rotations

Curriculum Focus

Centering, forming, and shaping clay; finishing and glazing; history and cultural significance of ceramics



The PTO will partner on live pottery demonstrations during family nights, extending learning into the broader school community.

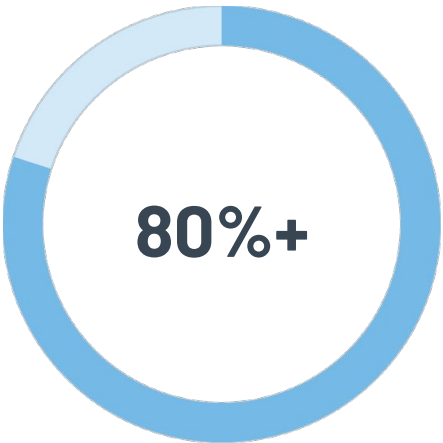
Pottery Residency: Rationale, Outcomes & Budget

This residency provides **equitable access** to an authentic ceramics experience that fosters creativity, confidence, and skill development — building on recently acquired pottery wheels funded by Educare and the school community art fundraiser.



Wheel Sessions Completed

All students across 19 classes complete at least one small-group session and create a finished ceramic piece



Confidence & Engagement

Tracked through teacher and artist observations throughout the residency



All Students

Demonstrate foundational ceramics vocabulary and identify at least one historical or cultural use of pottery

Total Budget: \$12,862.50

- Teaching time: 352.5 hrs × \$35/hr = **\$12,337.50**
- Training & prep: 6 hrs × \$35/hr = **\$210**
- Background check: **\$15**
- Tools & supplies: **\$300**

Sustainability & Replication

Lesson plans, scheduling models, and instructional strategies developed during the residency can be continued in future years and adapted by other schools seeking to incorporate pottery wheels or community partnerships — ensuring lasting impact well beyond the grant period.

Planetarium Laser System

The Mankato East HS Planetarium Club proposes installing a cutting-edge laser show system for the 2026–2027 school year. This project will engage math, science, and art classes — impacting **100+ students** — while enhancing K–8 district shows, area school visits, and public programming that draws **10,000–15,000 visitors annually**. Teacher: **David Burgess** | Mankato East High School

Vision & Rationale

Use technology to teach light, physics, art/music color principles, and geometry in an engaging cross-curricular way — directly aligning with Educare's goals of technology-driven, high-expectation learning that prepares students for the future.

Curriculum Standards

Aligned to MN Science Standards: covering physics and light across multiple grade levels.



Objectives

Grow K–12 programming, increase community visits, and develop student-produced laser shows. Supports cross-curricular and future-readiness skill development.

Project Partners

Partner	Contribution
Mankato East Planetarium Club	\$1,400
Mankato East Booster Club	\$500
District 77	TBD
Mankato Foundation	TBD



Laser System: Budget & Equipment

The itemized equipment below represents a professional-grade installation designed for longevity and multi-curricular use.

Itemized Equipment – Pangolin Laser Systems

Item	Qty	Total
ELITE 5 PRO FB4 Laser Unit	4	\$11,556.00
BEYOND Essentials Software (lifetime)	1	\$1,024.00
Tour Hazer II 'S' PHENOL 120V	1	\$1,795.00
Tour Hazer Fog 5-Ltr Can	2	\$154.00
FedEx Ground Shipping	1	\$217.00
Laser System Total		\$14,746.00

\$14,746

Estimated Total Project Cost

Additional Hardware: Asus G814JZR-IH99 computer (~\$2,499.99, Best Buy) Mounting hardware cost TBD based on optimal laser placement.

Sustainability

The laser system carries a **lifetime support guarantee** and can generate revenue through public shows to fund ongoing planetarium upkeep.

Social Emotional Learning Library

Project Overview

- **Teacher:** Jessica Villery, OTD, OTR/L
- **Building:** Futures Program
- **Grades:** K–21
- **Students Impacted:** ~40–45

Why Play-Based Learning?

Futures students don't always learn through traditional means. Evidence strongly supports play-based strategies as effective for building social skills and increasing student buy-in — meeting learners where they are.

The Vision

Create a lending library of SEL tools on a rolling cart that staff and students can access to support self-regulation and social skill development through play. Materials will be labeled with Minnesota SEL/CASEL standards and Boystown skills, with a reference binder and digital guide for staff.

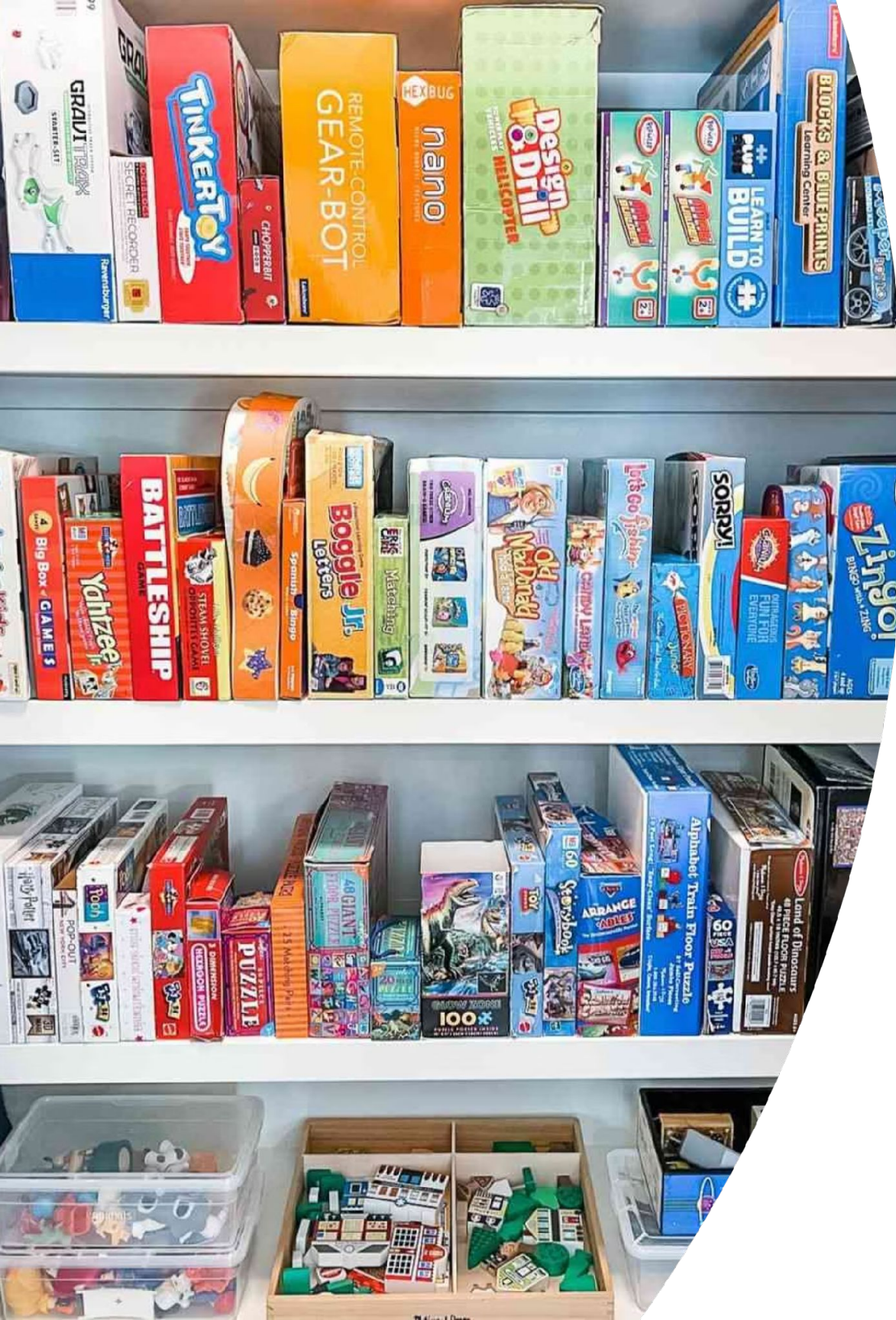
Measurable Outcomes

Progress on SEL-based IEP goals, successful transitions back to home school, and reduced need for staff support in social interactions and self-regulation.

Replicability

This model is intentionally flexible and open-ended. It could be easily replicated in other buildings, and the applicant is willing to support that expansion.





SEL Library: Contents & Budget

The lending library will include a curated collection of board games, card games, LEGO sets, fidget and self-regulation tools, and feelings-focused games — all selected to address at least one of the five CASEL domains within Minnesota SEL standards. Items span classic games (Yahtzee, Connect 4, Clue, Uno) to targeted SEL tools (A Little Spot Feelings Game, Go Fish Faces & Feelings, Face Cube Game, weighted stuffed animals, and fidget packs). Each item will be labeled with the relevant state standard and Boystown skill it supports.

How the Library Works

Staff select activities from the cart based on student needs or targeted skills. Students may also rent materials for the day to address self-regulation needs or as a reward through the Boystown point system. The open-ended design meets the ever-changing daily needs of the program.

Budget Request

\$1,200

Amount Requested

- ☐ SEL extends beyond a single class period — it is woven throughout the entire school day.

Cameras for Photography Courses

Submitted by **Nicole Youell** · Fall Semester 2026 · Grades 10–12

The Challenge

Photography is the **most popular course** in the art department at Mankato West, with four full sections and growing interest in Photography 2. The shift from darkroom to digital has created a critical camera shortage: only **15 functioning cameras** exist for **115 incoming students**. Without enough equipment, students rely on personal cell phones — creating an **equity gap** in learning opportunities.

Timeline
Cameras ordered immediately upon funding approval — essential to have equipment ready for the first day of fall semester.

The Request

Purchase **15 Canon EOS Rebel T7 DSLR cameras** (EF-S 18-55mm Kit) at \$529 each.

\$7,935

Total Budget

Supplier: Amazon, per district purchasing guidelines

Key Benefits

- **Real-World Projects:** Digital marketing, product photography, photojournalism, sports, and portrait photography
- **Equity & Access:** 100% of students use school-provided cameras, eliminating reliance on personal devices





Photography: Outcomes, Instruction & Curriculum

Measurable Outcomes

-  **100% Camera Access**
Every student accesses a functioning digital camera during every class period
-  **5-6 Real-World Projects**
Minimum of five to six projects completed per student per semester, tracked via rubrics
-  **Pre/Post Assessments**
Measurable growth tracked through assessments and project-based evaluation
-  **100% Capstone Completion**
Every student completes an 8×10 printed, matted photograph for public gallery exhibition

Instruction & Curriculum

Project-based learning covers aperture, shutter speed, ISO, composition, design principles, and photo history. Students complete projects in digital marketing, product photography, sports, photojournalism, and portrait photography — plus an interactive workbook and creative assignments like designing an album cover. The semester culminates in a **capstone gallery exhibition** — students select their strongest image, print and mat it, and display it for families and the school community. A check-in/check-out system ensures long-term equipment care. This model is **replicable at other schools**.

  Last year's end-of-semester gallery opening at Mankato West was a celebrated success — students, families, and the community came together to view student work in a professional artistic setting.

Grant Applications at a Glance

2025–2026 Educare Initiative Grant— Total Funding Requested

Initiative	School	Teacher	Students Impacted	Budget
Pottery Wheel Visiting Artist Residency	Hoover Elementary	Ariana Bealey	500 students (K–5)	\$12,862.50
Planetarium Laser System	Mankato East High School	David Burgess	100+ students + 10,000–15,000 annual visitors	\$14,746
Social Emotional Learning Library	Futures Program	Jessica Villery	~40–45 students (K–21)	\$1,200
Cameras for Photography Courses	Mankato West High School	Nicole Youell	115 students (Grades 10–12)	\$7,935

Total Requested: \$36,743.50

2025-2026 Educare Grant

Summary

\$11,485

November
14 mini grants approved

\$4,229

February
7 mini grants approved

Total Grant Dollars Approved

\$60,159

\$4,059

December
5 mini grants approved

\$3,642

April
4 mini grants approved

\$36,743.50

Initiative Grants
Recommended for
Approval

Total Grant Dollars Approved

