



2017 MNDEC Mini Grant Recipients

At the two annual conferences (Leadership and Practitioners) sponsored by MN DEC, each region donates a basket to raffle, the proceeds from the raffle are used to fund 'Mini-grants'. These action research projects are targeted to enhance learning for children and/or families. This year the number of grants funded was expanded and we are proud to announce three teams have been awarded grants for the 2017-2018 school.

The winning teams are from Stillwater, Rochester, and Mankato. Two teams, from Stillwater and Rochester, are focusing their research on expanding the use of sensory material in preschool inclusion settings. Stillwater's team will increase the availability of sensory tools and collect data on the effectiveness of different sensory tools. Rochester's team will emphasize increasing the use of sensory tools to enhance student engagement and self-regulation.

Mankato will use their grant to expand the teaching of Stem Skills. They will develop teaching strategies and lessons aligned with Creative Curriculum, based on Stem Indicators. In the fall of 2017 they plan on training staff to implement the lessons.

As the end of the year approaches, teams often have wonderful ideas about ways to enhance their practice which may be more costly than districts can fund. Mini grants are a great way to turn these ideas into practices and to be able to provide funding. Applications can be found on the MN Dec website, and are easy to complete. Stay tuned for further information regarding the next grant application deadline.

January 2015 MNDEC Newsletter

DEC Mini-Grant Eden Prairie Schools

Judy Beaton- President Elect (Eden Prairie Public Schools)

Over the years, we have observed that many children benefit from a fidget or a simple sensory item to assist in self-regulation and calming during classroom activities such as circle time and transitions. As special education staff, we often receive requests to try out squishy fidgets or cushion sits. Eden Prairie Schools created kits for staff to use with all children in inclusion rooms. The kits included directions and simple activities that all staff could use. We also used the grant money to print and laminate colored versions of (TACSEI) Social-Emotional Pyramid tools to use in the classroom. Eden Prairie Schools has been a TACSEI site for the past two years.

Five kits were created and staff took documentation regarding how the materials were utilized in the classroom settings. Prior report showed that fidgets or simple sensory supports were used only occasionally by general education preschool staff. Staff collected evidence for two months. The data showed that the "move and sit" cushions were used with students at circle time. "Feelings cards" were used on a weekly basis with the entire class when needed. The "weighted dog" was used during group time activities. "Fidgets" were also used during circle time and transitions. Staff comments included students needed to be shown how to use fidgets or to hold the weighted dog so that they weren't thrown or flipped around. This action research demonstrated that intentional teacher to student training needs to take place to show students how to use items. The data also showed that having the kits available gave classroom staff an opportunity to try different approaches to support students.



MNDEC SPRING Convention

2016 Award Recipients

Congratulations 2016 MNDEC Practitioner Award Recipients!

Sonja Griebel, St. Paul Public Schools

and

Nicole Moeller, Mankato Public Schools.



MN DEC Spring 2015 Practitioners' Conference: Award Recipients

Judy Beaton- President Elect (Eden Prairie Public Schools)

Two awards were presented at the Spring 2015 MN DEC Practitioners' Conference. Please join us in congratulating the MN DEC Award winners!

Recipient of MN DEC Practitioner of the Year Award:

Lori Ptak, Speech/Language Pathologist with Roseville Area Schools, was awarded the 2015 MN DEC Practitioner of the Year Award. Lori holds licenses in both speech/language pathology and early childhood special education. Lori has been a partner in education with her team and instrumental in designing instructional space using the Zones of Regulation and Routines Based Intervention in the classroom setting. Lori's contributions and leadership in the Roseville ECSE program were acknowledged.

Recipient of MN DEC Leader of the Year Award:

Donna Marget, Special Services Coordinator with Wayzata Public Schools, was awarded the 2015 MN DEC Leader of the Year Award. Many leadership strengths were highlighted in her nomination. Donna's strong and supportive leadership style was an asset to the Wayzata ECSE program. She was commended for being a champion for children and families in the area of early childhood mental health. Donna's positive collaboration with others and infectious sense of humor had a lasting impact on her team.

Barb Hustad receives the Practitioner of the Year Award for 2014

Barb is an Occupational Therapist currently working in the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District. She has many years of experience working in early childhood programs, making a difference for countless children and families. Barb has influenced the field by her mentorship, communication, problem solving and conflict resolution skills. Many teachers and parents are struck by her calm demeanor, excellent listening skills, willingness to learn and ability to guide. Barb has embraced the field of Early Intervention and she is a mentor to many. Barb was nominated for this award by her colleagues and by a parent. MN DEC is happy to present Barb Hustad the Practitioner of the Year Award for 2014.