

Doyle Building Strong Foundations in STEM

The Wakefield Educational Foundation (WEF) recently awarded preschool teachers Erin Schermerhorn and Tara Fitzgerald, and the Doyle Early Childhood Center \$1,500 to purchase science and math materials and manipulatives to foster engaged learning, inquiry-based learning and build strong foundations for future growth.

Many new materials and curriculums have been created to integrate science and engineering into schools. This year, part of the Wakefield Public School District Plan for grades K-12 is a focus on the new science standards. For preschools, there are no science standards, nor readily available curriculums. However, it is known that the materials need to be developmentally appropriate and engaging for three, four and five year olds, to provide learning opportunities and development of problem solving skills. The new science kits that have been purchased with the WEF grant, allow students to engage in more hands-on and cooperative learning, and to develop understanding of how to defend their position and provide evidence to prove it.

Math standards are in effect for preschool, but they are difficult to meet without having materials that allow students to independently practice skills and build mastery. The WEF grant enables the purchase of materials and manipulatives that allow for student-engaged learning with number skills as they relate to the instruction of counting, measurement, beginning geometry, and operations.

In addition, Ms. Schermerhorn and Ms. Fitzgerald are participating in the RADAR grant for Universally Designed Learning (UDL) training for teachers in grades PK-2. As they pilot Universally Designed Learning for Wakefield preschool students, they will be able to leverage these new materials for the UDL model, giving students choices for how they want to learn and how they show teachers what they learn.



Pictured are Ms. Pamela Van Beaver (left) and Ms. Erin Schermerhorn (right) with their students who are holding their cool new STEM toys funded by the WEF grant.

Ms. Schermerhorn and Ms. Fitzgerald submitted grant applications through WEF's annual grant process. WEF continually encourages staff and PTO leaders to submit innovative enrichment projects for consideration.

To support the grant process, WEF conducts a series of fundraisers annually, such as: WEF's Wakefield Public Schools Calendar, showcasing student art; the S.T.A.R.S. program, recognizing exemplary WPS staff; Chocolate Roses; and the Adult Spelling Bee. In addition, WEF welcomes individual, business and community donations. WEF is awarding staff and PTO leaders just over \$30,000 for the 2018-2019 school-year and has awarded over \$350,000 to schools across the Wakefield Public Schools district since 1989. Learn more by following WEF on Twitter or Facebook, or go to www.wakefieldeducationalfoundation.org.