



2025-2026 Final Grant Awards Report

Thanks to donors' generous support, Chatham Education Foundation funded the following grants in its 2025-2026 fiscal year, in the sum of \$111,280.97. Of this sum, 27 endowments contributed \$59,678.28 toward the grants.

Reading Fluency – Phase 1: Foundational Literacy K-2 (All Schools)

\$73,928

Mary Donohue, Katie Harms, Audra Berger

As the largest grant of the year, this first phase of the district's foundational literacy initiative funds the purchase of decodable readers for all K-2 classrooms, aligning instruction with updated New Jersey Student Learning Standards that emphasize phonics and phonemic awareness. Decodable readers, designed to be 95% aligned to taught phonics patterns, ensure students practice true decoding rather than relying on context or picture cues. These materials will be used daily during the ELA block to support whole-group and small-group instruction, strengthen early reading accuracy, and build confidence for emerging readers. As the applicants note, "Using decodable readers requires students to look at every letter in every word," reinforcing orthographic mapping and laying the groundwork for long-term fluency.

This grant was supported in part by the Endowment Fund for Environmental Sustainability (Abbott Family), the Routh Family Endowment Fund, the Blue Foundry Bank Endowment Fund, the PTO Endowment Fund, and endowments funded by anonymous donors.

Generative AI and Education Workshop (District)

\$6,750

Mary Donohue

This districtwide professional development initiative brought AI for Education to lead two tailored workshops, one for grades 6-12 and one for grades 3-5, during the October 13, 2025 PD day. The sessions will help teachers build foundational understanding of generative AI, develop practical classroom applications, and explore ethical considerations such as bias and data privacy. The goal is to equip educators to integrate AI responsibly into instruction and model digital citizenship for students. As the application notes, these workshops will help teachers "move from being passive observers to active leaders in the integration of AI in education."

This grant was supported fully by the Dickson Family Endowment Fund, the Alexandra

Routh Endowment Fund, and the STEM Endowment Fund.

Dash Robots (SBS)

\$2,146

Marco Freyre

This grant introduces Dash Robots into the K-2 STEM curriculum at Southern Boulevard School, providing young learners with hands-on opportunities to build foundational skills in coding, engineering, and problem-solving. Students will use block-based coding to complete challenges, navigate obstacle courses, and collaborate on team missions. The robots support cross-curricular learning in math, science, literacy, and SEL. As the applicant writes, Dash “turns abstract ideas like sequencing, logic, and cause-and-effect into tangible experiences,” helping students develop computational thinking at an early age.

This grant was supported in part by the Battiato Family Endowment Fund, the Jonathan Routh Endowment Fund, and the Prael Family Endowment Fund.

Music for All (MAS)

\$8,400

Kristen Crawford, Marykate Kaplan, Adina D'Ambola, Michelle Cervone, Laura Sivori

Music for All provides weekly music therapy sessions for preschool-grade 2 students in Milton Avenue School's self-contained special education classes. These sessions offer a developmentally responsive environment where students can practice communication, imitation, engagement, and social interaction. Teachers observed strong benefits during a pilot earlier in the year: “The students are highly engaged with fun music routines and activities... promoting generalization of skills across novel adults,” shared Mrs. Cervone. Mrs. Kaplan added that students “immediately stop what they are doing and are ready to begin the lesson” when the therapist arrives.

This grant was supported in part by the Quon Family Endowment for Diversity, Inclusion and Special Education, the Asian Community Endowment for Chatham Schools, the Allen Family Endowment Fund, the Guerrero Family Endowment Fund, and the Karpowic Family Endowment Fund.

Chatham / NJ Symphony Day of Music (All Schools)

\$9,525

Liam Keller, Mario De Santis, Emily Gaul, Christie Spriggs, Bailey Eng, Justin Lemley

This residency brings New Jersey Symphony musicians to work with instrumental students in grades 3-12 through small-group coaching and ensemble workshops. The program deepens musical understanding, strengthens performance skills, and provides access to world-class instruction typically reserved for advanced or collegiate musicians. The applicants note that this opportunity “opens our students to possibilities in the music world... and gives them an advantage

in statewide ensembles and competitions.” The residency also expands access to discounted symphony performances for students and families.

This grant was supported in part by the Ryan T. Ganley Memorial Endowment Fund (Metviner Family), the Christopher Routh Endowment Fund, and the Rooney Family Endowment Fund.

Sensational Sensory Station (SBS)

\$2,710

Shannon Moran

This project equips every kindergarten classroom at Southern Boulevard School with a sensory table to support hands-on exploration, social-emotional development, and fine-motor skill growth. Students will engage with materials such as sand, water, rice, and play dough during daily choice time and during teacher-guided lessons in science, math, and literacy. Research cited in the application highlights the role of sensory play in improving executive functioning, emotional regulation, and collaboration. The tables also provide a practical, classroom-friendly structure that allows 3-5 students to work together at once.

This grant was supported in part by the Epstein Family Endowment Fund, the Nicholas Routh Endowment Fund, and the PriViNik Endowment Fund.

Electrify Your Strings! (All Schools)

\$7,750

Liam Keller, Mario De Santis

This residency brings internationally renowned electric violinist Mark Wood, founder of Electrify Your Strings and former Trans-Siberian Orchestra performer, to work with orchestra students in grades 3-12. Students will explore contemporary styles, collaborate across grade levels, and participate in a high-energy finale concert. The program aims to inspire creativity, broaden musical exposure, and strengthen confidence. The applicants note that this experience “provides opportunities directly aligned with the Philosophical Foundations and Lifelong Goals described in the National Core Arts Standards.”

This grant was funded in part by the Voleti Family Endowment Fund, the Bojanowski Family Endowment Fund, and the Kuppenheimer Endowment Family Fund.

Submitted,
Jun Quon
Grants Chair 2025-2026