Chatham
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Case for Support



Classrooms of the Future Grant to Chatham Middle School - 7th grade pre-algebra class

Chatham Education Foundation's vision is to be the leading philanthropic partner for the School District of the Chathams for collaborating on innovative ideas to enrich education, support future-focused initiatives, and build a sustainable source of funding through an endowment.

Introduction

The School District of the Chathams (SDOC) has long distinguished itself as one of the most outstanding public school districts in New Jersey and the nation. Performance metrics such as test scores, Advanced Placement participation rates, post-secondary enrollment, and rankings by local publications consistently place SDOC at or near the top of highly rated peer schools.

However, SDOC's competitiveness is being threatened by fiscal and demographic changes. Whereas Chatham's total population has grown by 10-15% over the past 25 years, the population of SDOC has almost doubled. This has placed increasing demands on facilities designed for a much smaller student population. With statutory limits on school budget increases and reduced and unreliable support from the State, SDOC may face significant challenges in meeting the needs of its students.

In addition to annual grant funding of $100,000, Chatham Education Foundation (CEF) established an endowment to address increasing strains on SDOC. A Permanent Endowment, by producing a reliable stream of income, will bring increased stability and longevity to grant funding, as well as the ability to increase the absolute level of grants. A Term Endowment will help SDOC deal with inevitable budget shocks resulting from unpredictable New Jersey State funding levels. We hope that CEF's donors will contribute to the endowment and continue their history of strong philanthropic support for our schools.

History

CEF was founded on March 11, 1994, as a New Jersey not-for-profit corporation "specifically for the purpose of providing grants to the primary and secondary schools operated by SDOC, to further its educational activities." The Foundation's Board of Trustees consists of volunteers from all corners of the community and operates independently of the Board of Education, parent-teacher organizations, and booster groups. The Foundation's status as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization was confirmed on October 20, 1997.

Program Description

Chatham Education Foundation supports initiatives that would not otherwise be funded through the traditional SDOC budget. The Foundation structures its grant-making around four principal goals: (1) enhancing student learning; (2) supporting educator growth; (3) fostering student well being; (4) creating innovative learning spaces. Within those broad outlines, the Foundation funds grants that:

- enhance the existing academic program, curriculum, guidance or counseling functions, and staff development of SDOC;
- enrich—not duplicate or replace—the current curriculum and educational structure of SDOC;

- reflect the goals of SDOC, including the Superintendent and Building Principal and Curriculum Supervisors, as well as the Technology Supervisors;
- are innovative and creative in teaching and/or learning;
- implement new and experimental methods of teaching; and
- can be evaluated by some measure of quality and be expanded and replicated if successful.

The most impactful grants have been those that help SDOC be on the leading edge of implementing new educational research and technology. To that end, since its inception, Chatham Education Foundation has granted over $1.3 million to teachers and administrators to support innovative and creative educational programs and special projects to enrich the experiences of all 4,000+ students enrolled in the SDOC's six public schools. By way of example, recent grants include the following:

Enhancing student learning:
- Virtual Reality goggles for World Languages
- TEDx youth in Chatham
- Providing innovative texts (e.g. graphic novels, big print books)
- K-12 collaborative district art show, which was attended by over 2,000 people from the community
- Inflatable planetarium for K-3 children
- "Future-Focused Education" series
- Reading programs: read & ride classrooms at Chatham Middle School, book nook at Milton Avenue School; reading book challenges
- Classroom libraries
- Mozart Requiem performance - performed at Chatham United Methodist church to a standing room only crowd. The community was presented with a lecture to over 90 members of Chatham High School's choral groups and approximately 30 members of high school orchestra and band.
- "Probe-ware" to support science labs
- Humanoid robot
- Drones and aero robotics

Fostering student well being:
- Calm Space at Southern Boulevard School
- Mindful Mondays at Milton Avenue School
- Just Breath space at Chatham Middle School

Supporting educator growth:
- Building Voices - a summer experience for Chatham Educators at Chatham High School. Educators completed the courses within the TED Masterclass and had the opportunity to work collaboratively with their colleagues. At the culmination of the summer learning experience, each participant completed their own TED-style talk. Talks were related to educators' thoughts and opinions on education, teaching, and learning.
- STEM training for K-5 teachers

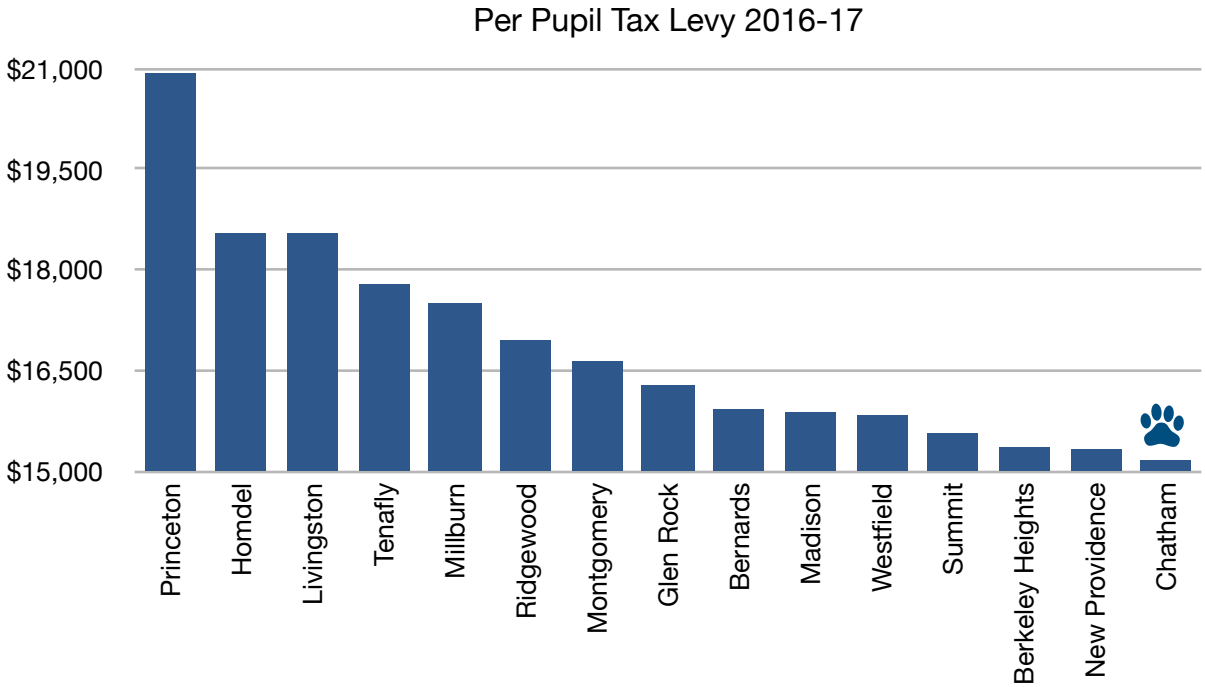
Creating innovative learning spaces:
- Vertical math classroom - vertical non-permanent surfaces around two Honors Algebra 2 classrooms to pilot innovative math teaching methods for 125 students
- Innovative classroom furniture in all six schools to facilitate learning and collaboration

A rigorous process ensures that donor funds are spent wisely: Grants are developed by SDOC teachers and administrators following CEF guidelines. Once grants are approved by CEF's Board of Trustees and by the Board of Education, the funds are paid by CEF to SDOC. SDOC periodically reviews individual grant accounts and returns any unused grant funds to CEF. All grant recipients are required to submit a Final Grant Report, showing the expenditure of funds and describing the grant project outcomes, including any material improvements in teaching or learning that was gained. SDOC accounts are audited annually by an independent auditor.

Need for Support

SDOC's per-pupil budgetary cost is below peer schools and the NJ and the Morris county average.

When the Board of Education annually reviews the school budget, one consistently stated desire is to hire more teachers, fund additional teacher development, and provide new innovative programs to introduce new leading edge technology. However, SDOC is often forced to forgo some of these needs in its budget because it cannot raise enough revenue through local tax levies, and has therefore had to rely on private funding to supplement its stretched budget.



How did we get here?

Prior to 2010, SDOC had a history of low operating budgets as compared to peer school districts. In 2010, in an effort to reign in property tax increases, the State legislature passed a law that imposes a 2% limit on such tax increases unless the School District gets an affirmative

vote from the public approving a higher increase. At the same time, the State slashed its aid, with SDOC losing $2.6 million in 2010. The 2% statutory cap, combined with cuts in State aid has squeezed SDOC. The problem may become even worse as the State legislature has discussed pushing teacher pension and retirement medical costs onto local school districts. In addition, the SDOC is more vulnerable to structural budget increases that it cannot control (e.g., increased health insurance costs) because it is already operating on such a lean per-pupil budget, which can only be increased by 2% per year. The net result of all of these factors is that SDOC is hampered in its ability to achieve desired staffing levels and to satisfy teacher requests for funds for innovative programs.

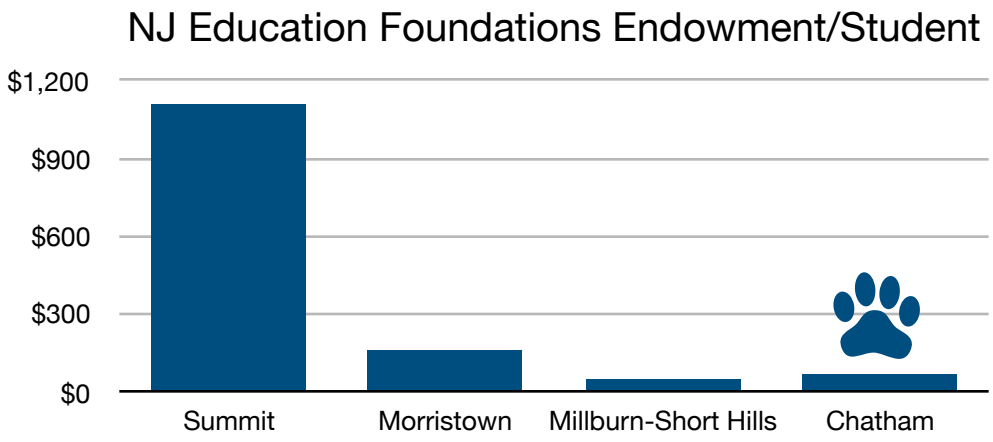
Project Details

The endowment will bring increased stability to grant funding, as well as help SDOC deal with inevitable budget shocks resulting from unpredictable State aid. It will also lessen CEF's dependence on hard-to-staff fundraising events and changes in donation levels due the economic climate. An initial $4 million endowment target has been set, comprising:

- A $3 million Permanent Endowment to provide a stable $150,000/year grant-giving level (estimating that the invested assets would produce income of approximately 5% per year)
- A $1 million Term Endowment to mitigate the impact of school budget shocks.

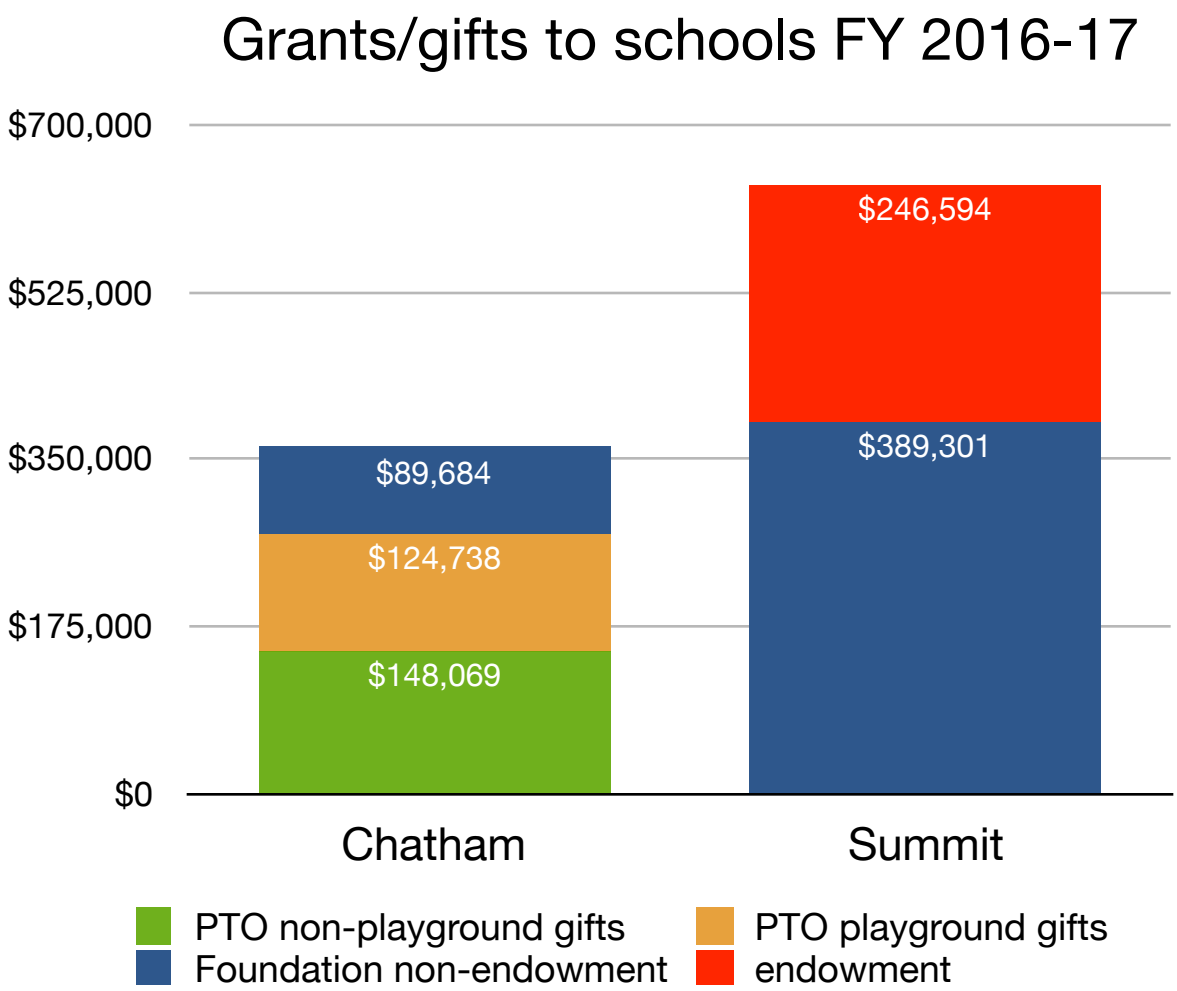
The target amount was set based on comparisons of peer school districts. Summit Educational Foundation has a $4 million endowment equivalent to $1,050/student. Morris Educational Foundation's $876k endowment is equivalent to $164/student. Chatham's $447k endowment is equivalent to $110/student. CEF has a target of achieving an endowment level at least equal to Summit's foundation.

As a result of strong ongoing financial performance, CEF has been able to begin building an endowment. Funds in excess of working capital needs have been set aside for a Quasi Endowment, which currently has a market value of over $300,000.



PTO and Education Foundation gifts to schools

Both the PTO of the Chathams and Chatham Education Foundation make gifts to Chatham public schools. On a comparable basis, Summit Educational Foundation gives much more to their public schools. Both Summit and Chatham public school systems have about the same number of students; Summit has a higher per pupil tax levy than Chatham. The main difference between what Chatham and Summit PTO and Education Foundations give to public schools is attributed to the $4M+ endowment which Summit has raised. Chatham's goal is to raise an endowment comparable to that in Summit in order to substantially increase support. The PTO of the Chathams has donated $20k to the Chatham Education Foundation endowment.



Impacts and Outcomes

Chatham Education Foundation's vision is to be the leading philanthropic partner of the School District of the Chathams for collaborating on innovative ideas to enrich education, support future-focused initiatives, and establish a sustainable source of funding through an endowment. Endowment gifts are an important and vital step toward realizing that vision. Donor generosity in adding to the endowment will help students over coming years experience the excellence expected of SDOC. That support will continue, year after year, so that over time, endowment gifts will touch every student who attends Chatham public schools. Philanthropic gifts like this can inspire other community members to give to the Foundation and build upon the support that other donors have already established.

Endowment giving is encouraged in amounts large and small. Bequests and planned giving, such as charitable lead trusts and charitable remainder trusts, are received with great appreciation. Endowment gifts of $20,000 or more can establish a named endowment, with pledged donations spread over a period of up to five years.

Those wishing to leave a long-term legacy to support Chatham public schools now have a vehicle to accomplish this philanthropic objective, through the Chatham Education Foundation endowment.

Chatham
EDUCATION FOUNDATION



2019-20 Board Of Trustees

Sally Allen, President
Diane Rooney, Vice President Events
Alan Routh, Vice President Endowment and Finance
Terry Cooper, Treasurer
Cheryl Whitney, Secretary
Laura Bojanowski - Donor Relations, Public Relations & Promotions, Corporate Development
Amy Coates - Grants Communications
Colin Devlin - Endowment
Allison Eckles - Public Relations and Communications, Grant publicity
Ron Epstein - Endowment
Amanda Feeman - Donor Relations
Ananya Holland - Grants, Press Releases, Event sponsors
Zahrah Khan - Marketing and Graphics Design, Trivia Night Game Master
Wendy Kuppenheimer - Casino Royale
Jessica Lakin - Grants Administration
Nona LeRoux - Event site manager, Casino Royale program
Kanchana Leung - Legal Advisor
Jennifer McNally - Alumni Development, Community Events, Social Media, Event sponsors
Erik Metviner - Assistant Treasurer, Trivia Night Game Master, Cash Management
David Prael - Grants
Jennifer Rowland - Audit
Rosalinda Rubio-Williams - Grants
Christine Sterling - Casino Royale food sponsors, Teacher Tribute, Trivia Night Site Manager
Emily Wurdemann - Event logistics
Sara Zuckerman - Finance

www.chathamedfoundation.org
P. O. Box 81
Chatham, New Jersey 07928
Questions? Contact Alan Routh at chathamedfoundation@gmail.com, 973-635-0906