

CALIFORNIA TEACHER TELLS HOW HE WON TECH EQUIPMENT - GRANTS GALORE FOR HIS CLASSROOM

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Dear Readers,

Many teachers wonder where are all the grants? The following are grants proposals I have written over the past 4 years. Most continue to be offered in subsequent years. Most of them I have found simply by using Internet searches such as Google and Yahoo. Local county offices and teacher associations such as NEA also offer current grant resources. My name is Bryan Feci. I teach fourth grade at Holly Oak Elementary School which is located in the Evergreen School District of San Jose. I have been teaching for 7 years. Over these past years, I've participated in numerous professional development programs in writing, differentiating instruction, second language development, and technology.

Due to successful winning grants, I have obtained the following materials for my classroom: 15 classroom laptop computers from various grants, 1 laptop storage cabinet, 1 scanner, 6 digital cameras, 10 electronic thesauruses, 1 wireless networked printer/copier/scanner, 1 document camera, 1 LCD projector, 5 electricity kits with 16 investigations, 5 static electricity kits, a river model kit to study erosion, Pangaea model, earthquake fault model and demonstration kit, rock and mineral test kits and samples, licensed copies of 2 math computer software applications, a classroom field trip, and miscellaneous technologies such as replacement keyboards and mice, headphones, CD's, and DVD's.

Donor's Choose is an Internet-based grant program. Teachers all over the United States design a grant proposal to post on the Donor's Choose Website. Sponsors will go online and search for classroom projects based on type of materials requested, grade level, subject, or by location. Teachers spend points when a proposal is posted and earn points when fulfilling grant agreements. A proposal may be posted at any time, once reviewed by the Donor's Choose staff. Many proposals are funded every year. I have had 7 proposals funded in just 4 years, but an additional 4 that were never funded. Unfunded proposals expire after 8 months. When a proposal is funded, the Donor's Choose staff purchases the supplies and mails them to the teacher's classroom making it unnecessary to worry out teacher reimbursements. <http://www.donorschoose.org>

The proposals that have been funded for me have been for electricity kits, static electricity experiments, rock and mineral samples and investigations, 10 electronic thesauruses, licensed copies of 2 math software programs, river model and earthquake demonstration kits to study erosion and earthquakes, and recently a brand new MacBook Pro laptop valued at \$2700.

Best Buy offers annual technology grants of \$2000 to teachers.

<http://communications.bestbuy.com/communityrelations/teach.asp>. I received this grant in February, 2008. My grant proposal was to buy a \$1000 laptop for student use in the classroom and a wireless networked printer, scanner, copier to print student projects designed on the computer. After a field trip to local California mission, students created documentaries using movie making software from pictures taken on digital cameras. Best Buy sends the winning teachers the money in the form of a Best Buy gift card.

National Semiconductor offers annual grants to teachers for \$2000.

For this grant proposal, students created movie presentations about earthquake safety to share with other classrooms. I used the money from this winning grant to purchase another computer for students to create their movies on and to partially pay for a field trip to study earthquakes. For more information, please go to <http://www.nsawards.com>.

Locally in San Jose, California, the Silicon Valley Education Foundation offers innovative grants to teachers in \$500 amounts several times through the year. I was the recipient of this grant twice this school year. One purchase was for a new document camera and the second was to fund the admission fee for a special classroom field trip to the Lawrence Hall of Science at UC Berkeley. Interested applicants should visit their website at <http://www.svefoundation.org>.

Adopt-a-Classroom is a simple program for teachers across the United States. Teachers simply discuss their classroom needs and type of school they teach at. Donors can select classrooms they wish to fund by grade and location. Teachers can get their classrooms "adopted" once a year. This means a sponsor has donated \$500 to a teacher's classroom. The teacher then completes a purchase form online and the materials are ordered and delivered to the teacher's school. This makes it unnecessary for a teacher to buy the requested supplies and be reimbursed. For more information, the website is <http://www.adoptaclassroom.com>.

Funding possibilities are everywhere. Sometimes you just have to be at the right place at the right time. In California, San Jose State University offered master teachers of student-teachers a \$1000 CAL-MOD grant. I just happened to have a student-teacher that semester. County offices of education sometimes offer grant writing workshops and keep lists current grant opportunities for schools and teachers. The Santa Clara County Office of Education awarded me a \$500 grant for two years in a row. The proposals I designed related to incorporating technology. One grant was used to purchase my own laptop storage cabinet for all of my laptops, digital cameras, and other various technologies obtained from other grants.

Many school districts may offer grants to their teachers. Funding is usually obtained from a grant school district office administrators write. In May, 2006, I won a \$5000 LET grant through my district purchasing 3 laptops and various supplies for completing a California Gold Rush unit.

The History Channel offered \$500 awards for teachers who preserve their "history" in the classroom. Through the **Save Our History** grant, I won \$500 for preserving California history by having students design newspaper articles on the computer documenting famous California explorers. At <http://www.saveourhistory.com>, this year they are offering grants to outside agencies that partner with local schools.

The question on everyone's mind is how have I been able to write so many successful grants? In just 4 years, I have received a total of just over \$20,000 in grants. It takes a lot of time to write a successful grant, but sometimes it can take a great of time just to research different opportunities. In my situation, it is very worth it when you get materials for a special unit you are teaching. I get as excited as the students get and this only causes those moments to be memorable when I see the students really being the ones who benefit.

SO WHAT ARE MY SECRETS TO GRANT WRITING? HERE WE GO!

1. **HAVE A STUDENT-CENTERED PROJECT IN MIND!** Grant committees like projects when they improve learning and are innovative. Unique and creative projects that use "out of the box" thinking won't guarantee you win, but will certainly help. I have written numerous grants that focus on units that incorporate the use of technology. Word processing might be an important skill, but using voice recordings to narrate a story typed onto Power Point gives that project a whole new look!

2. **STAY POSITIVE!** No one wants to read 1 proposal after another that complains about the lack of funding in schools. That's why you are writing a grant! Negativity does not promote success. Write grants for units of study that you will be excited to teach. Being positive also means being professional. I wish I could teach only what I enjoyed. Unfortunately, I have district and state standards to adhere to. Sometimes the best way to teach that boring topic is to write a grant to generate excitement! That is exactly what I did for teaching about landforms, rocks, and minerals in Science and now I look forward to teaching that unit every year!

3. **BE SELECTIVE IN THE GRANTS YOU CHOOSE APPLY FOR!** Only apply for grants you will see yourself excited about carrying out. Some grants are very specific for the types of projects they will fund. I came across a grant opportunity for a gardening project one time while searching online. As nice as it would be to get a few hundred dollars for a garden, I immediately moved on to the next grant listing as I don't have a green thumb. Every time I buy a plant, I forget to water it and you know what happens in just about a week! Some grants are not for everyone!

4. **FOLLOW DIRECTIONS!** Many grant opportunities have strict rules and procedures for applying. The way I see it, that organization is deciding whom to give money to. They receive anywhere from hundreds to thousands of grant applications so the least thing I could do to show my appreciation would be to obey the rules. By adhering to page limit, font size and style, whether or not sample materials are permitted, and due dates, you are showing your commitment in carrying out the grant should it be funded.

5. Along those same lines, many grant applications are divided up into various questions. Answering questions in order (especially if requested) can help your application at least be considered instead being tossed aside. Make sure your responses completely answer the questions. Are they clear and concise, or do they still leave too many unanswered questions?

6. **PROOFREAD!** Why should a company or agency fund your grant if you didn't even make the time to check over your writing? As a courtesy to the grant reviewers whom have many proposals to look over, please be nice enough to have your proposal be error free.

7. **AVOID THE WORD "WILL".** That is often difficult since implementing the project requires funding and it may sound petty. As a teacher, I cannot stand it when a student uses the same word constantly. Here is a first example: After our field trip to Mission San Juan Bautista, students will download the pictures onto classroom computers and will create 5-minute movie documentaries to explain about mission life. And now for the second example: After our field trip to the mission, students download the pictures on classroom computers and create 5-minute movie documentaries to explain about mission life. Reviewers know that implementing projects depend on funding. My overall point here is that the little details can make a big difference.

8. **AVOID BEING TOO WORDY.** Get to the point! Your proposal should show a style of creative writing, but don't waste the grant reviewers time in the process. Over-explaining and taking too much time to explain can turn people off to your proposal. Many times being concise is necessary as some grants require overall word limits, page limits, or word limits on each question.

9. Refer to information provided by the organization on what type of grants they are looking for and the criteria they will use to select winning grants. Think of it as a cheat-sheet. Many grants offer a scoring rubric for how your application will be scored.



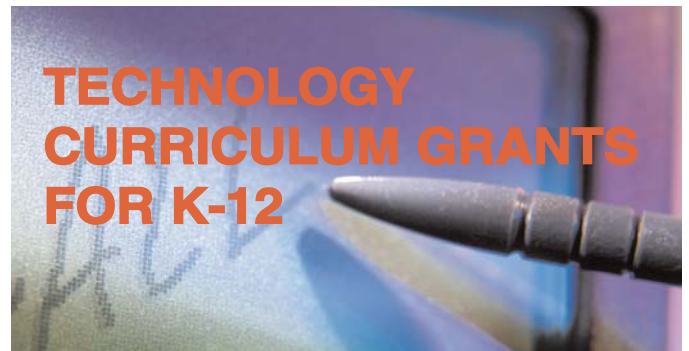
10. **RESEARCH EXACT COSTS.** Call the location where the materials will be purchased and get a quote. Make sure you have included all costs. You might have selected a new computer for classroom use for example. Is there applicable tax and shipping? What about that extended warranty? The electricity kit sounds like a great learning experience, but you the saying... "batteries not included!"

11. **YOUR MATERIALS SHOULD RELATE WITH YOUR LEARNING GOALS.**
I'm a big fan of the latest technology available, but it is very unlikely a grant will be funded if you want something for your classroom just to have. There has to be a learning experience connected to its usage. In one grant proposal for \$500, I designed a Social Studies unit where students wrote their own diaries using Power Point and budgeted the money for a laptop storage cabinet in order to maintain the safety and security of technology in the classroom in order to ensure future projects that incorporate computers are possible.

12. **WHEN A PROPOSAL IS SELECTED, MAKE AN EFFORT TO MEET ALL DUE DATES IN SUBMITTING REQUIRED FEEDBACK.** Make sure feedback is complete and thorough. Many companies enjoy hearing thank you letters from teachers and students. Your thank you letter should describe the project, explain how this project was a unique experience for the students, and sound appreciative. Obtain parent permission if photographs are requested from the grant organization. Make sure students only sign their first names. Names should never be included in photographs that could identify students. The organization may require additional feedback information. Meeting deadlines may often aid in receiving materials in a timely manner or in receiving reimbursement if necessary.

13. **PURCHASE MATERIALS WHEN GIVEN THE APPROVAL TO DO SO.**
This might not be necessary as some organizations such as Donor's Choose buy the materials and mail them to your school. Others send the money to the school that is deposited into your classroom account. Make sure the money is available before spending it! If good faith, spend the money on what you said you would spend it on. Many organizations request receipts and invoices used for reimbursements and for accountability. If a resource is unavailable now, obtain permission before purchasing a similar item. Should you decide to write a grant, please remember that some proposals are processed through a very difficult, competitive process. You might have written a proposal for a terrific project, however, not everyone's proposal can be funded. I always say that it is better to try, because you'll never know otherwise. Good luck!

**TECHNOLOGY GRANT NEWS, WINTER 2009: PART II:
EXAMPLES/SAMPLES OF THE ACTUAL GRANT PROPOSALS
BRYAN FECI WROTE FOR HIS FAVORITE WINNING GRANTS**



**DIGITAL KIDS CLUB
DIGITAL PHOTO CONTEST FOR KIDS
SPONSORED BY ADOBE DIGITAL KIDS CLUB!**

DEADLINE: OCTOBER 19, 2008
<http://news.techlearning.com/cgi-in4/DM/y/hzWc0GJcQj0E2V0Emmo0Er>

K-12 students are invited to participate in the Adobe Digital Kids Club fifth annual digital photography contest. This year's theme, "My Point of View," encourages kids to capture and share their own unique visions with our editors and readers. How: Send a photo and a short description (50 words or less) with your photo. Winners receive free digital cameras for themselves and their school. The contest is open to all K-12 students who may submit digital photos taken between January 1, 2008 and October 19, 2008. Winners: 12 winners will be named, with 1 first place and 3 second place winners in each of the following categories: elementary, middle school, and high school. Prizes: First Place: Adobe Photoshop Elements and an Olympus digital camera. Student's school: Adobe Digital Kids Club Digital Photography Lab Kit, including 3 Olympus digital cameras and accessories. Second Place: Student Winner: Adobe Photoshop Elements.

DIGITALwish



DEADLINES: 28TH OF EVERY MONTH
<http://www.digitalwish.com>http://www.digitalwish.com/dw/digital-wish/grant_awards

Tool Factory and Olympus have launched *Digital Wish* to help educators. Educators can link to Digital Wish, surf the national lesson plan repository or write a lesson plans and qualify to win a mobile digital camera lab plus as many as 43 different grants for hardware and software:

- 1) Tool Factory's Mobile Digital Camera Lab -October, January, and April. Worth \$3,450 each;
- 2) Olympus Digital Cameras - every month, September-June. 10 Awards, worth \$200 each;
- 3)-Tool Factory Podcasting - every month, September-June. 10 Awards, worth \$100 each;
- 4) Tool Factory Keyboarding Site License - August, worth \$1,200;
- 5) 10 Elementary Zone Site Licenses - September. 10 Awards, worth \$130 each;
- 6) Tool Factory Movie Maker Site Licenses - October, worth \$1,000;
- 7) On Track Reading Series Site License - November, worth \$2,250;
- 8) Fresco Site License - December, worth \$380;
- 9) Tool Factory Database Site License - January, worth \$1,000;
- 10) Tool Factory Word Processor Site License - February worth \$1,000;
- 11) Tool Factory Slide Show Site License - March, Math Bundle - May, worth \$720 (Elementary or middle);
- 12) Tool Factory Workshop Site License - June, worth \$2,000.