

#give2learn campaign



Best Practices Guide 2026-27

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What is the Appleton Education Foundation?

Founded in 1997, the Appleton Education Foundation (AEF) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, independent from the Appleton Area School District (AASD). The AEF is a Type I Supporting Organization of the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region. The Foundation's mission is to creatively enhance education in our community.

Thanks to donors, AEF has invested more than \$6.6 million to support education in Appleton.

The Foundation is led by a volunteer [board of directors](#). Many board members are AASD alumni and parents of current/former students. The AASD superintendent, board of education president, and Appleton Education Association president all serve as ex-officio, nonvoting members of the board. All board members believe in providing excellent public education for all students.

The AEF currently has four staff members:

- Julie Krause, executive director
 - JKrause@AppletonEducationFoundation.org
- Katie Juedes, administrative support coordinator
 - KJuedes@AppletonEducationFoundation.org
- Lori Kaufman, development & engagement director
 - LKaufman@AppletonEducationFoundation.org
- Julie Pahnke, grants & scholarships manager
 - JPahnke@AppletonEducationFoundation.org

The Work of AEF

Vision:

In our community, all students learn, grow, and thrive.

Mission:

We raise and direct private funds to strengthen and enhance education in our community.

We believe:

- Stewarding charitable gifts entrusted to the Foundation by generous donors is our greatest responsibility.
- Effective grants empower Appleton educators to innovate, as we recognize that educators who feel valued and emboldened are vital to student success.
- Strong partnerships with AASD staff, retirees, alumni, and the greater community contribute to a strong public education system and a vibrant community.

** These updated statements were adopted in fall 2024.*

Since its inception, AEF staff and board members have worked to strengthen and enhance education in Appleton. AEF is best known for “classroom grants” ranging from \$100 to \$3,000.

AEF stewards more than 100 charitable funds. Some are endowed (meant to last forever), while others support more immediate needs and funds are spent over a few years.

Current grant programs

- Four [competitive grant cycles](#) each year. AASD educators are invited to request funds for new ideas/projects/programs that would not be covered by the traditional school budget.
- Professional Development grant requests (to bring experts in to train and inspire educators) are also reviewed four times each year.
- [Big Idea Grants](#) can be considered at any time. These grants are for transformational, needle-moving programs that usually benefit a larger group of students. Some examples include \$20,000 for Jobs for America’s Graduates at Appleton East, \$95,000 for regulation toolkits for all AASD elementary classrooms, \$30,000 to Pointtters Community Initiatives to fund collaborative work with AASD 2024-25 through 2026-27, and \$25,000 to expand the Community School model to Dunlap Elementary.
- Designated funds award grants to schools as needed. For example, several schools have endowment funds that award grants one or two times per school year and can be used as needed.

- Scholarships for graduating seniors.

Other work

The **Educators' Resource Fund** is launching districtwide for 2026-27 after a successful pilot with four AASD schools. The goal is to lessen educators' out-of-pocket spend on student and classroom supplies. Learn more: AppletonEducationFoundation.org/ERF

The **Community Education Fund** supports opportunities for the greater community to learn about relevant educational issues.

AEF staff members build relationships with donors and other friends of education and often help match donors with needs in AASD, beyond existing grant programs. For example, a \$150,000+ gift was secured for Edison Elementary school in this way.

Appleton Alumni Network is a program of AEF that engages alumni with meaningful communication to inspire participation in activities, events, volunteerism, and contributions to support the Appleton Area School District community.

Why Give

An investment in the Appleton Education Foundation is an investment in yourself, your colleagues, and your students.

Gifts to the #give2learn campaign help increase AEF's granting capacity in three ways:

- 1. Competitive Grants – AEF holds four grant cycles annually to support educators' creative ideas.*
- 2. Big Idea Grants – Larger, transformational grants to support district initiatives.*
- 3. Educators' Resource Fund – Launching districtwide in 2026-27 to help reduce educators' out-of-pocket spend.*

Since 1997, more than \$6.6 million has been awarded from AEF to support education in Appleton. *Together, we can do more to ensure all students to learn, grow, and thrive.*

Testimonials

"I #give2learn because... I believe innovative ideas in education deserve the resources to thrive!"

– Nick German, Appleton East High School/Tesla Engineering Charter School

"I give to AEF because they are a great foundation to help teachers make their classroom dreams become a reality. By giving a little each month, I can help other teachers achieve so much for their students. When we support each other, that is how we really grow as a district of learners. My own children have benefited many times from the foundation and each time their teachers were able to make a learning experience even more meaningful through the AEF funds they received."

– Molly Pokwinski, Badger Elementary School

"I give because I have seen what our donations can do together to increase outcomes for our students."

– Suzette Preston, Appleton Community 4K, retired

"I give to learn because I respect everything the Appleton Education Foundation has done over the years. Not only for my school, but for our district. I can choose a lot of different organizations to give my resources to, but I always make sure it's a priority to give to the Appleton Education Foundation, because I believe they have done so many things to support people who I think are the most important people in this world, definitely in this city, and that's our teachers. And I will continue to give to the Appleton Education Foundation because they know what's important in this district."

– Jack Knaack, Richmond Elementary School

"I give to the AEF to help make it possible to fund unique projects to further enhance learning. I have been fortunate enough in my career to receive three grants from the AEF. Seeing the immediate impact that the projects/materials made in my classes provided new excitement and an eager willingness to learn."

– Chris Apriesnig, Wilson Middle School

“By funding innovative teaching and learning opportunities beyond our regular school budget, AEF empowers our educators to bring their creative ideas to life. This not only increases student engagement but also enriches the overall learning experience, fostering a love for learning in our students. I feel so thankful to live in a community that supports public education in such an impactful way.”

– Kelsi Van Fossen, Foster Elementary School

Campaign Goals and Timeline

The number one goal of the #give2learn campaign is to build a culture of giving in AASD. To measure this, we look at the percentage of staff members who participate in this campaign. We believe that we can increase giving participation by at least 2% each year. Giving participation figures for the **2025-26 campaign** are below.

- Administrators only: 100% (includes payroll and one-time gifts)
- All AASD staff: 34.4% (includes payroll and one-time gifts)

The 2026-27 campaign will run August 24-October 2.

- Personalized invitations will be sent via school mail by August 24.
- The #give2learn committee recommends setting aside 15 minutes to present the campaign to all staff the week of August 24 during designated building staff development. (See page 12 for a link to school-specific slide decks.)
- Weekly emails from AEF staff will be sent during the six-week campaign beginning Wednesday, September 2.

Campaign Motivation and Creating a Culture of Philanthropy

Campaign leaders at all levels have found meaningful ways to motivate employees to support the Appleton Education Foundation. Below are a few examples. Feel welcome to reach out to your colleagues to learn more.

School: McKinley Elementary

Contact: Andrea Vinje

In 2023, Andrea used the back-to-school meeting week to distribute campaign materials, highlight AEF grants that have benefited McKinley, collect completed forms, and draw for the use of a portable air conditioning unit and premium parking for the Donor of the Month (see page 9). While the campaign officially runs for six weeks, she condensed McKinley's to one week. With these incentives, McKinley's giving participation increased from 13% in 2022-23 to 51% in 2023-24! McKinley continues to reach participation in the low to mid-50s ending the 2025-26 campaign with 55.3%!

School: Appleton West High School

Contact: Mark McQuade (former principal, current assistant superintendent)

In 2021, the West administrative team began offering entry into a \$20 drawing for anyone who completed their #give2learn form and turned it in during a staff meeting or shortly thereafter. The \$20 bill was meant to demonstrate how gifts to AEF are "paying it forward." It turns out that the lucky recipients of the \$20 bill usually used that prize to continue paying it forward by buying coffee or other treats for colleagues. This principal-funded incentive increased West's giving participation from 17% in 2020-21 to 40% in 2022-23.

School: Badger Elementary School

Contact: Molly Pokwinski

In 2022 and 2023, Molly, who serves as an instructional coach, offered the gift of time to her Badger Elementary colleagues. New donors and donors who increased their gifts to AEF were entered in a drawing to receive an additional half hour of prep time while Molly covered their classes. This incentive was offered for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 campaigns. Badger's giving participation increased from 21% to 24% over those two years. For 2025-26, Molly again offered to cover a colleagues' class but also offered a \$50 gift card to anyone who submitted their gift envelope by the end of a single day. Badger's participation increased to 50%!

School: Classical Charter School

Contact: Nick Winch

Nick joined AASD in 2024-25 and shared the campaign materials with staff and realized a 15.7% participation rate (on par with past years' results). Fast forward to 2025-26 after seeing and experiencing firsthand the work of the AEF in Classical. He again shared the materials but also pointed out the changes that have happened at Classical and throughout the district thanks to the work of AEF. He encouraged staff members to join in this culture of philanthropy to continue to create change and improvements to public education.

Classical's participation increased from 15.7% to 57.1%! No special incentives – just the belief that together, we can make more change happen.

Additional notes:

Many sites find success in shortening the campaign from six weeks to a single day or week. AEF will continue to send campaign updates for the entire run of the campaign, but creating some urgency for a special drawing or reward seems to work very well.

If you want to do a special drawing at the conclusion of the campaign for the Donor of the Month parking spot or any other incentive, please reach out to Lori. Lori can provide a list of all donors (and indicate "new" if that's important to you). In addition, AASD staff members can sign up for giving via their Skyward account. AEF gets a report from Skyward each Monday.

Please do not hold on to completed campaign envelopes for the entire campaign. Send them in as you receive them.

AEF Incentives

Administrators

- Entered in a drawing for a \$200 grant to your school if you sign up to give at the Lead Learners meeting in August.
- Superintendent Hartjes has offered the following incentive for 2026-27:
 - 80% of administrators give --- \$250
 - 85% of administrators give --- \$500
 - 90% of administrators give --- \$750
 - 95% of administrators give --- \$900
 - 100% of administrators give --- \$1,000!!!!
 - AND a 10% increase in amount committed.

All AASD Staff Members

- Grants to schools:
 - Highest giving percentage: \$200 grant; teams ranking 2nd-5th entered in a drawing to win one \$150 grant
 - Largest participation increase over last year: \$200 grant; teams ranking 2nd-5th entered in a drawing to win one \$150 grant
- Weekly drawings: All donors (existing and new) are entered in drawings to win weekly prizes – usually for gift cards to locally owned businesses.
- Thank you gift for all donors at \$3.50+/pay period (or one-time gift equivalent). The 2026-27 gift is an AEF cooler bag.

Additional Offerings

Please contact Lori, if interested in implementing any of the ideas below.

- **AEF “Donor of the Month” Parking Sign** – a specially designed parking sign can be installed in your school parking lot. At the conclusion of the campaign, AEF staff will work with principals to administer this program.
- Up to four schools will be chosen annually to benefit from AEF staff support to implement additional weekly drawings for prizes. Schools will be selected based on past campaign performance. For 2025-26, AEF will work with Berry, Edison, and Horizons.

Additional Resources

School-specific slide decks and additional resources are available here:
<https://appletoneducationfoundation.org/invest-in-education/give2learn/>

Lori is always a resource to help. Please contact her at
LKaufman@AppletonEducationFoundation.org or 920-832-1517 ext. 2.

2026-27 #give2learn campaign committee

Katie Chicquette, Central

Amy Didreckson, Appleton West High School

Sam Herrmann, Appleton East High School

Stacy Juhl, Einstein Middle School

Jack Knaack, Richmond Elementary School

Corissa Krueger, Franklin Elementary School

Noelle Mudrak, Horizons Elementary School

Molly Pokwinski, Badger Elementary School

Dawn Price, Highlands Elementary School / Odyssey

Nate Werner, Appleton North High School