

# IPEI Announces 23 Teacher Grants

By Tompkins Weekly Staff

The Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI) has awarded 23 Teacher Grants totaling \$32,500 to be carried out during the 2013-14 school year to enhance learning for approximately 1,600 Ithaca City School District (ICSD) students.

Teacher Grants fund classroom projects that are linked with grade-level standards and enrich the curricular opportunities for students and their teachers. Proposals for a maximum grant amount of \$1,500 are made by teachers. In keeping with IPEI's mission of "connecting school and community," they always include a community partner.

Teacher Grants Review Committee Chair Sandy True states, "IPEI Teacher Grants support and engage our teachers, our kids and our community. The teachers receive support to explore their creative ideas while involving community partners. The kids get a fun engaging learning experience introducing them to some of the incredible resources of our community. This ultimately benefits us all."

Three Teacher Grant projects

were selected during the competitive review process to be funded through the Charles E. Treman Jr. Teacher Grants Fund of the Tompkins Charitable Gift Fund in memory of the late Tompkins Trust Company president. They include "Soaring Stories: Exploring the Ecology of Plants and Butterflies through Storytelling," "Storydance" and "Trout in the Caroline Wilderness Classroom."

IPEI will fund the other 20 grants through the annual Adult Spelling Bee (scheduled for March 2) and its 2013-14 Annual Fund "Engagement Matters." In addition, IPEI offers four rounds of Red and Gold Grants and Community Collaboration Grants reviewed on a rolling basis. The Fine Arts Booster Group, an affiliate of IPEI, has also recently announced the first of its two rounds of mini-grants.

Northeast Elementary School teacher Paula Kilts will collaborate with the Ithaca Children's Garden and Regi Carpenter for "Soaring Stories." The goal of this project is to explore the interconnectedness of plants, butterflies, and humans through art and science. There will be ecology visits by the Ithaca

Children's Garden staff and volunteers to help students explore the anatomy of flower, butterflies and their host plants, and hands-on gardening.

Carpenter will visit Northeast to tell stories about plant mythology, and to share how stories use language, movement, speaking, and documentation through photography and video recording. The project will culminate with an evening event for students and families.

"Storydance" is the project of Beverly J. Martin Elementary School teachers Arne van Leuken, Nancy Siegele and Elizabeth Inman working with teaching artist Lisa Tsetse. Eight weekly arts residencies will be offered in the three pre-kindergarten classrooms. Stories will be utilized to emphasize language development, reading readiness, and self-expression through creative movement. This initiative engages preschoolers in fine arts experiences that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

While Bill Foster and the Floating Classroom brings "Trout in the Classroom" to many ICSD schools, this year will be the first time it will be offered in conjunc-

tion with the new Wilderness Campus of the Caroline Elementary School. Caroline teacher Anna Chapman will partner with Foster and with Robert Ross and Matt Sacco of the Cayuga Nature Center and Museum of the Earth. The fourth grade students will be housing two trout tanks in order to study both brook and brown trout. They will maintain the appropriate environment in the tanks, chart their growth, examine the impact of humans and environment, and ultimately release the fish into the stream behind the school in the Wilderness Campus.

In November IPEI released research-based evidence for what it has always believed: the programs and activities that it funds through grants to teachers and schools are effective at increasing student engagement.

Data from reports submitted by teachers who were awarded grants during the 2012-13 school year show that ICSD students' engagement rose by an average of nearly 50 percent following an IPEI grant-funded activity.

For more information on the IPEI grants go to [www.ipei.org](http://www.ipei.org).

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