



For Immediate Release:

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The Innovators of Tomorrow Benefit from a Grant from DFCU Financial

These days, being an educator doesn't just mean keeping up with course work and homework. It means helping to transform the students of today into the innovators of tomorrow.

Alisha Bashawaty has been a technology teacher in elementary schools in Novi and now Kennedy Elementary in Livonia for six years, always looking for ways to improve the student learning experience. A 3rd grade visually impaired student named Kyden made her realize that perhaps a 3-D printer could add another dimension to her students' knowledge of the world around them.

When Kyden, who can only slightly see color in one eye, handed Alisha a picture book and pleaded, "Can you explain this picture because the other kids are laughing and I just don't understand what they think is funny," Alisha knew that she had to pursue this kind of teaching. "I initially wanted to be able to give visually impaired students the opportunity to 'feel' the picture with their hands," said Alisha. But then she realized all her students could benefit.

That's where the Livonia Education Foundation and DFCU Financial stepped in. The foundation, through donors like DFCU, makes grant monies available for just such unique classroom purchases.

"No way would this school have been able to provide this 3-D printer and HP Sprout computers without this support," said Alisha. "The kids are so excited."

DFCU Vice President Theresa Aquino and Foundation Executive Director Diane Policelli recently visited Kennedy's 4th graders to see them at work on the new computers. These creative students make their imaginations a reality with this technology that was installed in April.

The glow of many large screens illuminate the small faces as they watch their creations come alive.= The children learn dimensions of shapes and sizes—from a Hogwarts castle to a home with plants and shrubs to a huge egg with chicken legs)—and that helps with geometry, design theory, problem solving and collaboration.

Four girls from the class then take the visitors to the Maker Faire room where the 3-D printer is housed. Avery, Charlotte, Helena and Sadie explain how the computer takes an image from the screen (like a dinosaur head) and sends it to the 3-D printer, which works by "printing" objects. But instead of using ink, it uses more substantive materials: plastics, metal, rubber, and the like. It scans an object—or takes an existing scan of an object—and slices it into layers it can then convert into a physical object.

"With technology like this, kids don't even know they're learning," said Alisha. "This will help us create STEM projects like building three-dimensional bridges and buildings. It also give the visually impaired students access to manipulatives to enhance their experience. Next year we'll try a new unit that teaches coding."

Alisha, a self-described book nerd, doesn't just support advanced technology applications. Good old-fashioned reading is also her priority at the school. The entire student body is clad in pajamas on this particular day as a reward for a reading contest. The students read an amazing 181,000 minutes in the month of March, which translates to. (this should be a measure of how much each kid read per day)

"We try to come up with fun, unique ways to encourage the students in all areas," said Alisha, as she models her mermaid pajamas before heading back to the classroom full of the innovators of tomorrow.

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