

Key Biscayne Women's Giving Circle Grant

Founded in 2008, **Foundation for New Education Initiatives (FNEI)** was created to support the educational initiatives of Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), by working to provide M-DCPS' students with world-class educational opportunities. Students at some of the district's lower-performing schools are reaping the benefits of a Foundation initiative which increases teacher and administrator effectiveness through innovative professional development. These students now have a new opportunity to succeed despite their many challenges. Parents may also participate in their child's academic success by exploring family learning opportunities offered through the school district's celebrated Parent Academy, an initiative the Foundation also funds. Thousands of students are also being introduced to our community's array of cultural and arts institutions through the Foundation-supported Cultural Passport Program. The Foundation also supports scholarship programs, homework assistance and an effort to ensure that all students have mobile computing devices for learning, and other valuable programs serving our K-12 student population.

The proposed project, entitled *Investing in Literacy*, will target four high-need elementary schools located in at-risk communities in Miami-Dade County Schools and will be selected based on the percentage of students and families who qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch, a federal indicator of need. Additionally, selected schools will have an active middle school media program in their feeder pattern so that students will continue to have access to active media programs after they leave their elementary school. The number of students to be served will be approximately 1,200 kindergarten through fifth grade students.

The goal of *Investing in Literacy* is to improve student literacy by giving students greater access to a wider variety of current, high interest reading materials, including eBooks at school and at home.

Giving students easier access and more choice in what they want to read, their interest, engagement and
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Investing in Literacy

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literacy in reading should increase. Currently, all of our students have access to large eBook collections through the *Community Share Program*, an initiative that allows students to borrow eBooks from the Miami-Dade Public Library System, Miami-Dade County Public Schools' District Library and their own school library. By using our online catalog, students can easily access all of these collections seamlessly from one place. Unfortunately, many of our students aren't able to access these resources because they do not have ready access to eBook readers at home. Grant funds will be used to purchase approximately 30 Kindles for each media center at the four schools which will then be circulated to these students. By providing these devices through the library, we can ease this disparity and will be able to give our students more regular access to this large eBook collection. Besides providing greater access to digital resources, these media centers are being transformed into digital collaborative learning oases by providing maker spaces for students to engage in authentic project-based learning using 21st century learning tools with a focus on supporting STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) based curriculum. To facilitate this new learning space as well as to help instill a love of reading both inside and outside of the school, a full-time, certified media specialist will work with teachers, administrators, parents and community leaders to provide interesting and relevant engagement opportunities. These schools will also leverage existing technologies, such as interactive white boards, provided through M-DCPS' *Digital Convergence Initiative*, to enhance student learning by increasing student engagement and student technology literacy. These technologies will also be used to provide ongoing professional development to teachers and parental training to the community. We strongly believe that giving students greater choice and access to a variety of interesting and relevant electronic books will **increase pleasure reading** among students and therefore **improve student literacy rates**. **Investing in Literacy** will study how increased access will impact our student's literacy and pleasure reading habits by monitoring the library circulation data as well as by comparing the iReady reading diagnostic results before and after implementation.