

Perfect Pitch Communications

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Milton Foundation for Education Awards Principal Grants

According to the geography textbook currently used by the seventh graders at Pierce Middle School, China is primarily an agricultural society, Czechoslovakia is a country in Eastern Europe, and the Internet doesn't exist. My, how things have changed in 17 years. That's the year Pierce purchased the textbooks, and despite the enormous political and geographical shifts in the world since 1992, the Milton school system has not had enough money to purchase new books since George W. Bush's first term in office. But thanks to a grant from the Milton Foundation for Education, seventh graders in the fall will have new textbooks, with up to date maps and accurate descriptions of the challenges facing the world in the 21st century.

Since 1998, the Milton Foundation for Education has been sponsoring Celebration for Education, a fundraiser that has in the past benefited specific departments in the Milton Public Schools. Last year, in light of the town's severe budget crunch, MFE decided to award the grants directly to principals who could then decide where the money was needed most in their own schools. All of the town's principals have submitted proposals to the MFE, and many of the schools have already started spending their grants.

Erika Donahue is the president of the Milton Foundation for Education, and she is thrilled that the funds from 2008 Celebration for Education are making a real difference in the schools already. "We put all the funding on a fast track this year, so that principals could use the grants right away to help offset some of the losses in funding that occurred with current year budget cuts," Donahue said. "In the past, we have only allowed the Celebration grants to be used for enrichment opportunities in the schools, but the needs of the schools were so great this year. We felt it made more sense to let principals talk with their teachers and let us know what they needed most."

Pierce's seventh grade geography teachers, Bill Baino, Justin Daley, and Mike Cleary, are relieved that new textbooks were on the "wish list" for Pierce. In order to align with the state frameworks, the teachers recently had to create a unit of study on Asia, using their own money to purchase supplementary materials. According to Cleary, there were simply too many examples of outdated information in the textbooks to make them useful. "Themes of globalization and interconnectivity of countries are central to the subject today," Cleary said, "but those terms didn't even exist 17 years ago."

For more information on Milton Foundation for Education, please visit their website
www.miltonfoundationforeducation.org.

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