

# EPAK

EAST PALO ALTO KIDS FOUNDATION

# NEWS

Since 1993, EPAK has been a community based, all-volunteer organization whose mission is to promote educational opportunities by awarding grants to teachers in the classrooms of East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park.

## EPAK Day is May 25

Join us for EPAK Day and see your generosity in action. Students and teachers enjoy meeting the people who are making a difference in their lives. It's an uplifting morning for all.

Thursday, May 25, from 8:30 am to 10 am at Brentwood Academy.  
RSVP at [info@epak.org](mailto:info@epak.org)

## Spring Grants

This spring, EPAK made 203 grants to teachers for a total of \$120,464.

## Did you Know?

EPAK reaches 4500 students in eight K-5 and K-8 schools and two high schools:

- 72% speak English as a second language.
- 88% come from families with financial hardship.
- 75% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

## Support EPAK!

To donate or volunteer, please visit [epak.org](http://epak.org) or email us [info@epak.org](mailto:info@epak.org)



## Executive Update

As winter turns to spring, I'm pleased to report that 2017 is likely to be another stand-out year for EPAK.

For the spring grant cycle, we received well over 200 applications from teachers in the Ravenswood City School District - a high figure for the time of year. More educators in East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park are not only aware of EPAK's twice-per-year \$600 grants, but are also factoring it into their curricula planning. They and their students are counting on us.



Lee Dineen  
EPAK Board President

Of the winter funding requests, 39% were for literacy projects, 34% for STEM, 10% for Social Studies, 6% for music and art. Requests ranged from number sequence puzzles and stethoscopes to colored yarn and copies of *The Kite Runner* and *Walk Two Moons*. Getting students out of classrooms was also a high priority. EPAK supported field trips to The Exploratorium, San Francisco Zoo, and Vida Verde Nature Camp.

We believe that moving post-project reporting from paper-based to online has raised awareness and increased engagement between educators and EPAK. Teachers use the system to share photos and updates of our grants in action, bringing to life the vibrancy, creativity, and rigor of their classroom efforts. We will be sharing some of these success stories with you in the year ahead.

Speaking of sharing, we'd like to hear from you. We hope that we are providing you enough insight into how your donation is making a difference in the education and future of the students. I'd love to hear your suggestions --- on the type of stories we share, and on the mediums (i.e. social media, website, email updates, or snail mail), formats and frequencies you prefer. Please send your thoughts to [feedback@epak.org](mailto:feedback@epak.org)

## Teacher Grant Highlights

EPAK can open the door for students to experience exciting and innovative projects which extend beyond the traditional curriculum. At Brentwood Academy, Art Teacher Melissa Brown, partnered with Makerspace Tinkerer, Edward Hostia, to introduce her students to complex science through a fun and powerful medium - Art!

This unique project - making special LED cards for Valentine's Day - was both a fun and instructive way to teach how electronics components such as circuits, batteries, and copper conductive tape work together. "I feel like this project challenges our 3rd graders as a hands-on STEAM lesson and is presented in a way that really excites them, especially in that moment when their card lights up!" reported Ms. Brown.

By all accounts, the project was an immediate success. Ms. Brown and Mr. Hostia both believe that creating collaborative cross-subject lessons through art and the Makerspace enriches their program. Nico Janik, Tk-8 Makerspace Coordinator at Ravenswood City School District, expanded on this powerful approach:

*"Nearly 80% of Ravenswood students are English language learners. In a typical classroom environment without the proficiency in the language, sometimes it's hard to show how smart you are and how to be a leader. I've seen students in the Makerspace without the verbal acuity come in and make cool things and feel more confident. They earn respect from their peers and their project they have created helps them rise and shine in a way they can't always do in a classroom setting."*

Brown said that the LED card project empowered her students and improved the quality of their learning:

*"I am so grateful to EPAK and the donors for giving us the opportunity to introduce this project. There would be no way we could get the materials to run this project without funding from EPAK."*

To help students in RCSD, please make a tax deductible donation at [www.epak.org](http://www.epak.org)



## Mary Ann Noonan:

EPAK shares the sad news of the passing of Mary Ann Noonan. Mary brought a powerhouse of wisdom, compassion, and strength to EPAK. Her family graciously requested donations to EPAK in lieu of flowers.

## Inspiration:

"Until we get equality in education, we won't have an equal society" - Sonia Sotomayer



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**GRANTING OPPORTUNITY IN EVERY CLASSROOM**

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