

NEWS RELEASE

FORT WORTH ISD COMMUNICATIONS
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Fort Worth
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Five FWISD Schools Awarded Wellness Innovation Grants

Student groups from five Fort Worth ISD schools will soon implement their proposals to improve campus well-being as winners of the 2024 Wellness Innovation Grants. Now in its fifth year, the Wellness Innovation Grant program is sponsored by Texas Health Resources and underwritten by the Fort Worth-based R4 Foundation.

The five Fort Worth schools were among six schools chosen from 17 entries to advance to the finals. During the finals, student teams presented their proposals in person to a team of judges representing Texas Health, R4 Foundation, and other community and school leaders. Students impressed judges with their insights and imaginations, said Matt Dufrene, Texas Health vice president. “It’s inspiring to watch these presentations and listen to the creative plans students have to improve well-being on their campuses,” Dufrene said. “This competition gives them an opportunity to make a lasting impact on their schools.”

This year’s contest provided four \$5,000 grants and two \$2,500 grants to improve well-being on area campuses. Winning FWISD schools included:

\$5,000 awards

South Hills High School: Refurbishment and enhancement of the school courtyard was the focus of these students’ proposal as a space to support mental health and meet new friends. Various low-maintenance flowers will be added, enabling students to relax and bond with nature during lunch or free periods. Decorative items will be incorporated to further beautify the area and support school spirit and culture. Students will purchase cornhole games and outdoor furniture.

Western Hills High School: A system of mobile, hydration, heat safety, and first-aid stations known as RAWR (Response Aiding Wellness Recovery) Carts will enable students and others using school grounds to better address health concerns and emergency situations. Those capabilities will allow students to more fully and safely participate in a variety of activities.

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William James Middle School: Students plan to enlarge an existing outdoor garden and develop an indoor garden. Gardening helps children learn to grow healthy foods and discover the role plants play in providing food and habitat for insects, birds, and other animals. With the new indoor area, students will be better equipped to enjoy gardening, regardless of the weather or time of year. Student ambassadors will also include learning about vocations and workforce development in horticulture and landscaping areas.

\$2,500 awards

Oaklawn Elementary: Outdoor recess helps students become more physically active. An existing soccer field will be updated with goal nets and supplies. A volleyball court will be added, along with equipment for oversized checkers, cornhole, Connect 4, ring toss, and other games.

Rufino Mendoza Elementary: Students plan to implement Project STRONG (Support, Teamwork, Responsible, Open-minded, Neighborly, Greatness), a comprehensive wellness initiative designed to foster physical, mental, and emotional health. Specific elements include affirmative indoor decorations and messages, improved recess equipment, and water bottles for each student to promote school spirit and wellness.

“Area students continually impress us with their commitment to improving their schools and their own personal well-being. They are our future, and it is clear when we judge this competition that our future is in good hands,” said Bret Helmer, R4 Foundation president. The R4 Foundation has underwritten the grants each year.

The annual Wellness Innovation Grant program aligns with Texas Health’s ongoing work with area schools. Other efforts include walking school bus programs, support for learning gardens, literacy, movement activities, and campus wellness.

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