

MARTIN COUNTY YOUTH FOUNDATION GRANT APPLICATION

General Information:

Name of Organization (Legal Name): Southern Plains Education Cooperative
Address: 201 E 3rd Street, Fairmont, MN 56031
Street or P.O. Box City State Zip
Contact Person: Stephanie Schmitz Title: Administrative Coordinator
Telephone: 507-893-3701 Fax: 507-893-3703 E-mail: Please see "Other" area
Tax Status: (check one): 501 (c)3 School District Unit of Government Church
Other (Describe): stephanie.schmitz@southernplainscoop.org

Fiscal Agent Information (If different than Applicant):

Fiscal Agent: _____ agrees to serve as
fiscal agent for Applicant for the purpose of receiving funding from Martin County Youth Foundation.
Address: _____
Street or P.O. Box City State Zip
Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____
Authorized Signature: _____ Date:

Project Description:

Name of Project: PAES Lab
Statement of project purpose: To improve employment outcomes for students with disabilities.
Geographic area to be served by project: Martin & Faribault Counties
Project Beginning Date: Project Ending Date:
Total Project Budget: \$30,000 Amount Requested: \$10,000

Board Approval from Applicant Organization:

We approve submission of this grant request and certify that the purpose of this request is charitable and that monies received from the Martin County Youth Foundation will be used solely for the project stated.

Authorized Signature: _____ Date:

For Martin County Youth Foundation office use only:

Grants Committee Determination Approved _____ Denied _____ Date _____
Advisory Committee Determination Approved _____ Denied _____ Date _____

The Martin County Youth Foundation approved this application in the amount of \$ _____

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Southern Plains Education Cooperative requests support from the Martin County Youth Foundation for the purpose of building and maintaining a Practical Assessment Exploration System (PAES) Lab.

As a result of litigation on behalf of people with disabilities, the state of Minnesota was required to create and implement an "Olmstead Plan." The purpose of this plan is to assist people with disabilities to live more independently and engage with the community on a level commensurate with their non-disabled peers. School districts have long been required to put in place Transition Plans for students who graduate from high school programming and move to post high school plans. However, a new focus has been placed on the importance of teaching children with disabilities to work and live as independently as possible. For this reason, Southern Plains Education Cooperative is creating a PAES Lab to teach and support the students attending school in Martin and Faribault counties. Southern Plains Education Cooperative recognizes the importance of investing in the future of the youth we serve.

The purpose of the PAES Lab is to teach students the necessary skills to obtain and maintain employment in the community. These skills include not only the task level skills required to do a job (running a cash register, cleaning a bathroom, etc), but the "soft" skills students will need to maintain employment (how to talk, how to behave, etc). Further, the PAES Lab has an intricate evaluation component so that not only is a student evaluated on task completion, but the program's efficacy is evaluated as well. The goal of the PAES Lab is to duplicate, as much as is possible in an education setting, a real world employment situation. Students assigned to the PAES Lab as a part of their school day, are expected to act as they would on a job site. Students will clock in, perform assigned tasks, be evaluated on the assigned tasks, and be "paid" minimum wage for their hours worked. With their "paychecks" students may purchase items from the "school store." Students are further taught the pros and cons of saving for higher priced items versus spending their "paychecks" on a weekly basis.

PROJECT NEED

Research shows that evidenced based curriculum combined with valuable feedback is the most effective way to achieve success for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities already come to our classrooms and our communities deficient in critical skills for success. It is our job as educators to help narrow the gap in these deficiencies.

Many organizations and agencies in our communities work tirelessly to assist and support people with disabilities. Organizations such as the DHS, MRCI, STEP, COR, REM, MVAC, HSI, etc, do a wonderful job of assisting and supporting. However, they need further assistance in light of the Olmstead Plan. Further, we at Southern Plains Education Cooperative are finding that children with disabilities need intervention as early as possible to have the greatest impact. The more significant the disability is, the more difficult it is for a person to acquire a new skill. Organizations outside of the school system simply do not have the resources necessary to provide such a learning opportunity to students until the students become of transition age. For

many of our students with significant learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, or Autism Spectrum Disorders, the legal age of transition is simply too late to begin such skill development.

This year alone, Southern Plains Education Cooperative will serve 866 students with disabilities within 6 school districts. Southern Plains Education Cooperative serves all school districts within Martin and Faribault counties. Of these 866 students, 422 of these students are in Martin County. Most importantly, these 422 students have families in need of resources to help improve the lives of their children. These families are concerned about what will come of their children as they grow older. Will their children be able to live or work independently? Will their children need continuous care as they age? Will their children be able to support themselves financially? While a PAES Lab cannot possibly answer all of these questions, it will impart the skill development necessary to help ensure as much success as possible. We at Southern Plains Education Cooperative also believe that this project goes well beyond supporting students with disabilities and their families. This project will have a direct and explicit impact on every community in Martin County. Students with disabilities become adults with disabilities. These adults will live and work in our communities. Our mission at Southern Plains Education Cooperative is to shape the youth of today into the adults of tomorrow. Part of this mission is to ensure that the youth of today become productive adults that contribute to their communities.

GOVERNING BOARD

Southern Plains Education Cooperative is governed by a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is comprised of a representative from each of the school districts we serve. The members are: Mike Pfeil, Board Chair from Truman; Sheila Ripley, Vice Chair from Blue Earth; Julie Laue, Clerk from Fairmont; Bryan Nowicki from Granada-Huntley-East Chain; Wendi Russenberger from Martin County West; and Mike Schrader from United South Central.

PROJECT STAFF

The project will be supervised by Stephanie Schmitz. Stephanie is licensed as a Director of Special Education, K-12 Principal, K-12 EBD Teacher, K-12 SLD Teacher, and 5-12 Social Studies Teacher. Stephanie has been in education for 13 years. The last 12 years of her career has been with Southern Plains Education Cooperative. Stephanie was one of two teachers hired to teach in what is now the Bridges Program when the program was opened in 2004. For the last 4 years, Stephanie has been the Administrative Coordinator for the Southern Plains Programs located in Winnebago.

Matt Nielsen will also supervise the project. Matt is working toward licensure in Special Education and in Work-based Learning Coordination. Currently, Matt serves as the Work-based Learning Coordinator for Southern Plains Education Cooperative. Because Matt comes to education from the private sector, he has an advantage when teaching students the "soft" skills necessary for success in the workplace.

Molly Tietje is currently the teacher of the Positive Approach to Learning School (PALS) located in Winnebago. The PALS program is specifically for students with significant disabilities in the area of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and Developmental Cognitive Delay (DCD).

Molly has been with Southern Plains Education Cooperative for 3 years. Prior to joining Southern Plains Education Cooperative, Molly was employed by REM as a Program Director for ASD.

Rhonda Petrowiak is currently the Behavior Specialist for Southern Plains Education Cooperative. When our districts have students who are exhibiting difficult to manage behaviors in the classroom, Rhonda is a resource to help create positive behavior intervention strategies and help teach replacement behaviors. This is Rhonda's first year with Southern Plains Education Cooperative. Prior to joining Southern Plains Education Cooperative, Rhonda was employed by REM as a Regional Quality Assurance Specialist/Behavior Intervention Specialist. Rhonda is also a Certified Brain Injury Specialist.

Brandi Hotzler is currently a Paraprofessional with the Bridges Program. Brandi has been in this position for 3 and ½ years. Brandi will be program components under the guidance and supervision of Matt Nielson and Stephanie Schmitz as appropriate. Brandi will be responsible for data collection and day to day program support.

PROJECT EVALUATION

The effectiveness of this project will be evaluated on a quarterly basis. Students with disabilities who receive special education services have Individual Education Programs (IEPs). The purpose of IEPs is to ensure that students receiving specialized instruction are actually gaining from this instruction. Students assigned to the PAES lab will have goal(s) specific to their work in the lab. IEP goals are measured on a quarterly basis. For this reason, the impact of the lab on the student's IEP progress will be measured at least on a quarterly basis. If progress is not made, adjustments must be made to the IEP.

Another way in which the project will be evaluated is through the data collection process embedded in the program. PAES is a standardized work development and transition curriculum. PAES has been utilized and tested for effectiveness since 1974. The program has embedded scoring software to detect potential errors in scoring in order to ensure fidelity in the program. The program also comes with intensive training for those who will be directly involved with the implementation of the program. The data will be evaluated quarterly to ensure the effectiveness of the project.

BUDGET

ITEM	COST	FUNDING SOURCE
Practical Assessment Exploration System: *Curriculum Component *Consumer/Service Component *Construction/Industrial Component *Processing/Production Component *Business Marketing Component *Computer Technology Component	\$24,732.00	*MCYF (\$10,000 requested) *McCarthy Dressman Education Foundation (\$10,000 requested)

*2 Days On-Site Training *Shipping and Handling		
Money Manager Program	\$538.92	Talent Assessment, INC (TAI) *South Central Service Cooperative
*Plastic Storage Shelving with Shipping *Composite Wood Packing Table	\$523.04	Walmart Grant (\$2,000 requested)
*Groceries needed for the Consumer/Service Component *Office supplies needed for the Business/Marketing Component *Tools & supplies needed for the Construction/Industrial Component	\$3206.04	Walmart Grant (\$2,000 requested) Southern Plains Education Cooperative
"School Store" items for student purchase with paychecks	\$1000.00	Southern Plains Education Cooperative

The overwhelming majority of the cost of the project is incurred in the first year. As shown in the grid above, the cost of the project up front is approximately \$30,000. After the initial costs, costs for the program will come from replacing items such as the groceries needed for the Consumer/Service Curriculum, and the "store items" that students are able to purchase with their "paychecks." Funding is being requested from multiple sources, including a Walmart Grant, the McCarthy Dressman Education Foundation, and support from the South Central Service Cooperative. South Central Service Cooperative has agreed to work with Southern Plains Education Cooperative to attempt to arrange for discounted pricing. Any costs not covered through grant support will be covered by Southern Plains Education Cooperative.

SUPPORT

Support from the Martin County Youth Foundation is being requested due to the impact this project will have on the communities in Martin County. As stated earlier, Southern Plains Education Cooperative currently serves 422 students from Martin County. This project impacts these 422 students, their families, and the communities in which they live. It is the goal of Southern Plains Education Cooperative that with this project; we can help students acquire the skills they will need to be successful in the workplace.

Currently grant applications have been or will be submitted to Walmart, the McCarthy Dressman Education Foundation, and TAI. TAI has agreed to waive the \$538.92 fee for the Money Manager Program. The grant to Walmart will be submitted once the application period opens in February. The McCarthy Dressman Education Foundation request for \$10,000 (the maximum request allowed) will be submitted as soon as Board approval is obtained. Thus far, Southern Plains Education Cooperative has received the equivalent of \$538.92 in support towards this project.

Southern Plains Education Cooperative appreciates the consideration of the Martin County Youth Foundation Board in funding assistance for this very important project.