

Summary

Driven by our mission to show up for our neighborhood schools, this initiative defines community banking through deep partnerships that grow in scope and impact every single year. We maintain a constant open-door policy with district leaders to address real-time needs firsthand, whether that means supplying last-minute STAAR testing snacks, sponsoring an honors banquet, or funding a new marquee sign for the Education Foundation.

To secure the long-term future of local education, our bank team completely funds and manages sustainable programs. This includes establishing permanent financial endowments, custom school-logo debit cards that generate recurring booster club revenue, and an innovative school bus advertising partnership that brings new funds straight to the district. We continuously layer on new support for educators by underwriting grants, providing stationery packs to new teachers, and financial literacy programs for high school seniors that equips participating teachers with a \$500 supply grant. From our staff personally handing out classroom supplies to volunteering at Friday night football concession stands, this initiative ensures our schools have a trusted, permanent neighbor in their corner year after year.

Our Objectives

We wanted to look past transactional, one-time donations and find genuine, lasting ways to back our local schools. To us, being a true community bank means investing in the future of the towns we call home. By forming deep partnerships with local school districts, educators, and booster clubs, we aim to provide steady financial support and hands-on volunteer help where it is needed most. By adding innovative programs on an on-going basis we aim to meet the real, evolving needs of local school districts.

What We Achieved

The program has grown naturally every single year, bringing creative funding and resources directly to our schools:

- **Custom School Debit Cards:** Our debit cards feature local school logos. Every time a customer opens a new account with the school logo debit card and chooses a booster club, the bank makes a donation directly to that school's booster club, creating a steady stream of extra revenue for student programs.
- **Innovative School Bus Partnerships:** In a major school district partnership, we found a creative way to solve two problems at once. Because this local market has very few billboard opportunities, we partnered with the district to place bank advertisements directly on school buses. This brought completely new, recurring advertising revenue straight to the school district while giving the bank highly valuable local visibility.
- **Financial Literacy Grants & Supplies:** We designed and launched a financial literacy program for local high school seniors. To make it entirely seamless for the schools, our grant not only covered 100% of the curriculum costs but also provided a \$500 school supply grant directly to each participating teacher to outfit their classroom.
- **Direct Campus Upgrades:** We funded major, tangible items for local campuses, including brand-new gym or field scoreboards and an exciting student book vending machine to make reading fun for elementary students.
- **Supporting Our Teachers:** We directly backed local educators by sponsoring custom teacher t-shirts, hosting welcome luncheons for new teachers at the start of the school year, and giving every new teacher a practical welcome gift pack filled with stationary and classroom essentials.
- **Long-Term Funding & Classroom Grants:** To ensure lasting academic success, we established permanent financial endowments with both local school districts and local universities. Alongside these future-focused endowments, we directly underwrote the *Fund-A-Future Grant* program through a local education foundation, putting immediate funds right into the hands of teachers for innovative classroom projects.
- **Hands-On Volunteering:** Our employees don't just sit behind desks. You will regularly find bank staff volunteering to run the concession stands at local high school football games, freeing up parents and booster clubs so they can focus on raising money for their students.

A Message From Our CEO: *"Supporting our local schools is one of the most important ways we invest in our communities. This project represents what it truly means to be a community bank: building long-term partnerships, showing up for students and educators, and finding new ways to make a meaningful and on-going difference."*

Steps in the Process Toward Our Goal

We didn't build this program overnight; it is a continuously growing effort that expands every single year by keeping our doors wide open to our school partners and listening to their needs firsthand.

- **Step 1: Keeping an Open Door and Constant Dialogue** Instead of guessing what schools need, we maintain a constant, open dialogue with superintendents, principals, school boards, and education foundations across all the school districts in our market area. Because we have an "open door" policy, district leaders know they can call us directly. This allows us to hear about real-time needs firsthand, straight from the source.
- **Step 2: Realizing No Need is Too Small** As our relationships grow each year, we have learned that being a true partner means stepping up for specific, everyday requests just as much as the big projects. When our schools reach out for help to keep important events and resources funded, we listen and act:
 - When a local school reached out because they needed help providing snacks for students taking their STAAR testing, we took care of it immediately.
 - When a district needed a food sponsor to make their annual Top 10 Honors Banquet happen, we stepped right in to cover the dinner so these high-achieving students could be properly celebrated.
 - When an education foundation's digital community sign stopped working and they couldn't afford the costly repairs, we stepped in to sponsor a brand-new marquee sign.

From a box of testing snacks to a major facility sign, our program evolves daily to ensure no request is ignored.

- **Step 3: Anticipating Seasonal School Needs** We structure our calendar around the natural rhythm of the school year to maximize our impact when districts need it most. Every summer, we show up to local "Back to School Bashes" equipped with thousands of essential school supplies for families. Concurrently, we welcome incoming faculty with customized stationary gift packs, ensuring both students and teachers are fully prepared for day one.
- **Step 4: Designing the Large-Scale Tools** Alongside these daily fixes, we manage the long-term infrastructure. We handle the logistics for the school debit card program, coordinate with district officials to manage the school bus advertising partnerships, and support the university and district financial endowments.
- **Step 5: Layering on the Manpower** We put the physical plans into action. We print take-home folders for elementary students, provide lunch for incoming teachers, and send our bank staff out every fall to work the Friday night stadium concession stands so booster parents can watch their kids play.

This entire project was created, funded, and run completely by our local bank team.

We do not outsource our community outreach to an outside management firm, nor do we simply sign off on generic fund allocations. Instead, our local bank team takes the lead on every piece of this program from start to finish.

When it comes to putting these programs into action, we are right there in the community doing the heavy lifting. Our team takes pride in personally presenting the grants and financial literacy supplies directly to the teachers and foundations, moments we have proudly captured in our attached supporting documentation and program pictures. From our staff personally working the local stadium concession stands to managing the school bus ad partnerships, this program is entirely a homegrown effort run by the bank neighbors who live and work right here.