



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LAFCU awards \$2,500 to Michigan teachers to bring classroom ideas to life

Five educators receive grants for hands-on learning, literacy, technology and student support

LANSING, Mich. — Five Michigan teachers are getting help turning classroom ideas into new learning opportunities for students through LAFCU's 2026 Teachers Grant Contest.

LAFCU awarded \$500 grants to five educators across Michigan, providing \$2,500 to help purchase materials, introduce new learning experiences and support students so teachers would not need to shoulder those costs themselves.

The annual contest reflects LAFCU's commitment to education and to strengthening the communities it serves by investing in the people helping prepare the next generation.

This year's recipients are:

- **Matt Grandstaff, Ovid-Elsie Middle School**, who will use the funding to support a songwriting and music production class that integrates arts into STEM learning.
- **Nicole Nesbitt, Southfield Christian School**, who plans to purchase video equipment to create instructional math videos students can access both in class and at home.
- **Jennifer Newberry, Heritage School in Saline**, who will invest in phonics games, tactile tools and movement-based activities to support literacy development.
- **Emily Smith, Perry Upper Elementary**, who plans to expand STEAM opportunities by purchasing art and photography supplies to strengthen interdisciplinary learning.



LAFCU team members pose with 2026 Teachers Grant recipient Emily Smith. Smith, along with Matt Grandstaff, Nicole Nesbitt, Jennifer Newberry, and Bilyana Zambova received one of five \$500 grants from LAFCU to support classroom learning and student needs.

- **Bilyana Zambova, Averill Elementary in Lansing**, who plans to use the grant to purchase animal-themed learning materials and create a sensory corner for her early childhood special education classroom.

“As I move into a new role, I’m looking for ways to make a positive impact on our school,” said Smith. “I’m excited about using drones and digital cameras to give students new ways to highlight the people and activities happening around the school. I’m really excited about what’s ahead.”

For LAFCU, the grants are an opportunity to support educators whose ideas can make a lasting difference for students.

“Teachers see every day what their students need to learn, grow and succeed, and too often, they reach into their own pockets to provide it,” said Shelia Scott, LAFCU community financial education and business development officer. “LAFCU created the Teachers Grant Contest to help turn educators’ ideas into opportunities for students while easing some of that financial burden. When we support teachers, we’re investing directly in stronger students, schools and communities.”

The Teachers Grant Contest is one more way LAFCU puts its people-helping-people mission into action. By giving educators additional resources to create engaging and supportive learning environments, LAFCU aims to make an impact that extends beyond individual classrooms to students, families and communities across Michigan.

About LAFCU

Founded in 1936, LAFCU (pronounced Laugh-Q) is a not-for-profit, member-owned credit union open to all who live, work, worship or attend school in Michigan, and to Michigan businesses. LAFCU serves nearly 73,000 members and holds over \$1 billion in assets. With a particular focus on serving people of modest means, LAFCU is committed to enhancing its members' financial well-being and creating long-lasting positive change across generations. Awarded the prestigious Dora Maxwell Social Responsibility Community Service Award, LAFCU is known for its people-helping-people mission, which has led to award-winning financial literacy programs for all ages. A three-time honoree as a national ‘Best Credit Union to Work For,’ LAFCU has also been recognized as a Best Place to Work for Women and an Inclusive Workplace, and is recognized globally for its diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Learn more at www.lafcu.com.

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