



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 20, 2026

Applications sought for \$10K LAFCU Innovation for Education Grant

Michigan K–12 schools invited to enter

LANSING, Mich. — From calming corners to robotics labs, Michigan classrooms are being transformed in powerful ways — and LAFCU is ready to help make the next big idea a reality. The credit union has opened applications for its 2026 LAFCU Innovation for Education (LIFE) Grant, awarding \$10,000 to a K–12 school project that enhances learning, creativity and student well-being.

Schools interested in applying are encouraged to complete the online application at www.lafcu.com/life and to submit a three- to five-minute video explaining how the funds would be used and the impact the project would have on students and staff.

Teachers, administrators, parent-teacher organizations, and school clubs or councils may apply on behalf of their schools. Applications will be accepted now through May 1.

The LIFE Grant may be used for innovative projects that strengthen the overall student learning experience. Past and potential uses include improvements such as flexible seating, updated technology, equipment upgrades, STEM tools, social-emotional learning supports, sensory spaces, and other enhancements designed to support engagement, creativity, and well-being.

“Schools often struggle to secure funding for essential improvements,” said Shelia Scott, LAFCU community financial education and business development officer. “This grant helps create learning



Sensory tools added at Ellis Elementary School in Belding through the 2025 LAFCU Innovation for Education (LIFE) Grant help students regulate behavior, improve focus and re-engage in learning.

environments where students feel supported, engaged, and excited to learn.”

Last year’s recipient, Ellis Elementary School in Belding, used its \$10,000 award to expand calming spaces, add flexible seating, and integrate sensory tools that support social-emotional development for its K–2 students. *[View their winning video here.](#)*

“As a community, we are so grateful,” said Nicole Stoner, school counselor at Ellis Elementary. “These tools really help empower our students to be the best version of themselves, and it’s all thanks to LAFCU and this grant. The best part is that the impact goes beyond today; it will create lasting change that benefits future generations of students.”

Teachers reported measurable improvements in student focus, behavior regulation, and classroom engagement as a result of the new sensory paths, flexible seating, and calming resources.

The 2024 LIFE Grant recipient, Perry Upper Elementary School, used its award to upgrade its STEM learning spaces. STEM teacher Eric Bentley transformed his classroom with programmable robots, engineering kits, sensory seating, and an undersea-themed mural to create a more immersive, hands-on learning environment. *[View their winning video here.](#)*



At Perry Upper Elementary School, STEM equipment funded by the 2024 LAFCU Innovation for Education (LIFE) Grant enhances hands-on instruction and encourages student engagement.

environment that fuels curiosity and exploration. I’m incredibly grateful to LAFCU for making this possible.”

“This grant truly transformed my classroom,” Bentley said. “It gave my students hands-on learning opportunities that sparked creativity and problem-solving. The programmable robots and engineering resources have made STEM concepts more interactive, while the mural turned our space into a vibrant, inspiring

Scott said visiting past recipients highlights the grant's impact. "It's incredible to see how educators use these funds to build safe, innovative spaces where students can thrive," she said. "Whether it's calming corners or robotics labs, the results show how powerful the right tools can be."

Now in its third year, the LIFE Grant reflects LAFCU's ongoing commitment to Michigan schools through its Pathway to Financial Transformation initiative.



Pathway to Financial Transformation is LAFCU's long-term community initiative focused on strengthening financial stability, expanding access to education and resources, and helping individuals and families build a stronger future.

About LAFCU

Founded in 1936, LAFCU (pronounced laugh-cue) 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 more than 74,000 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,’ named a Best Place to Work for Women, and recognized globally for its diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, LAFCU stands out for its commitment to creating an inclusive workplace. Learn more at www.lafcu.com.

#