

First Graders use their Academic Award to Support Local Bookstore

San Juan Island, WA, June 30, 2020 –

First graders in the National Education Foundation (NEF) Academy program at Friday Harbor Elementary have worked diligently all year to exceed academic achievement standards in math and language arts, which has earned them incentive dollars. Instead



of using this award for themselves, they decided to support local business, Griffin Bay Bookstore, by purchasing gift cards for their own class as well as all the other 1st graders and Kindergartners at their school. A heartwarming story of kindness and academic success in these troubled times.

The NEF Academy is a virtual learning program that uses a strategic approach to learning to create an IMPACT for students and school districts, with Individualized learning, Mentoring, Performance tracking, Awards (students/teachers), Certificates (from SUNY-Potsdam), and Teacher training (PD).

Academy Director Diane Heller explains, “Starting in September, it became a routine for the children to complete their daily sessions of math and language arts on the computer. When the teleschooling began, the parents were very grateful that this routine was already established and in knowing that the children are staying on track with first grade skills. As a teacher, I appreciate the reports for each individual student. This helps guide my instruction and offer progress reports for our parents and school Care Team. In my 5th year of implementing an NEF Academy, I have never been more thankful for this invaluable resource!”

With most schools showing sharp learning loss during shelter-in-place, Friday Harbor 1st graders maintained consistent gains, with every child achieving greater than one year of growth in math and reading.

Over the past several years, the Griffin Bay Bookstore has invited K-1 students for a spring fieldtrip to pick out a free book. Due to COVID-19, all non-essential small businesses had to close their doors. After discussing it with their teacher, the students decided they wanted to give back to their community, by using their award money to buy gift cards from Griffin Bay Bookstore. On further discussion, the students recognized not all children have a book collection at home and how they could share their love of reading by purchasing gift cards for all the other first graders and kindergartners at the school.

Dr. Appu Kuttan, Chairman of NEF states, “This is a shining example of the compassion and academic achievement we strive to support at NEF. With 30 years of experience, our Academy program is one of the few distance learning models with a proven track record. With the continued necessity of remote learning, NEF is expanding our grant program with the aim to help more students than ever in the coming school year.”



NEF Academies like this one in San Juan Island School District, use effective online courses, foster partnerships, implement context-related solutions paired with incentives that increase engagement, which at the end of the day increases student achievement, closes opportunity gaps, and builds district capacity to support mission critical objectives. NEF is currently providing 95% grants for its distance learning Academy program to all interested school districts and schools, as part of its STEM VISION for AMERICA initiative.

About the National Education Foundation

NEF is a national nonprofit leader in bridging the academic divide by providing world-class, affordable, online and blended learning to students. NEF offers the largest library (8,000+) of effective courses for K-12, mapped to every state's standards. www.stemnef.org