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## As budget picture worsens, schools' foundation gains importance

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Stanford Hirata

As school starts back up in the Roseville City School District, students at Buljan Middle School will be able to work out with new fitness equipment. Fourth-graders at Blue Oaks Elementary will take a trip to the Explorit science center in Davis and third-grade classrooms at Woodbridge Elementary will be outfitted with high-tech document cameras.

The projects, 20 in all totaling nearly \$24,000, were made possible by a recent grant distribution by the Roseville City School District Foundation, the four-year-old fundraising arm of the RCSD.

It's the first time the volunteer-run nonprofit group has made the grant disbursements and it likely won't be the last. Supported by community donations, local events and city grants, the volunteer-run nonprofit group is likely to become even more important as state budget cuts loom and more programs become eliminated, officials said.

Still, the goal is to expand upon what's there, not to subsidize existing curriculum.

"We don't want to fund things the district should fund; we want to fund things that add value," said Stanford Hirata, the group's president.

For the grant program, teachers, both individually and by grade-level at schools, submitted applications for everything from literacy tools (at Spanger Elementary) to band uniforms (at Eich Middle School) and music programs (at Sierra Gardens and Thomas Jefferson elementaries). At Crestmont Elementary, funds will go toward a fourth-grade running club.

School district foundations are popping up as state funding becomes more unreliable. In Loomis, the Loomis Basin Education Foundation formed about a year ago. The oldest – the **Eureka Schools Foundation in Granite Bay** – raises hundreds of thousands of dollars for programs and has a paid executive director.

Despite the district's larger size, the Roseville City School District Foundation has a long way to go until it meets those kind of numbers. And the economic crunch is expected to sap many families' ability to contribute through events such as the group's "Dine and Dash" and annual fun-run. But Hirata said the group still has high ambitions.

“Right now, we’re working on a capital campaign to basically build on the district’s plan for technology for next three to five years,” he said. “It’s not just computer workstations; it’s a myriad of technology improvements that will lead us into the future.”