

NEWS



July 24, 2013

Contact: Sue Murphy – (860) 638-2959
or smurphy@liberty-bank.com

THREE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS RECEIVE EARLY LITERACY GRANT FROM LIBERTY BANK FOUNDATION

MIDDLETOWN, CT — Public school districts in **Middletown, Montville, and Plainville** have been awarded three-year grants from the Liberty Bank Foundation to provide early literacy programming for at-risk students in grades Pre-K through 3. The \$30,000, three-year grants were awarded under the foundation's Early Literacy Grants Program, which is new this year.

The Liberty Bank Foundation introduced the Early Literacy Grants program this year as a means of addressing the achievement gap between students of low income and their more affluent peers. It provides three-year grants of up to \$30,000 to fund creative supplemental literacy programming at elementary schools in Liberty Bank's service area. The goal of the grant program is to ensure that students are reading at grade level by grade 3—an important milestone.



Middletown Public Schools Early Literacy Grant Presentation with students and staff of the Kindergarten Kickstart program. Superintendent Patricia Charles (back row, fourth from left) and Macdonough School Principal Jon Romeo (back row, third from right) received the grant check from Angela Labbadia (back row, fifth from left), manager of Liberty Bank's office on Washington Street, Middletown.

“Through third grade, students are learning to read; after that, they are using reading as a tool for learning,” said Sue Murphy, executive director of the Liberty Bank Foundation. “Studies have shown that children who are not reading at grade level by the time they enter fourth grade are at higher risk of falling behind in school, dropping out, and experiencing even more negative outcomes later in life.”

The grant to **Middletown Public Schools** will fund **Kindergarten Kickstart**, a 5-week, 5-day-a-week, full day program for students who have had limited preschool education and/or could

benefit from additional pre-K experience. Approximately 30 students each year who are about to enter kindergarten at Macdonough or Farm Hill Schools will participate in the program, which comprises a 5-

week summer session whose curriculum is designed to enhance vocabulary, communications and writing skills, as well as to build students' confidence and enthusiasm for attending school. Parents and families are integral to the success of the program, and are invited to participate in daily activities, as well as a workshop that teaches them how to support their children as developing readers.

The **Montville Public Schools** will use the grant toward its **Kindergarten Readiness Summer and Saturday Experiences** for students prior to their entry to kindergarten. The program is new to Montville Schools and will include 60 students each year from all three of the town's elementary schools. It will begin with a three-week summer session immediately before the start of school. Students will participate in small-group and one-on-one programming with certified teachers, an occupational therapist, and a reading consultant. During the school year, the program will bring pre-kindergarten children into the schools for literary experiences and will include sessions designed to educate parents about how to support their children as developing readers at home.



Montville Public Schools Early Literacy Grant Presentation. Left to right: Lesley Gray, manager of Liberty Bank's Quaker Hill office; Diana George, manager of Liberty Bank's Norwich office; Pamela Aubin, Superintendent, Montville Public Schools; Laurie Pallin, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Montville Public Schools; Amy Espinoza, Principal, Dr. Charles E. Murphy Elementary School; and Allison Peterson, Principal, Mohegan Elementary School.



Plainville Community Schools Early Literacy Grant Presentation. Left to right: Jeffrey Kitching, superintendent of schools; Sue Murphy, executive director, Liberty Bank Foundation; Linda Van Wagener, director of curriculum and instruction; Maureen Brummett, assistant superintendent.

In **Plainville**, the grant will fund a **Leveled Literacy Intervention** program for 100-120 kindergarten and first grade students in the town's three elementary schools. The program was piloted with 60 first-graders last year, with the result that almost 90% of them were reading at grade level by the completion of the program. The district's reading resource teachers will work with students in small groups, and an online reading program

called RazKids will provide leveled reading that aligns with the small-group instruction. Take-home books and activities will help engage parents in reinforcing the skills learned in the small group sessions, and

several Reading Starts with Us nights will be held throughout the school year to provide a fun forum for parents to enjoy literacy activities with their children.

Since its inception in 1997, the Liberty Bank Foundation has awarded over \$7.6 million in grants to nonprofit organizations within Liberty Bank's market area. The foundation seeks to improve the quality of life for people of low or moderate income by investing in the areas of preventive programming for children and families, affordable housing, and nonprofit capacity building. Along with its grantmaking, the foundation strives to foster the convening and collaboration of nonprofits, funders, business, and government to address community issues.

Established in 1825, Liberty Bank is Connecticut's oldest mutual bank, with more than \$3.6 billion in assets and 48 banking offices throughout the central, eastern, and shoreline areas of the state. As a full-service financial institution, Liberty offers consumer and commercial banking, home mortgages, insurance, and investment services. Rated outstanding by federal regulators on its community reinvestment efforts, Liberty maintains a longstanding commitment to superior personal service and unparalleled community involvement.

###