

2026-2027 DLI Grant Recommendations

PSU: Johnston County Schools

SBE: North Central

Tier 1 Average Score: 2.8/3

Recommended by Tier One for Tier Two Review? Yes

Grant:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uQlvufBFOTTU76b9x2H0cskMdfT0fGR2/edit?usp=sharing&oid=117053052492277112077&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Summary: The FLAME PLC will support educators across four elementary schools in creating meaningful, student-centered learning experiences. Teachers will receive ongoing professional learning, instructional coaching, and collaborative planning support from The Science House and district leaders. This work will help educators design interdisciplinary lessons that engage students in real-world inquiry, science and engineering practices, digital learning, and problem-solving. Students will have more opportunities to collaborate, think critically, make decisions, and take ownership of their learning. The long-term goal is to develop a sustainable instructional model that can be expanded to additional schools across the district.

Reviewer Feedback: This is a strong, well-organized proposal with clear goals, a research-based design, and strong alignment to the NC Digital Learning Plan and state standards. The instructional concept and implementation plan are well designed and reasonably priced, with a thoughtful combination of Science House training, coaching, PLC planning, and classroom implementation that demonstrates strong readiness and local commitment. The primary area for improvement is strengthening how student engagement and innovation are measured. Rather than relying primarily on participation as evidence of engagement, the proposal could incorporate more meaningful outcome measures such as digital literacy growth, student STEM-career perceptions, student-created artifacts, and science performance data to better demonstrate the impact on teaching and student learning.

PSU: Research Triangle High School

SBE: North Central

Tier 1 Average Score: 2.78/3

Recommended by Tier One for Tier Two Review? Yes

Grant:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MU0ohubjS2432IF1oneqvQRyT3Ej-6fT/edit?usp=sharing&oid=111830601961390307232&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Summary: The district will launch an AP Cybersecurity course in fall 2026 that gives students hands-on experience with real-world cybersecurity work. Using an AI-supported simulation environment, student teams will operate as Managed Security Service Providers, create simulated firms, take on specialized industry roles, and respond to cybersecurity scenarios. Students will practice defending networks, analyzing threats, responding to incidents, and evaluating the effectiveness of their decisions. The program is designed to strengthen AP exam performance, prepare students for CompTIA Security+ and Network+ certifications, and build career-ready digital skills aligned with ISTE competencies.

Reviewer Feedback: This is a highly innovative and forward-thinking cybersecurity proposal with strong alignment to the NC Digital Learning Plan and a compelling connection between classroom instruction and real-world workforce preparation. The simulated cyber firm model, AI-augmented learning environment, alignment with the NICE Framework, and preparation for AP exams and CompTIA certifications provide students with meaningful opportunities to develop advanced problem-solving and industry-relevant skills. Although the initial number of participating students is relatively small, the proposal is strengthened by a detailed and realistic sustainability plan that supports long-term value beyond the grant period. One area for follow-up is the \$5,000 placeholder included in the budget, which should be reviewed to ensure the associated quote and anticipated expense are clearly documented.

PSU: Asheville City Schools

SBE: Western

Tier 1 Average Score: 2.58/3

Recommended by Tier One for Tier Two Review? Yes

Grant: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZJPSpABmPpYoxwGGZs10nzw6sekYDIMnerbXbGP11Co/edit?tab=t.0>

Summary: The Impactful Technology Use Framework initiative will help educators use classroom technology more intentionally to improve student learning and support the creation of high-quality work. Digital Learning Coaches and teacher teams will participate in professional learning focused on strategies that keep students actively thinking, problem-solving, and working through challenges rather than relying on technology to do the thinking for them. Progress will be monitored through classroom observations, coaching data, and educator feedback. The initiative will also create practical, open-source resources that can be shared with schools across the state.

Reviewer Feedback: This is a well-developed, research-informed proposal with a timely focus on purposeful technology integration, productive struggle, and High Quality Student Work across eight schools. The proposal aligns well with district priorities, EL Education, the NC Digital Learning Plan, and the DLPR, while offering a promising pathway from pilot implementation to a broader PSU-wide instructional framework. Reviewers noted that the student outcome measures would benefit from greater specificity, particularly by incorporating measurable performance indicators rather than relying primarily on student perceptions, and that the goal of 100% of students demonstrating growth may be unrealistic. Additional clarification is also recommended for the budget, including the expected number of work hours associated with the \$275 stipend and documentation or a scope of work for the \$13,000 EL Education expense.

PSU: Anson County Schools

SBE: Southwest

Tier 1 Average Score: 2.49/3

Recommended by Tier One for Tier Two Review? Yes

Grant:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yfnZg06enzjaupoz30h_1gEuPyX9ncQy/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=103315071966919355662&rtpof=true&sd=true

Summary: Anson County Schools will transform the new Anson Middle School media center into an Innovative Learning Hub where every student engages in standards-aligned makerspace learning, digital creation, podcasting, design challenges, inquiry, collaboration, and hands-on application of classroom content. The media specialist will lead technology integration and co-teach with classroom teachers to redesign instruction so students create, communicate, problem-solve, and demonstrate mastery through authentic products aligned to NC content standards, Digital Learning Standards, ISTE-aligned competencies, and the NC Portrait of a Graduate.

Reviewer Feedback: This is a strong, highly collaborative proposal with clear PSU and school buy-in and an exceptionally detailed, standards-aligned plan to transform the middle school media center into an equitable, hands-on makerspace and digital creation hub. The proposal reflects meaningful field research, comprehensive professional learning, co-designed lessons, authentic student products, and strong potential to expand access, engage large numbers of students, and scale across the PSU. Reviewers noted two areas to monitor closely: the expectation that every core teacher and class complete four co-designed experiences may place a significant workload on a single media coordinator, and the long-term sustainability of makerspace consumables and resources should be clearly addressed to ensure the program can continue beyond the grant period.

PSU: Elizabeth City Pasquotank

SBE: Northeast

Tier 1 Average Score: 2.29/3

Recommended by Tier One for Tier Two Review? Yes

Grant:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/16VIIb4YgA_Gls1-X3kAf7cuPIJA_YayT/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109846920819999947262&rt_pof=true&sd=true

Summary: Elizabeth City Pasquotank Public Schools (ECPPS) seeks to establish a Drone Sports and Aviation Network that integrates aviation, engineering design, computational thinking, digital learning, and career exploration through authentic, student-centered learning experiences. Building upon the district's Aviation Academy partnership with Elizabeth City State University, the program will engage students from multiple secondary schools in collaborative problem-solving, drone construction, coding, competition, and workforce-connected learning. Through structured professional learning for educators and implementation of emerging technologies, the initiative will increase student engagement, strengthen STEM and aviation career pathways, and develop future-ready skills aligned with the North Carolina Digital Learning Plan and ISTE Standards.

Reviewer Feedback: This is a highly innovative and timely proposal with strong workforce and career connections through its drone sports and aviation pathway. The plan has promising sustainability elements, including training eight educators, and offers students meaningful exposure to future-ready STEM opportunities. However, reviewers noted that the implementation details need further development, particularly around logistical milestones, equipment timelines, curriculum integration, and long-term sustainability. The relatively high cost per student, approximately \$833, also raises concerns about the return on investment. A clearer plan for transitioning the program into a defined extracurricular activity would strengthen the proposal. Given the current level of detail, additional planning and support are recommended before full funding is released.