



SALINA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

community connection

ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE TOGETHER

salinaeducationfoundation.com

785-309-4729

Fall 2025

Classroom grants to enhance student learning • Exceptional teachers to staff our classrooms

LIFT turns 20!

This year, we celebrate 20 years of LIFT! The LIFT program (Loan Initiative for Future Teachers) selected its first recipient during the 2005-2006 school year. The LIFT program is a 'Grow-Your-Own-Teacher' loan forgiveness program. It is designed to encourage talented students to enter the teaching profession and teach in Salina Public Schools. Recipients sign an agreement to complete their teaching degree and to teach one year for each year of support. Recipients receive up to \$5,000 each academic year for up to three years, starting their sophomore

year. Since LIFT began, 38 recipients have completed the program and fulfilled their LIFT loan requirements. The Salina Education Foundation is proud to report that 26 of those are still teaching in our schools. What a testament to the mission that Salina Public Schools are the best place to learn and work!



TOM DORSEY / Salina Journal
Kaysie Rowson (center), a junior at Kansas Wesleyan University, talks Tuesday with Martha Rhea (left) and Joe Hodges at a news conference announcing Rowson as the first recipient of the Loan Initiative for Future Teachers. Rhea is a trustee of the Salina Education Foundation. Hodges is president. LIFT is a program of the foundation.

Education LIFT

Wesleyan student is first recipient of teacher initiative program

LIFT Background and Timeline

LIFT = Loan Initiative
for Future Teachers

2001: The Creating the Future Priority Action team begins talks with SEF about a 'grow-your-own' teacher program. The joint committee creates a preliminary framework, and the Foundation researches the issues, refining the program design. LIFT is designed as a forgivable loan program to encourage students to enter the teaching profession and return to teach in Salina Public Schools.

2003: LIFT receives full board approval, and the Earl Bane Foundation commits a \$240,000 matching gift to LIFT.

2004: Fundraising begins for the LIFT program.

"So, I want to say thank you. Thank you to the donors, the trustees, USD 305, and the Salina Education Foundation for believing in programs like LIFT. Thank you for investing not just in me, but in countless teachers who have returned and will return to serve our community."

Kaysie Chrisman
SEF's first LIFT recipient

2005-2006: Fundraising match achieved, fundraising continues (and does to this day). The LIFT committee selects the first LIFT

recipient, Kaysie (Rowson) Chrisman.

2011-2012: Five LIFT recipients are teaching in USD 305. The total number of recipients is now up to 11.

2014: The goal of a \$1,000,000 endowment to support the LIFT program was reached. Nineteen students have received the LIFT award, totaling \$175,000 in support for future teachers.

2025-2026: SEF celebrates the 20th Anniversary of the LIFT Program. Thirty-eight LIFT recipients have taught in USD 305, fulfilling their LIFT loan requirements. Twenty-six of those continue to teach in Salina Public Schools! Fifteen LIFT students are in the pipeline to become future teachers.

Welcome New Trustees

Eric Holmes is a native of Salina and chose real estate as a career because he finds building relationships to be meaningful in both his personal and professional life. Eric and his wife Lisa have been married since 2007 and have two daughters, Kaylee and Kenah. Lisa owns and operates Flipping Fabulous, a furniture store in Downtown Salina. Besides attending his daughters' volleyball, basketball, and track events, Eric and his family enjoy fishing together. Eric has a genuine passion for the game of golf and also enjoys cooking, particularly BBQ.



Sharlene Ramsey began her teaching career in 1990 with USD 305 and has



also worked in the Abilene, Southeast of Saline, and Smoky Valley school districts. Now enjoying retirement, Sharlene lives in Salina with her husband, Jon. She cherishes the time spent with their children—Bailey and his wife, Michelle, Elyse and her husband Jon—and their grandchildren, Greyson and Halle. With a continued passion for education and supporting teachers, Sharlene enjoys volunteering and substitute teaching in the Salina district, where both Michelle and Elyse also teach.

Marcie Wentzel just retired from USD 305 after 33 years of teaching at Grace E Stewart and Meadowlark Ridge. She is a Salina native who graduated from KSU and received her master's degree from Southwest Missouri State University. Her husband Mark is an engineer, and



they have two children, Dylan and Allie. She was raised in a household of educators and is excited to support teachers by being on the SEF Board of Trustees. Her passion remains for kids and supporting education through substitute teaching and involvement in various community organizations.

Retiring Trustees

During their annual meeting on August 20th, the board of trustees recognized the following retiring trustees: **Tim Blake, Gabe Grant, and Michelle Peck**. Salina Education Foundation's executive director, Kate Lindsay, expressed gratitude for the remarkable contributions of these trustees. Their dedication has significantly benefited the Foundation and its mission to support students and staff. We extend our heartfelt thanks to them for their unwavering commitment to the Salina Education Foundation's vision.

SEF Welcomes New Superintendent, Mr. Heath Hogan

SEF was honored to have Mr. Hogan as one of the featured speakers at our Fall Breakfast. The Superintendent of USD 305 serves as an ex officio member of the Board of



Trustees. Mr. Hogan is a 1996 graduate of Fort Hays State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education. Mr. Hogan received his master's degree from Fort Hays State and is working toward his doctorate at Kansas State University. He worked at Garden City Public

Schools, USD 457, for 25 years, serving in many different roles. His time there was spent as deputy superintendent, human resources director, elementary school principal, and teacher. Mr. Hogan served as superintendent of Smoky Valley Public Schools, USD 400, before joining USD 305 in July of 2025. We welcome Mr. Hogan to Salina Public Schools!

Horizon Award

LIFT recipient Grace Baughman has been named the Elementary Horizon Award winner for 2025-2026. The Kansas Horizon Award program, sponsored by the Kansas State Department of Education, provides all school districts the opportunity to nominate one elementary and one secondary teacher. To be eligible for the award, teachers must have successfully completed their first year of teaching and have performed in such a way as to distinguish themselves as outstanding. A preschool teacher at Heusner Elementary School, Grace has established a happy and stimulating learning environment where children look forward to learning new things every day. SEF was thrilled to award Grace's class with a Sudden Opportunity Grant, providing supplies so they could use the flower beds at Heusner Elementary for their lessons on the life cycle of a seed, seasons, and weather. What an outstanding lesson for those students! Congratulations Grace!

Fall Breakfast celebrates 20 years of LIFT

The Salina Education Foundation held its annual Fall Breakfast to honor donors on September 18 at the Salina Country Club. The New Dawn Singers from Salina South High School provided entertainment. Guests heard uplifting remarks from Superintendent Hogan and past recipients of the LIFT program (Loan Initiative for Future Teachers). Three LIFT recipients—Kaysie Chrisman, Lauren Cox, and Cameron Munk—shared how being a part of the LIFT program influenced their professional journeys and solidified their dedication to teaching in Salina.

In 2006, Kaysie Chrisman became SEF's first LIFT recipient. A Salina native, she has spent the past 18 years teaching at South Middle School. LIFT enabled her to complete her education and begin her teaching career in her hometown. Kaysie said her LIFT loan was a "\$7,500 investment that has had a ripple effect on nearly 1,800 students. In my classroom file cabinet, I keep pictures of every class I've taught over the past 18 years. When I flip through those photos, I see siblings, cousins, and now even the children of my very first students." What a powerful testament to the long-term impact of SEF's support!

Lauren Cox, also from Salina, is currently the Math Coach at Oakdale Elementary School. Cox shared how SEF funding helped her

purchase analog wristwatches for each of her third-grade students, supporting them in meeting state standards for telling time. "Earning and receiving the Loan Initiative for Future Teachers provided me with an opportunity to not only pursue my goals but also give back to the school district and community that contributed to my personal development."



Cameron Munk, a kindergarten teacher at Schilling Elementary, has been with SPS for five years. She has used SEF grants in her classroom in innovative ways—from organizing color-themed spirit weeks to reinforce color recognition, to providing doodle boards that build fine motor skills, to purchasing

social-emotional books to support her students' transition into school for first-time students. "Not only did SEF help me with my education and help place me in a district that I love working for, but the SEF grants continue to help make kindergarten a great place to learn and play."

The Salina Education Foundation's grants and scholarships are funded through the generosity of donors from the community, including USD 305 teachers & staff, Business Partners, Charitable Foundations, and individuals committed to providing enhanced educational experiences for students.

This year's event was made possible by the generous support of the following sponsors: Bank of Tescott, Be Wealth, Bennington State Bank, Hickory Hut, and Woods & Durham. JRI Hospitality, Arrow Printing, and Pronto Print provided in-kind support.



Grant Partners

The work of the Salina Education Foundation is supported 100% through the generosity of individuals and businesses in our community. Your support of our programs demonstrates a strong commitment to a healthy community. Local businesses seek employees who possess critical thinking skills and can adapt to the ever-evolving needs of their businesses. Perhaps this is the year you fund a specific grant. We can help you match the topics that are important to you with projects happening in Salina Public Schools. Contact Kate at kate.lindsay@usd305.com or 785-309-4729.

Our Mission

To promote & support educational excellence by providing resources to enhance opportunities for the students and staff of Salina's Public Schools.

As part of its mission, the trustees of the Salina Education Foundation:

Manage and grow endowment funds, grants, and gifts for specific schools, programs & scholarships

Award grants to teachers seeking to enhance instruction

Identify and support, through forgivable loans, outstanding Saline County residents seeking to become teachers in USD 305.

Build community awareness and support of the Salina Education Foundation

Our Vision

Unite the community to support excellent public schools.

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Grants and Programs

21st Century Advantage Grant: awarded annually for creative and innovative classroom projects

Sudden Opportunity Grant: quick turnaround grant for projects that come up unexpectedly

LIFT Program: awards up to \$5,000 per year for Saline County residents who wish to become teachers

Outside-the-Box Grant: awarded annually for projects that take students outside the typical classroom setting

Partners in Education Fall 2025

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