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Welcome to this month's edition of PEP TALK, a column from Public Education Partners (PEP) honoring the creativity, innovation, and dedication of Aiken County's public-school teachers. Each featured educator has received a PEP Teacher Innovation Classroom Grant for a project designed to enhance student learning in exciting and meaningful ways.

Taylor Little is a music teacher at Aiken Elementary School, and received a PEP Innovation Grant titled "Keys to Creativity: Bringing Classroom Pianos to Elementary Music." With the funds, she purchased 10 portable mini keyboards. They were incorporated into the existing color-coded notation system with which the students were already familiar, and used in rotating stations in her music classroom.

Ms. Little says "The addition of classroom keyboards significantly increased student engagement and participation during music lessons. Students were excited to have the opportunity to play an instrument individually as well as work together to create music." After practicing with the keyboards, students demonstrated improved understanding of pitch relationships, note patterns, and melodic structure. Many asked for additional opportunities to use them. Ms. Little thinks the success of this project has created a strong foundation for growing the piano program in the future.

PEP Innovation Grants are awarded twice a year and provide vital resources to Aiken County teachers. PEP is proud to be the only nonprofit in Aiken County focused solely on supporting our public school system. To learn more or support PEP programs, visit [PEPAiken.org](http://PEPAiken.org) or follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

*Public Education Partners: Harnessing the power of our community to enhance student learning and support educators in the Aiken County Public School District.*