Minneapolis Public Schools will receive a $200,000 grant from the Minnesota Vikings as part of the National Football League Grassroots Program.

The grant, awarded by the Vikings, the NFL Youth Football Fund and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), is part of $2.5 million in field refurbishment awards allocated this year. It will be used to replace the natural field at Washburn High's MacQuarrie Field with synthetic turf as part of the MPS Team Up for Turf campaign, a commitment to raise $2.2 million to convert the athletic fields at Henry and Washburn high schools to state-of-the-art synthetic turf fields.

"The Minnesota Vikings are proud to continue to support local projects that improve fields, promote football development and bring families and communities together through football," said Lester Bagley, Vikings vice president of public affairs/stadium development.

LISC identifies nonprofit, neighborhood-based agencies that have an interest in building or refurbishing football fields in schools and parks. The local agencies oversee construction, maintenance and programming of the fields.

"These fields are a critical part of our efforts to create sustainable communities – places where people want to live, work and raise families," said Michael Rubinger, LISC's president and CEO. "Through its contributions, the NFL Youth Football Fund is not only creating places for young people to compete in football and other sports, but also making countless neighborhoods better and stronger."

John Washington, MPS athletic director states, "Our student athletes work hard and deserve to play on state-of-the art facilities. This generous gift brings us one step closer to our goal of installing turf at two of our high schools, which will ultimately reduce maintenance costs; create a safer, uniform playing surface; enhance the reputation of our athletic program; and provide our students with greater athletic opportunities in high school."

"The news about this grant is exciting and continues the legacy of A. E. MacQuarrie, Washburn's first principal and an advocate for excellence in both academia and sports," said Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman. "Artificial turf will provide Washburn students and the youth of our community with more and better recreational opportunities and team sports experiences."

By 2013, MPS hopes the Team Up for Turf campaign will raise supplemental funds to cover the cost of additional synthetic turf projects. All fields would be available for use of schools, parks and Minneapolis youth organizations. New fields will support athletic activities that engage students academically and promote fitness and healthy lifestyle choices in the schools and in the community.