

The Connecticut General Assembly



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CURREY HERALDS GRANT AWARD FOR O'BRIEN STEM ACADEMY

Rep. Jeff Currey (D-East Hartford) joined school officials, students, Hartford Wolf Pack mascot Sonar and a television personality at a school assembly Monday to celebrate a \$500 grant awarded to the Robert J. O'Brien STEM Academy for the purchase of recess equipment.

"The equipment purchased with this grant is great news for the students at O'Brien," Currey said. "Play and exercise during recess will help children improve their overall well-being, and that ultimately will help them become better students and succeed later in life. The staff at O'Brien should be commended for obtaining this grant."

The grant, funded by the East Hartford School-Business Partnership, was awarded as a result of a collaborative effort by three teachers at O'Brien: Ms. Kim Guzzo, a reading room literacy tutor; Luke Granato, a sixth-grade teacher and after-school fitness club adviser; and Stephen Higgins, a physical education teacher.

The grant allowed the teachers to acquire two carts filled with colorful playground balls, hula hoops, basketballs, jump ropes and footballs. One cart will be for kindergarten, first and second grade students, and another for the third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade students. The teachers hope the new equipment will not only provide a resource for the students to engage in more play and improve their scores on the CT Physical Fitness Assessment, but also to improve their classroom performance and academics as well.

"Research has proven that children who engage in physical activity have improved memory, attention and are better students," Guzzo said. "We hope our students enjoy a variety of activities at recess and are better prepared to focus on their lessons as a result."

Granato said his goal is to take the school's first group of students and even some staff members to run a 5K at the Manchester Reservoir this spring.

“My goal with the Fitness Club is to instill a love of exercise and an attitude of perseverance. By participating in this race, I hope that my students will experience the joy of activity in an open, accepting environment. It will give them an idea, regardless of the setting, of what they can accomplish.” Granato added.

The school assembly Monday highlighted the support the School-Business Partnership provides to East Hartford public schools through awards totaling \$15,000 each school year.



(L-R) Teachers Luke Granato, Stephen Higgins and Kim Guzzo celebrate the \$500 recess grant they won with WFSB Channel 3's Nicole Nalepa, Hartford Wolf Pack Mascot Sonar, CT State Representative Jeffrey Currey and Superintendent Nate Quesnel.



Physical education teacher Stephen Higgins leads a quiz game "Are You Smarter Than a First Grader?" with Sonar of the Hartford Wolf Pack and a first grade student.



The Hartford Wolf Pack's Sonar assists with the unveiling of new recess equipment from the *Kids on the Move!* grant funded by the East Hartford School-Business Partnership.