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New Friends Academy program launches at Hayden-McFadden School

NEW BEDFORD --- Christmas came early last week at New Bedford's Hayden-McFadden School where brand new laptops were presented to the first of 46 staff members.

The laptop presentation was a key step in the Center for Education Innovation (CEI) at Friends Academy's launch of a \$675,000 pilot program at Hayden-McFadden.

"CEI's goal is to be an incubator for best practices in education while thoughtfully integrating technology into the classroom and curriculum," said CEI director Katherine Roberts Gaudet in a news release. Gaudet is also the director of the Sally Borden School at Friends in Dartmouth.

In addition to the computers, the program will provide access to the software programs, Lexia and Symphony Math; online teacher training through the WIDE World program created at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education; and mentoring with Friends Academy teachers.

The New Bedford school was selected by CEI to participate in the program, in part because of Principal Suzanne Madden's vision for technology innovation and the teachers' dedication to the concept, according to the release.

"I'm thrilled that our teachers and students will have these state-of-the-art resources to continue to move our students toward academic excellence," said Madden.

At the presentation, five teachers – Pat Michaud, Sandy Ford, Dawn Almeida, Kerry Slinn, and Annie Smith – were given the opportunity to work on the laptops, testing some of the new software programs that the students will use.

"It's fun for the kids to use the computers. They enjoy it, and they learn so much more," said Michaud as she tried out her laptop.

The computers will remain with the staff as long as they are employed at Hayden-McFadden.

"I'm excited to see our staff and students increasing their technology proficiencies and integrating it into their daily practices," said Madden.

The cost to launch the pilot program has been fully funded by a single donation from Al and Kate Merck, who have long been proponents of educational improvements and have a home on SouthCoast. Officials said CEI will now embark on an aggressive fundraising campaign to raise \$6 million over the next two years in order to extend the to all 22 New Bedford schools.

The partnership between CEI and Hayden-McFadden marks the first of what all sides hope will become a replicable model for school improvement.

"I have already seen the measurable successes of this program at Friends Academy, and we are eager to share what we have learned about technology integration with New Bedford teachers and students and to eventually bring it to schools across the country," said Gaudet.



PHOTO/ PHOTO BY MOJA

Hayden-McFadden teachers Dawn Almeida and Sandy Ford flank Katherine Gaudet, director of CEI at Friends Academy. The innovative program is designed to boost teacher use of technology with free laptops being given to the educators.

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