

Press Release – Robots in Schools

There is an opportunity for a story and photos on Thursday, March 4, 2010 at the Anne T Dunphy School in Williamsburg, Massachusetts from 9:00 AM to 3 PM. Teachers will be attending a professional development seminar on that day.

The Hampshire Regional Public Schools, and 7 partner districts have been awarded \$200,000 in grant funding to implement a technology grant to support a project that will provide high quality professional development and support teachers in the integration of technology into curriculum and instruction, and share promising practices with teachers. The “WeBot – Western Massachusetts Robotics Project” funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act through Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will provide technology, math, and science rich robotics kits and training to elementary and middle schools in Western Massachusetts. The Lego WeDo (grades 2-4) and Lego Mindstorms (grades 6-8) robot kits have been successfully used in the Williamsburg Schools for many years. The project will integrate this promising technology into curriculum and instruction in participating schools in 8 Western Massachusetts districts (Amherst, Easthampton, Northampton, Hampshire Regional, Gateway Regional, Greenfield, South Hadley, and Ashburnham-Westminster.) The curriculum provides rich learning in science, math, and technology/engineering. Technology/engineering has traditionally been a difficult area to provide for students. Students will start at an early age and build their technology/engineering skills over time. Teachers will specifically address the engineering and scientific processes from the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

The grant also provides for mentoring including a coach to assist teachers with developing student lessons. Participating teachers will provide at least two promising practices/lesson plans to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by August 2011 for dissemination to other Massachusetts school Districts. John Heffernan, Technology Coordinator/Teacher for the Williamsburg Public Schools is providing the professional development and project coordination for the project. Hampshire Regional School District is the fiscal agent for the project. The Technology Education Partnership (TEP), and Lego Education will provide additional support for this two year project that begins in January 2010.