

## A Letter from Melissa Gavarrino

Dear Ms. Vanek,

I am writing today to express my sincere appreciation for the opportunities afforded East Hartford Public Schools through the Department of Defense's STARBASE program. As a district we have supported the inclusion of DoD STARBASE into not only our fifth grade curriculum but, in the past two years, into our after school programming at both the elementary and middle school level.

Every fifth grade class in our district attends five days of DoD STARBASE instruction each year. Our students have attended the program since 2007 and I can attest to the value of the experience via feedback we receive from both teachers and students. When we introduced DoD STARBASE 2.0 at our middle school two years ago, as we travelled from class to class talking to students about the opportunity to participate in an afterschool version of DoD STARBASE, they were ecstatic. We filled the program immediately and have continued to do so for the past two years. Students remember their elementary experience and speak positively about not only the activities but the staff as well. Everyone remembers Raven, Redbird and



Sparkle, and Dory!

From a science perspective, I support using our valuable instructional time to have students and teachers attend DoD STARBASE. The program is grounded in inquiry and addresses appropriate content standards in an engaging, exciting and relevant manner. Students as well as teachers benefit from participating in the lessons and activities which truly bring STEM to life. The integration of engineering practices, math application, engaging technology and science concepts, all in an atmosphere which promotes team work and problem solving, is a worthy investment of our time.

Personally, I have enjoyed our partnership with DoD STARBASE. Melissa Vanek and her staff are always willing to listen and problem solve around any type of issue. They strive to make those important connections with our students so they can see the absolute potential in STEM related fields of study and that these opportunities are within reach. I look forward to our continued partnership!

If you have any questions regarding our support of this program, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Melissa Gavarrino

Secondary Supervisor of Science

East Hartford Public Schools

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