

West End STEM Certification Ceremony



Thursday, September 6th, marked the official date in which West End Elementary School achieved their Georgia Department of Education Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) certification. This is the third Elementary School, (including Elm Street and North Heights) within the Rome City School system to be honored with such a prestigious award.

STEM is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, that serves as an approach to education which expands current teaching models for science and mathematics by incorporating technology and engineering concepts into standardized instruction.

This project began three years ago under the guidance of Buffi Murphy, previous Principal at West End. "When we began the process of obtaining our certification, our main goal was to implement the program at the highest levels," explained Murphy.

"A big part of the process is how you begin the teaching and learning. We achieved this by embedding EIE units, Engineering is Elementary, and PBL units, Project Based Learning, to allow our students to take literacy and incorporate the STEM aspect in all content areas. We educated the students to develop and foster those critical thinking skills that we know will build future leaders," said Murphy

The STEM ceremony was held in the gymnasium at West End and was packed, shoulder-to-shoulder, with students, educators and a variety of guests that came to honor this great accomplishment.

Dr. Dennis Drummond, current West End Principal, led the introductions and the celebration to start off the day, speaking highly of his colleagues, his teachers and most importantly his students. "I want to first give credit to Buffi Murphy. I have been at West End for the last two years and it's been a

privilege to see Mrs. Murphy's vision. She did such an absolutely amazing job implementing a focus on STEM without sacrificing rigorous standard based instruction," said Dr. Drummond.

"We have outstanding instructional coaches and the finest teachers in the State. They go above and beyond, and we would have not achieved this without them. We also could not have accomplished this without our amazing student body. Our students are smart, well behaved and I'm just so thankful to be working with them," said Dr. Drummond.

Georgia State School Superintendent, Richard Woods, also spoke at the presentation, and presented West End with their STEM certification banner. Mr. Woods explained, "In looking at the future of these young people, the vast majority of Georgia students will have jobs that are directly tied to STEM education. It does make education more relevant for them as it involves the community, businesses and it's very encouraging as a collaborative effort. This is something that the whole school was really focused, but more importantly it really gives our kids the very best of what education should be about."

The certification is impressive, but the amount of time West End took to achieve it is unbelievable as normally, it can take a school an average of five years from the initial implementation to attain a STEM certification. West End Elementary did it in three years!

Mr. Woods illustrated what it takes to accomplish the feat in such a short period of time, "First and foremost, it's leadership. You have to have the faculty, educators and staff behind this initiative one-hundred percent. They obviously embraced this concept, rallied support from their community and accomplished this in an amazing amount of time," described Woods. "When you have an entire team focused on success, things happen at an accelerated rate. We have spent a lot of time working with their staff and this is something that makes every one of us proud."

After the STEM Presentation, the entire school and members of the community took to the streets to celebrate this award with a parade.

The morale around the school was undeniable. We all congratulate West End for their job well done!