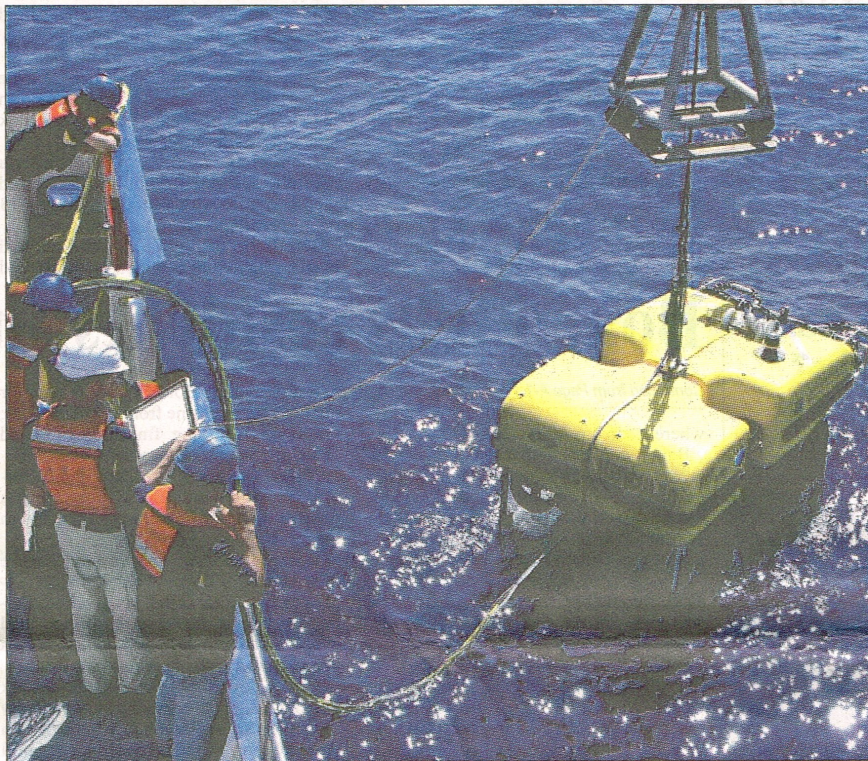


Sweet Sy-STEM



File photo

Researchers aboard Dr. Robert Ballard's ship the *Nautilus* at sea. Ballard is the sponsor of an initiative that has been awarded an additional \$500,000 by state lawmakers to continue to deliver curriculum in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math.

Ballard-sponsored learning initiative picks up steam as STEM education gains traction in Ocean State schools

JESSICA BOISCLAIR
jboisclair@ricentral.com

COVENTRY—A program that was implemented into the Coventry and West Warwick school districts more than a year ago has received additional funding to expand into other communities.

On Monday, it was announced by Rhode Island lawmakers that an additional \$500,000 in state funding will go towards the program and be distributed throughout the state.

Formerly known as the Jason Project, Jason Learning is a non-profit organization founded by Dr. Robert Ballard in 1989. Dr. Ballard is world famous for discovering the RMS Titanic on the Atlantic sea floor.

This program ties into the curriculum and teaches students from kindergarten to twelfth grade about science, technology, engineering and math. The program is currently being used in Central Falls, Pawtucket, Smithfield, Warwick, West Warwick, Westerly, Woonsocket, Bristol, Burrillville, Coventry, Cranston, East Providence, Jamestown and North Providence school systems.

The Jason Learning project collaborates with the University of Rhode Island, National Geographic Society, Sea Research Foundation, Mystic Aquarium, Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation and Boys and Girls Clubs throughout Rhode Island.

Through this program, teachers can use multiple items to ensure their students are receiving the best



File photo

Coventry science teacher Tiffany Risch has worked aboard the *Nautilus* with Dr. Ballard.

education.

On the website, curricula on topics such as seas of change, monster storms, terminal velocity and marine mammals of the Arctic can be printed and used to teach students.

Students are also given the opportunity to learn

See STEM, Page A-2

STEM education growing in state

Continued from Page A-1

through online games, digital labs, videos, online articles and live events.

Michael Almeida, Coventry Superintendent, explained that when he was the principal at the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School he recalled the students studying oceanography through this program.

“They were communicating with scientists and doing research and asking questions of Ballard,” he added. “It’s motivating for students to participate in the exploration live and speaking to researchers. It was pretty powerful; we had a great experience with it.”

Now, at both the high school and middle school, students are able to participate in this program, he said.

Dr. Ballard and other scien-

tists navigate through the ocean and complete underground research of the ocean floor.

“We tap in live to his work and while he’s doing research he opens up conversation with kids in our district,” Almeida said excitedly. “We’re watching him live, streamed on video and he’s able to communicate.”

Last year, the West Warwick school district began implementing the program into their curriculum with the help of Science Department Chair at the high school Christine Kursch.

“We found out we were a part of it last year,” she said. “It was really cool because I can take my kids on a field trip to Mystic Aquarium and they get free entry. There are so many activities and opportunities available to the students because of this program.”