

Superintendent Dr. Lori Duerr shares her take on the over \$85,000 in FRR, Inc. grant funding awarded to promote health and fitness for Falmouth Public School students this year

By Olivia dePunte

July 7, 2023

The Falmouth Road Race, Inc. prioritizes its public school system in its grants, this year donating over \$85,000 to promote health and fitness in students of all ages. Thanks to these donations, Lawrence School students will be sporting new uniforms, Teaticket Elementary School students will be playing in a new “gaga ball pit,” and a couple Mullen Hall and North Falmouth students will be ready to roll on the playgrounds and trails thanks to brand new GRIT Freedom wheelchairs. Falmouth High School is also taken care of with updated equipment for the wellness center and new boats for the Sailing Club.

Superintendent Dr. Lori Duerr agrees, “We are deeply committed that what we teach in wellness and fitness and physical activity are life-long skills that we want students to have. We are trying to create behaviors while they are young that will last a lifetime, so that’s why these spaces and updated equipment are so important and we appreciate that the Road Race is partnering with us on that.”

The Lawrence sports uniforms and equipment were agreed upon at a mini town hall meeting where the students voted on warrants. Dr. Duerr supports the students’ vote, “It’s nice to be able to recognize what the students think is important for their school.” The consensus was that the most immediate need was to refresh their old and tattered sports team uniforms.

Over at Teaticket Elementary School, the gaga ball pit was at the top of the list. The gaga pit, a new take on the classic dodgeball game, has been a big hit over at North Falmouth and Morse Pond schools. Dr. Duerr commented, “I always have said when you look at the four elementary schools, if one school gets to have something then all the kids across the district should get to experience it.” Enter: the new gaga pit!

Speaking of equity, another important item made possible with this grant award was new GRIT Freedom wheelchairs to be used at North Falmouth and Morse Pond schools. These chairs have wider tire treads that make it safer to traverse over rougher terrain, like the wood chips on playgrounds or the dirt on nature trails. “By special ed law, if not all students have access then no students can participate. But the most important thing to me is that every student does get to participate in whatever activities,” said Dr. Duerr. “It’s that equity piece. So this freedom chair gives us equity for every student.”

For the past few years, FRR, Inc. has been supporting the redesign of the wellness center at the high school, as well as upgrading the equipment at Lawrence and Morse Pond, and this year was no exception. A new focus with the grants, however, was the FHS Sailing Club. Many boats were in need of replacement; a new instructor took over this year and did a full assessment. Thanks to the grant, the club was able to purchase improved equipment, including boats, to build up the team.

Dr. Duerr expressed her support of the Sailing Club grant proposal: “I love all the grants, I love everything we are doing, but I feel like where we live and where we are – this is a team that needs to be as supported as any other athletic team that we have.”

Lawrence students were able to participate on the varsity team this year, and the team aspires to get even younger students out on the water. “My future goal is to start sailing practice at the Morse Pond level – again, it’s an equity thing for me,” said Dr. Duerr. “Not every student has opportunities at a young age to go sailing, so to give students at the fifth and sixth grade level an opportunity to learn how to sail so by the time they get to Lawrence they can be on a competitive team to sail and have these experiences through high school would be very exciting.”

Dr. Duerr closed our conversation on this year’s grant awards for the Falmouth Public Schools expressing her gratitude for FRR, Inc: “When I came here five years ago, I got an invitation to go to the Road Race and the race itself is so exciting but when you learn about what they do for this community it’s absolutely amazing. This doesn’t happen in other towns, and we are just so fortunate to be here.”