



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Sanders Brings NASA to the District; Distributes Webcams to JHS 226

JAMES SANDERS JR. March 4, 2016



Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village) delivered hundreds of webcams to JHS 226 in South Ozone Park Friday, continuing his mission of ensuring that schools in his district lead in technology. He encouraged students to work hard, dream big, and imagine a future that might include space travel. Sanders brought a representative from NASA along with him to help hammer home that message.

"I am here to make a commitment to you and to the school," Sanders told students. "If you

do what it takes, if you get yourself together, master math, science, technology - all of these things, and you are physically fit, you stand a great chance of being one of those people who walk on Mars."

Sanders pledged a total of 3,000 webcams to School Districts 27, 28 and 29 and has been distributing them incrementally over the last few weeks. The cameras could potentially be used to interact with NASA since the agency often hosts interactive classes about the space program including opportunities to connect with astronauts. Sanders will be speaking with NASA to discuss how to facilitate a partnership where area schools could participate in such programs.

The special guest speaker at the event was Matthew D. Pearce, education program specialist with the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center Office of Education and the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies. Mr. Pearce's role is to elevate STEM education in the NYC tri-state area by working directly with teachers and students in both formal and informal educational institutions.

Pearce told students that NASA plans to put a human on Mars by 2030 and that they also want to colonize the planet. He added that the agency is seeking to recruit the next generation of astronauts and explorers to help make that happen.

"By the time you graduate from college over half of NASA's workforce will be retired," Pearce told the students. "We need you, and we know we need you. We need you to get to Mars."

The students at JHS 226 were excited to hear about the prospect of being involved in a future space mission. They asked Pearce a barrage of questions including how long it would take to travel to Mars and whether life exists there. Pearce said the trip to the red planet takes one

year and that NASA has found conditions that are conducive to life like water and organic materials.

“We haven’t found a Martian yet, but we believe there is life in the universe,” Pearce said.

He also offered those interested in becoming astronauts some advice.

“The pursuit of space depends on asking big questions, working together, getting an education and valuing our colleagues,” Pearce said.

Also on hand at the event was Unadai Deepan, the parent coordinator at the NASA Minority University Research Education Project (MUREP) Aerospace Academy at York College. She encouraged students to participate in the program, which aims to improve STEM literacy for K-12 students through the integration of emerging technologies.

JHS 226, where students are encouraged to reach for the stars, is named after NASA pioneer Virgil I. Grissom. He was one of the original NASA Project Mercury astronauts and the second American to fly in space.