

South Boston Catholic Academy bolsters STEM learning through Innovative Spaces Submitted by: Jamie Brown

South Boston Catholic Academy is a preschool through grade 6 school located in the heart of Boston. Recently, the Academy has spent time carving out two spaces within their building to dedicate to STEM learning for all students, beginning at age 3. The IDEA Lab for preschoolers, and Math & Science Lab for the upper grades serve as spaces for learning experiences that are both authentic and deeply connected for all students.

South Boston Catholic Academy's Early Childhood Program serves almost 150 students. The Early Childhood Program, in partnership with the Lynch Early Childhood Project, provides experiences for students to learn through play and seeks to provide students with opportunities to approach tasks with an inventive and inquisitive nature.

On Thursday, November 8, South Boston Catholic Academy unveiled the new IDEA Lab! The lab is intended to be a space for Early Childhood students to Imagine, Design, Explore, and Achieve. There, students are inspired to build and test out ramps and gears on a magnetic wall, explore concepts of color and transparency at a light table, perform on a stage, write on the walls, and build with oversized blocks and lego walls! The lab provides countless opportunities for students to predict, experiment, tinker and work together in a room full of possibilities!

The IDEA Lab is designed and dedicated in loving remembrance of an actively involved and admired school and community member, Lori Miller. Lori was a familiar face at the school for more than 15 years, as a mother and volunteer. Lori's love for South Boston Catholic Academy was clear in her involvement there, and her daughter, Kristen, continues her legacy working in the preschool as a teacher.

Also new this year is the Academy's first Math and Science Lab. If you walked in there on any given day, you would see students working around tall Collaboration

Stations engaging in hands on science. In the lab, students have access to an interactive whiteboard, two 3D printers, chromebooks and virtual reality headsets.

South Boston Catholic Academy has done a great deal of reflection on practice in STEM this year in order to ensure that we are providing rigorous, standards aligned instruction in math and science. Study and learning in the both sciences and mathematics has been bolstered by shifting our thinking towards more STEM education, and thinking of how we can integrate science, technology, engineering and mathematics in order to help students make sense of the world around them. Students in grade 6 recently created a “Christmas Village” that asked students to construct gingerbread houses from nets and then calculate various aspects of their structure, including finding volume and surface area. Through our partnership with Engineering is Elementary and the Museum of Science, students in all grades K2-5 will have experience a full EiE unit.

In addition to in school experiences, we also take our students on regular field trips to experience science in the real world. Classrooms visit the Museum of Science, New England Aquarium, Stone Zoo, and MIT for Robotics classes.

We look forward to highlighting our student learning during Catholic Schools Week, and opening our doors to prospective families. Our Open House will also be held on Wednesday, January 30th from 9-1. For additional information about South Boston Catholic Academy, or to schedule a tour, please visit their website at www.sbcatholicacademy.org or call 617-268-2326.

Jamie Brown is the Assistant Principal of South Boston Catholic Academy.

Kristen Miller (teacher) at the Opening of the IDEA LAB



Students exploring light in the IDEA LAB.



Grade 4 visits the New England Aquarium.



Grade 6 learns about 3D Printing at MIT.

