

OLV curriculum STREAMs path to Victory

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To say the students are thrilled with the implementation of the diocesan STREAM program at Our Lady of Victory School in Lackawanna is an understatement.

“It’s the talk of the school,” said Marian Abram, STREAM coordinator and social studies teacher at the school. “It brightened the school so much. You hear things like, ‘This is the best day because it’s a STREAM day.’”

After experimenting with STREAM academy courses during the summer, Abram applied to the diocese to implement the program in 2016 and was approved. It has refreshed the educational opportunities the school offers with programs like STREAM academies, unique 10-week courses that lets students choose classes about the environment, emergency situations, robotics, Lego building and more. This year Our Lady of Victory will offer 22 STREAM academies.

“The kids really get it, and it’s given the teachers the permission to do what they know good teaching is all about,” Abram said. “It gives them hands-on (instruction), inspires children’s curiosity and even failure. In our lives, we know we can learn much more



from failure; not failing from a grade, but trying something and failing at it. You learn so much more from it and the students get more comfortable with it. The parents say they wish they had this when they were in school.”

“I know the classes I have taken and the things I know will help me in so many ways in the future, from getting job opportunities to saving lives,” said seventh-grade student Sofia Chandler.

“STREAM changes how I think through problems,” said eighth-grader John Matyas. “It helps me to problem solve easier and taught me to be part of a team.”

In addition to the academy classes, the STREAM program is focused on making regular classroom instruction more active with hands-on learning.

“What you’re learning in the classroom, you’re doing it,” Abram said. “It’s not saying we’re not doing the science lab once a week, (but we’re also) trying every day. There’s a hands-on component to it, and you



DAN CAPPELLAZZO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Our Lady of Victory School STREAM coordinator Marian Abram works with sixth-graders Sophia Turchiarelli (left to right), Alex Viterna, Eugene Davis III and Lizzy Sibley, as the students construct earthquake-proof tower models during the “Lego U,” portion of the STREAM program.



DAN CAPPELLAZZO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Our Lady of Victory School seventh-graders Tyler Sitarek and Matthew Viverto work in the robotics room as part of the STREAM program.

can do it in large and small ways.”

One example is how students reacted to the recent school shooting at a high school in Parkland, Fla., that created a nationwide debate about gun violence, but this time the leading voices were teenagers. Throughout the United States, thousands of students walked out of their schools on March 14 for 17 minutes to remember the victims of the shooting.

While the students at Our Lady of Victory stayed in their classrooms, Abram said she talked about the situation with her class and gave them freedom to decide their own actions as part of the STREAM instruction.

“We said prayers in our classes,” Abram said. “Right from when this happened, we did an awful lot of discussing current topics. You’re taking that, talking about the religious aspects of it, reading the Constitution and the second amendment. We’ll continue talking about it. We may get further involved. I’m with the students on this, and that’s what we want them to do in STREAM: Take informed action. Isn’t that what we want people to do when they come out of the schools, be good citizens?”

Many of the students have taken exceptionally well to the problem-

solving elements of STREAM. Abram’s students even helped her out by fixing her classroom chair out of the blue. The social studies teacher feels the curriculum is one of the best things she’s done in her career.

“They fixed (the chair) ... and they shouted, ‘Yay, STREAM kids,’ Abram said. “They have the attitude that they can do things and solve problems. I cannot imagine a school without this program, and I know the students can’t. Next year is going to be even more exciting.”

“The STREAM educational initiative has allowed the wide variety of learning styles in my class to come together seamlessly,” said fifth-grade teacher Jordan Yendall. “The students are learning the real life skills of collaboration they will use in their adult lives and in our safe classroom setting. Students have learned to reflect and make changes to be successful, all the while having fun and learning to work together as a team with their peers.”

Eighth-grade student Desiree Diaz Torres agrees.

“STREAM taught me that life is not about finding yourself, it is about creating yourself,” she said.