

# Teaching minds, touching hearts, transforming lives

## *St. John's School Dedicates New STREAM Learning Spaces*

KENMORE — The halls of St. John the Baptist School are alive and buzzing with excitement as students, faculty and staff have jumped feet first into the Diocese of Buffalo's STREAM Education Initiative.

STREAM Education (science, technology, religion, engineering, art and math) teaches students the same content and curriculum as St. John's always has, but in a new way. The goal of STREAM is to encourage children to think critically and creatively, while building skills that the students will use during their time at St. John's, into high school, and beyond.

St. John's became an official STREAM school last school year. With that designation, the teachers at St. John's were trained in the STREAM Initiative and learned various ways to incorporate STREAM into their classrooms. Teachers began utilizing more



technology, such as Chromebooks and science lab Probeware. Students are taught about the engineering design process and fine arts are brought into lessons.

"It really is just best teaching practices. We are teaching the same curriculum in a new way," St. John's STREAM Coordinator Mary Makar said.

STREAM is a mindset to help the teachers deliver the curriculum in an engaging, effective manner.

With a STREAM school designation, St. John's had the opportunity to apply for a STREAM grant through the Diocese of Buffalo's Upon This Rock campaign. Makar worked with St. John's principal, Jenny Bainbridge, director of development, Michelle Salemi, and the faculty and staff at the school to brainstorm what to apply for through this grant.

It was decided that St. John's needed to establish some dedicated STREAM learning spaces throughout the building.

The grant total awarded to St. John's was \$9,000, which went to purchase an Interactive Board and supplemental accessories.

Long-time friend of St. John's, Msgr. Dino Lorenzetti, who donated the proceeds of his book, "Seven Minute Homilies," was in attendance. He witnessed all of the updates around the school and noted that children are more likely to truly learn when they are actively involved in the learning.

This was the first phase of a larger STREAM vision for St. John's. The funds secured through the Upon This Rock STREAM grant were matched



COURTESY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

At the STREAM Reveal Night in November the Fleckenstein family work together on an engineering challenge in the St. John's Makerspace.

through various sources including the St. John's annual appeal, fundraisers, memorial funds, and in-kind donations. The St. John's community came together to make the project a possibility.

With these additional funding sources, the school expanded their science lab, updated the library, and created two dedicated STREAM classrooms, the Interactive Room and the Makerspace.

To recognize those who made this project a possibility, St. John's hosted a STREAM Dedication Night in November. Individuals who donated time and funds to the project, along with the St. John the Baptist Parish Council, were invited to visit the school for the official unveiling and dedication by St. John the Baptist pastor, Father Michael Parker.

After dedicating the project, St. John's invited school families to come and tour the building with their children.

On Nov. 15, over 175 of the

school children brought their parents and families to look around at all of the changes throughout the building at the STREAM Reveal Night.

Reveal Night gave the teachers at St. John's an opportunity to share with the families more about what they are doing in their classrooms to bring STREAM to their students.

"It was empowering as a teacher to see my students take ownership over their classroom and their learning," fourth-grade teacher Alyssa Murcin said. "They were so excited to act as tour guides for their families and to tell them all about what they have learned so far this year."

Students are thrilled to be able to share this excitement with the St. John's community.

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~ Alyssa Murcin