

Enthusiasm for STREAM flows through St. Al's School

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Springville's St. Aloysius Regional School is moving full STREAM ahead, as the Southtowns school incorporates the diocesan educational curriculum into its instruction.

The STREAM program is based on the STEM model, which emphasizes science, technology, engineering and math as core subject areas. However, STREAM also includes arts and religion as part of its foundation.

Since its inception in the Diocese of Buffalo, the STREAM education initiative has been steadily incorporated into many local Catholic schools.

Fourth-grade teacher Brittany Tirone became the school's STREAM coordinator at St. Aloysius at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year. As she's adapted to her new role, Tirone has focused on establishing and incorporating as many outside partnerships as she can to create better learning experiences for the children. Thus far, she's teamed with 10 local businesses and companies, including



the Buffalo Zoo, Darwin Martin House and Shea's Performing Arts Center, so students can go on field trips.

In the classroom, Tirone has used elementary science kits to inform instruction, such as making electrical circuits, looking at light switches and heaters, observing different types of energy, planting seeds and caring for plants, and examining the stars through astronomy.

"We showed the kids how what they're learning in school can be applied to real-life concepts," Tirone said. "The kids are just so engaged with the hands-on activities. It really makes learning fun for them."

One of the essential attributes that separate Catholic schools from public is the focus on religion and faith. Applying a hands-on model to religious education can be creative and establishes ties to other STREAM concepts. For example,



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St. Aloysius School students Jack Gugino and Madeleine Griffin collaborate to assemble a circuit as part of the school's STREAM program.

students were asked to recreate Noah's Ark, a Biblical tale that forces children to think about the science of a vessel that can carry two of every animal, as well as withstand the environmental forces 40 days of rain and flooding will do.

The faculty at St. Aloysius has embraced the STREAM model as well.

"They are very eager and willing to learn," Tirone said. "They are always coming to me asking for ideas for how to incorporate it into the program. They support student learning."

As the school prepares for the 2018-19 academic year, Tirone said they will dedicate one hour each Wednesday to hold a STREAM Academy, which students can electively choose which class or session they would like to participate in. Teachers can also decide which academy course they would like to run, as well. Potential academy subjects include LEGO, Lights Camera Action and Kitchen Chem.

The STREAM initiative at St. Aloysius also took students out of the building. In addition to field trips, students participated in the diocesan X-STREAM Games and

Expo where they competed with other Catholic school teams. St. Aloysius participated in the Kitchen Chem contest, and Tirone hopes next year the school will compete in more games.

St. Aloysius also participated in an Arcade Academy as part of their Catholic Schools Week celebration. Students made arcade games through recycled materials and charged a quarter for each session. All told, the students raised \$75 from the Arcade Academy, which they donated to the Catholic Charities Appeal.

There's no doubt STREAM has improved the regional school's marketing and outlook. Tirone said enrollment has increased over the past school year, and many families are touring St. Aloysius. Current parents are also impressed with the initiative.

"I personally have parents emailing and stopping me at the end of the day, telling me how excited their children are about what they're doing," Tirone said. "We also try to post what we're doing on Facebook so parents can see what we're doing, and the feedback to that has been great."



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St. Aloysius School seventh- and eight-grade science teacher Chelsey Smith (left) helps students as they work with robotics as part of the school's STREAM program.