



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY

The STEAM Sandbox

At Gordon Elementary School, the spirit of collaboration fills the air, not just among the students but also within the dedicated staff. The STEAM Sandbox, a monthly professional learning initiative, stands at the heart of this vibrant educational culture. Spearheaded by educational technologists and teacher leaders, this program embodies a dynamic approach to professional development, extending learning beyond conventional boundaries and directly impacting student engagement and achievement.

The STEAM Sandbox sessions are held in various spaces around the school—from the STEAM Lab to the cafe and the broadcast space—emphasizing that learning and development can happen anywhere. These sessions are designed to be mini, hands-on experiences, granting teachers access to digital resources and encouraging a culture of collaboration. The program offers something for every staff member, regardless of their technological prowess or experience level.

One of the unique aspects of the STEAM Sandbox is its connection to tangible outcomes in the classroom. Teachers who implement digital technologies with their students can earn badges, a mark of innovation and impact. These badges are more than just accolades; they foster a competitive yet collaborative spirit among classes to be named the Technology Pirate of the Month, inspired by the school's "Teach Like a Pirate" theme.

The professional learning opportunities are shaped by participant feedback and aligned with the school's goals and data. This responsive approach ensures that the sessions remain relevant and beneficial. For instance, Dr. Brayboy, a 3rd-grade teacher, shared how a session on Lego Education manipulatives opened up endless possibilities for hands-on STEAM learning in her classroom, enhancing academic skills and social-emotional development.

Similarly, Coach LeMaster found value in using Flipgrid to facilitate peer learning among different age groups. At the same time, Dr. Peaden credited a session on ozobots for making story retelling a more engaging and fun activity for her 4th graders. These testimonials underscore the program's impact on teachers and students, fostering an environment where everyone is a learner and an innovator.

The STEAM Sandbox in action has teachers building with Lego robotics to engaging in broadcast production and trick-or-treating with ozobots to creating 3D-printed nameplates, these images reflect the program's offerings and emphasis on hands-on, experiential learning.

As Gordon Elementary School continues to nurture the growth of its teachers and students through the STEAM Sandbox, it stands as a testament to the power of professional learning that is innovative, and deeply connected to the classroom. This initiative equips teachers with new tools and skills. It celebrates their achievements and leadership, creating a ripple effect that enriches the entire educational ecosystem.

Printed on Thursday, July 3, 2025 - 11:28. For the latest version of this content please visit <https://www.dodea.edu/print/pdf/node/260146>.