

The staff at St. Joseph Catholic School has spent the last year researching the benefits of implementing a STEM Smart Lab at St. Joseph Catholic School. We discovered that STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) careers are growing faster than any other job market, and our staff recognized the need to better cultivate students' curiosity within these fields at a much earlier age. Last year, we piloted a coding class using SPHERO, a robot, with our eighth grade students, and a spark was ignited.

Supported by our Long Range Strategic Plan, and backed by research as well as guided by the new International Society for Technology in Education Standards, **St. Joseph Catholic School is excited to announce the implementation of a STEM Smart Lab into our students' academic day beginning this fall.**

The STEM curriculum is based on educating students within the four disciplines: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, but it is done so using an interdisciplinary and applied approach. Rather than teach the four disciplines as separate subjects, STEM integrates them into a cohesive learning paradigm based on real-world applications. This education model has the ability to provide our students the necessary critical thinking skills for today's globally competitive and technologically driven economy. At SJCS, we are also incorporating the Arts into our new lab with learning engagements focused on the digital arts and creative communications.

We are excited to partner with Creative Learning Systems to bring this new, innovative STEM Smart Lab to St. Joseph Catholic School. This fall, we will begin with the standard curriculum offered by CLS and hope to expand our course offerings once additional funds have been secured to include more advanced lessons that will enhance critical thinking skills.

Construction is well underway in our media center to transform that area into our STEM Smart Lab. The traditional media center classes, which have successfully prepared students in all grades to use technology in their learning as well as led to the successful implementation of the 1:1 Chromebook program in grades 4-8, will move to our library space as it is being transformed into a library/media center.

This is an exciting time at St. Joseph Catholic School! Through this link, <https://youtu.be/6n8pDjc0hdk>, I invite you to take a look at what we have planned for our students this fall. If you are interested in a tour of the school, please contact Tracy Lombardo, Director of Admissions, at 847.362.0730 and visit sjslibertyville.org, and as always, I thank you for your continued trust and support as I lead our great school.

Sincerely,

Anne Phoenix
Principal, St. Joseph Catholic School



