

A photograph of two young girls sitting at a desk, looking at a laptop screen. The girl on the left is wearing a red shirt and the girl on the right is wearing a teal shirt. They are both smiling and appear to be engaged in a learning activity. The background is slightly blurred, showing a classroom setting.

SAM Labs Cultivates Problem-Solving Skills at Seattle Public Schools

At Arbor Heights Elementary, part of the expansive Seattle Public Schools district that serves 51,650 students across 104 schools, Sarah Gerhardt, a seasoned fourth-grade teacher, embarked on a transformative journey with SAM Labs. Sarah has been a long-time SAMster where at her previous district she utilized SAM Labs for over 5 years before transitioning to Seattle Public Schools. Her mission? To harness the power of interactive learning to nurture problem-solving skills in her new school, Arbor Heights Elementary. Over the 2023-2024 school year, SAM Labs has revolutionized her classroom dynamics and enhanced student outcomes.

Objectives: Empowering Young Minds

The goals set forth by Sarah Gerhardt for integrating SAM Labs into her curriculum were focused on the core competencies crucial for future success:

- Cultivate problem-solving skills through engaging, hands-on activities.
- Increase student engagement and interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) concepts.
- Foster a growth mindset among students, encouraging resilience and adaptability.

Enhancing Student Engagement and Problem-Solving Skills

With SAM Labs, Sarah noticed a marked improvement in how her students approached learning and problem-solving:

- **Engagement and Interest:** "SAM Labs is really engaging to kids," Sarah observed, noting the platform's ability to make complex concepts like coding and Morse code both accessible and exciting. "I have never had a group of students actually use the language of coding while they're doing the work, saying things like algorithm and variables in conversation."



- **Persistence and Innovation:** SAM Labs inspired students to embrace challenges with determination. "They keep trying things until it works," Sarah remarked, highlighting the platform's role in encouraging students to iterate, adapt, and innovate.
- **Confidence and Growth Mindset:** The introduction to SAM Labs not only boosted students' confidence but also fostered a culture of resilience. This newfound perseverance was evident in other subjects, too, with students encouraging each other to keep trying despite setbacks. "SAM Labs has helped my students become problem solvers in ways I wasn't sure were possible," said Sarah.

Teacher Benefits: Streamlining Instruction and Enhancing Classroom Management

For Sarah, SAM Labs provided invaluable support in two key areas:

- **Resource Efficiency:** "Everything is here," she said, appreciating the comprehensive resources offered by SAM Labs. This included ready-to-use lessons that integrated seamlessly into the curriculum, significantly saving on planning time. "It saved my day and my planning time," Sarah recounted, after finding a last-minute SAM Labs lesson to replace an absent STEM teacher.
- **Improved Classroom Behavior:** Engaging students with activities they enjoy has minimized behavior issues, allowing Sarah to concentrate on teaching rather than managing disruptions. "When kids are happy and doing something they like, you don't have to worry about behavior management."

Conclusion: Shaping Future Problem Solvers

Sarah Gerhardt's experience with SAM Labs at Arbor Heights Elementary underscores its impact on fostering problem-solving skills and student engagement. By providing an interactive and supportive learning environment, SAM Labs not only equips students with essential skills for academic and future career success but also empowers them to become confident, innovative problem solvers. As Seattle Public Schools continues to prioritize hands-on, experiential learning, SAM Labs stands out as a vital tool in realizing this educational vision, proving that problem-solving skills can indeed be cultivated in ways once thought impossible.

Want to try SAM Labs in your classroom or district? [Schedule a free trial](#) to get started.