

#SAMSuccess story: Wicklund Elementary's Success with SAM Labs

Customer: Wicklund Elementary

Teacher: Shawntel Schenck

Class: Librarian

Started using SAM Labs: 2022

As it becomes increasingly obvious that technological literacy will be vital for today's students to one day succeed in the job market, schools are looking to integrate STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) for even their younger students. At [Wicklund Elementary](#), a K-8 school, librarian Shawntel Schenck saw the facility's makerspace as a perfect opportunity to create exciting, innovative STEAM activities for students in transitional kindergarten through grade 6. Since implementing SAM Labs materials into the makerspace in 2022, Shawntel and the wider Wicklund Elementary community have watched students and teachers embrace STEAM with enthusiasm.

Finding a STEAM Program That Fits

Though many school districts understand the importance of developing STEAM skills in their students, creating an effective program can be a challenge. Since STEAM is considered a special offered across multiple grade levels, the material needs to be adaptable to suit the needs of young children and teenagers. Will separate STEAM teacher be brought in to create these curriculums, or will existing faculty need to fold these lessons into their existing lesson plans?

These were some of the challenges that the teachers at Wicklund Elementary faced. In order to get the STEAM program off the ground, educators needed resources that minimized preparation time while maximizing student engagement. Wicklund Elementary is home to a diverse student body with a wide range of ages and learning styles. Shawntel didn't want the new STEAM program to feel like a chore to students. She wanted students to be able to explore the concepts they were learning in an active, hands-on way. Some of her main objectives included instilling a joy of learning and promoting creativity through discovery-based learning.

After reviewing several options for [STEAM programs](#), SAM Labs stood out to Shawntel for a couple of reasons. First, SAM Labs provided a superbly user-friendly experience that other comparable programs just couldn't match. Shawntel hosts students in the makerspace on Fridays, but it is open for other teachers to use Monday-Thursday. [SAM Labs' materials](#) were easy enough to use that other teachers could quickly get a handle on them and start implementing them into other lesson plans as they chose. SAM Labs also comes with fewer small parts that need to be cleaned up at the end of a lesson, taking away from instruction time, or could get lost and minimize the effectiveness of the materials for future lessons.

SAM Labs also produces materials for a wide range of ages and skill levels. Rather than spending hours each week tailoring lesson plans to a specific class's needs, Shawntel and any other teacher who wants to use the makerspace throughout the week could pick up a lesson and dive right in.

SAM Labs in Action

So far, SAM Labs has been a smash hit with both students and teachers at Wicklund Elementary. Shawntel has noticed genuine enthusiasm from the students, who are excited to progress from lesson to lesson. Even better, SAM Labs gives students the option to log in and continue working on lessons from home—which many do. It's rare to see students voluntarily completing schoolwork in their spare time, but SAM Labs is that engaging.

One of the biggest benefits to teachers is the versatility that SAM Labs offers. Experienced educators know that each student learns differently, but there is not always space in traditional curricula or lessons to accommodate those different needs. Fortunately, SAM Labs facilitates many different ways for students to learn with a combination of hands-on, tactile, and digital activities. The program also includes multiple seasonally themed activities that Shawntel and other teachers can incorporate throughout the year for a more holistic approach to learning.

"I like the ability for SAM Labs to reach TK-6th grade," Shawntel says. "The variety is interesting to students and easy to implement for the teacher. This is a fun way to incorporate STEAM for kids."

Partner with SAM Labs at Your School

As Shawntel and Wicklund Elementary have proven, SAM Labs is a powerful educational tool for transforming learning experiences and getting kids excited about STEAM. SAM Labs offers a wide range of hands-on and virtual activities for students of all ages and skill levels. It's also easy to implement and takes the burden off teachers to create and customize lessons.

Sign up for a [free trial](#) and see what SAM Labs can do for your students and teachers.