

A background image of a classroom with students at desks and a teacher standing at the front. A teal semi-transparent banner is overlaid on the image.

Embracing Innovation, Collaboration, and Fun with Judson ISD and SAM Labs

School: Copperfield Elementary, Rolling Meadows Elementary, Salinas Elementary, and Ed Franz Elementary

District: Judson Independent School District

Teachers: Jennifer Silva, John Ramirez, and Yolanda (Yoli) Vega

Class: Enrichment K-5

Started using SAM Labs: 2022

With more than 24,000 students, the Judson Independent School District was looking to help students grow throughout their ongoing Academic Enrichment program, specifically geared for students in 4th and 5th grades.

Educators were looking for STEAM (science, technology, education, arts, and math) curriculum that would reinforce science concepts taught at 20 elementary schools to 10,000 students in their general education classes, while also introducing students to coding and programming.

Enter SAM Labs. The unique programming was the perfect fit to help students grow their STEAM skills and 21st-Century thinking through fun, engaging curriculum and built on what they were already learning.

Enriching Activities Boost Student Engagement & Learning

The involved teachers said there was a noticeable difference in student engagement when they started using SAM Labs.

“I notice a great deal of engagement,” said Jennifer Silva, a SAMbassador at Copperfield Elementary School. The kids are super excited. Even with the activities that go along with it (like handouts and Nearpod activities), they’re really engaged. There are great discussions and risk-taking, especially.”

Jennifer and her fellow educators said the [traffic light activity](#), where students use code to control the lights, is a crowd favorite.

“I always challenge them to have the red and green light go for 5 seconds but the yellow for only 2 seconds,” said John Ramirez, teacher at Rolling Meadows Elementary. “I give them the challenge with no instruction, and I’ve had groups figure it out in different ways that I wouldn’t even have thought of.”

[Mars Rover](#) and [Battle Bots](#) were also favorites among the students, spurring their creativity and collaboration. Teachers said the kids were working together and asking for additional maker materials to expand their vehicles and make the most of the activity.

Teachers Love the Easy Implementation and Quick Results

In addition to increased engagement from students, teachers in the Judson Independent School District said they also loved how easy the program was for students and how they saw quick improvement among students.

“For the most part, it’s pretty easy to get started once you figure out how to sync/pair,” Yolanda (Yoli) Vega, a teacher at Salinas Elementary, said. “Everything else is pretty easy. The student handouts and slides are easy to follow. Any of the attached videos make it even more captivating for students.”

With step-by-step directions, minimal preparation is needed. Many teachers project the directions and allow the kids to work together or independently as needed. Then, students can work at their own pace, and teachers can help those who may need a little extra assistance.

Each SAM Labs lesson also has a specific goal, making it easy to tie activities back to the classroom curriculum and student success benchmarks.

“The curriculum is wonderful and I enjoy using it,” John said.

SAM Labs prides itself on its alignment with the [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills \(TEKS\)](#) science standards.

Beyond the Classroom: The Lasting Impact on STEM Learning

SAM Labs has not only enhanced the learning experience for 4th and 5th grade students in the district but set them up for long-term success in higher education and the workforce. They’re not just learning STEAM principles but also skills such as collaboration and critical thinking.

“I walk around and listen to their conversations, and I hear them make connections,” Yoli said.

The success of the SAM Labs program shows how you can inspire, engage, and open doors for these future leaders. The skills they’re learning today will serve them well as they pursue future education and career paths.

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