

STEM Learning with Dotty's Place

OCTOBER 2024



TRUNK OR TREAT HIGHLIGHT



One of the highlights this past month was setting up an activity at the Picture Rocks Community Center Trunk or Treat. I arranged over 250 boxes of various sizes on the basketball court, giving kids and their families the chance to build forts and towers as high as they could. Watching the joy and excitement on their faces as they knocked down their creations was priceless. I estimated about 250 kids came through, though it was hard to keep track in the flurry of activity! At one point, I overheard a parent say to another, “Now I can see why it was such a hit.” Hearing that gave me a boost after a long day of activity. This experience showed me that creating memorable STEM moments doesn’t require elaborate setups—sometimes, a few rolls of tape and a big imagination are all it takes!

STEM GAMETIME ANYWHERE!

One of the best things about STEM Game Time is its flexibility. I can set up just one table or create multiple stations, transforming a courtyard, classroom, or even a lunch area into a STEM exploration zone. Currently, I’m hosting a setup during a school’s lunch period. Students have the freedom to play on the field or stop by to explore the activities at my tables. This approach saves teachers the time and hassle of planning a visit into their busy day, allowing students to engage with STEM on their own terms. There are pros and cons, of course, but the students love it! They can dive into hands-on activities without the traditional classroom structure, making learning fun, dynamic, and self-directed.

STEM Learning with Dotty's Place

OCTOBER 2024

MAKING STEM A SEASONAL EXPERIENCE

STEM activities can be extra fun when tied to the season, giving kids a chance to explore science and nature in creative, hands-on ways. This fall, you might try making a “pumpkin volcano”—just hollow out a pumpkin and add baking soda and vinegar for a safe, exciting reaction. Or gather pumpkin seeds to create colorful mosaics that teach patterns and design. When I work with students, I let them explore at their own pace, sharing facts as they come up naturally during the activity. This way, what they learn feels practical and meaningful, helping it stick better. For parents and homeschooling families, it’s helpful to talk about the science in the moment—describe a chemical reaction as it happens, or mention symmetry while arranging seeds. Seasonal experiences like these turn STEM into a fun, ongoing discovery, and kids learn in a way that’s connected to the real world around them.

REFINING OUR SCIENCE KITS

Recently, I tested my science kits with a group of students, and it’s been both a rewarding and enlightening experience. I’m seeing areas where improvements will make the kits even more effective. My goal is to design kits that parents, teachers, or any staff member can rely on without a lot of prep work. I want people to feel confident that these kits are ready to go and contain everything they need for a solid learning experience. So, it’s back to the drawing board for me—embracing the same advice I give my students: go back and make it better! With a bit more fine-tuning, I hope to have these kits ready for the market by late November or early December. Stay tuned!



OCTOVER IN NUMBERS

- Participants: 596 students and staff
- Volunteer Hours: 20
- Prep Work Hours: 14
- Computer Work Hours: 15
- Support Received: Materials from Picture Rocks Community Center, Donations from Picture Rocks Thrift Store

Thank you to everyone who has supported Dotty's Place this month! Your help allows us to reach more students and bring STEM learning to life in creative ways.



WWW.DOTTYSPLACE.ORG/

