It’s important that children understand that there is always an opportunity for there to be more than one solution, and with more than one solution, there are possibilities.

Teaching Creativity

What does it mean to “teach creativity”? It is not – as one might expect – tied only to artistic endeavors. Teaching creativity is very much a part of all studies at the Akron STEM School.

As stated in the school’s vision statement, the purpose of providing an education “that ensures creativity and inventive thinking” through a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics. This is practiced in the classroom with problem-based learning, an approach that begins with open-ended questions needing inventive solutions, as opposed to giving answers for children to memorize.

Why teach creativity?

It’s simple: regular creative activity trains our minds to think and react faster and better. It helps humans make the connection between point A and point B and create a way to point C.

From the perspective of the Akron STEM School learners, problem-based learning makes lessons relevant, inclusive and enjoyable.
Teaching creativity to learners:
The Learner Experience

Featured on CNN and in Newsweek

The Akron STEM School has quickly become a national go-to source for how a school can teach students to be creative. “Perry’s Principles,” a segment of Anderson Cooper’s 360° on CNN, followed Akron STEM School learners in a problem-based learning activity helping park rangers rid an area of its autumn olive trees. The trees. In the words of one child, “it’s an invasive species” that adversely affects the soil and surrounding vegetation.

A Newsweek feature article titled “The Creativity Crisis” focused on a noise reduction project at the Akron STEM School that required learners research material, budgets, aesthetics and maintenance proposals. The result, as the article worded it, was that, “They’d unwittingly mastered Ohio’s required fifth-grade curriculum – from understanding sound waves to per-unit cost calculations to the art of persuasive writing.”

The rise and fall of creativity

In 1958, a series of tasks were created by Paul Torrance that assessed creativity among children and adults in America. Since then, creativity scores have been tracked and continue to be recorded.

As noted by Newsweek, from 1958 to 1990, creativity scores climbed steadily. But after 1990 they have dropped consistently. According to Kyung Hee Kim, researcher at the College of William and Mary, the most serious decline in creativity is among our country’s youngest learners: kindergartners to sixth graders.

With a clear vision in place, the Akron STEM School intends to lead the battle against declining creativity, both in our community and state as well as our nation.