

# Leveling The Playing Field

## How Sports-Based Learning is Changing the STEM Classroom

Ms. Hayes' innovative approach to teaching STEM has not only captivated her students but inspired them to explore STEM careers beyond the classroom.



**Ms. Sandra Hayes**

STEM Teacher

F.K. White Middle School

Calcasieu Parish School Board, LA

### THE CHALLENGE

When Ms. Hayes stepped into her role as the STEM teacher at F.K. White Middle School four years ago, she wasn't sure what to expect. The 6th, 7th, and 8th graders were already learning STEM through STEM Sports curriculum - something she wasn't familiar with yet. Up for the challenge, she embraced the new learning materials and got to work with her students.

### THE SOLUTION

The uncertainty quickly faded when she saw the impact STEM Sports lessons had on her students. "I quickly realized how fortunate I was," she said. "I know that when students walk in my classroom, they'll be engaged and excited. They know they can go outside, get hands-on, and engage with the materials as part of learning," she added.

Her principal, who was an early advocate for STEM Sports, secured STEM Soccer and STEM Multi-Sport for the class. Ms. Hayes dreamt of the possibilities of expanding into more sports and applied for grants that eventually helped her purchase STEM Hockey and STEM Lacrosse.



**The STEM Multi-Sport Curriculum Kit includes lessons from a variety of sports, including Basketball, Football, Soccer and Volleyball.**



"Hockey and lacrosse aren't very popular in our region, which is why I chose them. It levels the playing field. I have kids that are really good at soccer, basketball and football. That can cause some of the other students to shy away a little bit. But no one in my class plays hockey or lacrosse. It's a completely different learning experience for all my students."

When asked what sport she has her eye on next, she replied, "Golf!"

#### THE IMPACT

Ms. Hayes' students become so engaged during class that they groan in disappointment when the bell rings. To ease the abrupt end of the lessons, similar to a basketball shot clock or extra time in soccer, she started setting a timer ten minutes before the bell, giving students a heads-up that class is about to end.

The response to that timer isn't what you'd typically expect from middle school students.

Ms. Hayes explains, "When that alarm goes off the kids yell, 'No, you're kidding me!' and look at each other to discuss how they aren't finished and don't want to leave. I love that!"

That excitement towards STEM has flourished beyond her classroom as well. Some students have joined the middle school robotics team and even continued to pursue robotics in high school.

Integrating STEM into her students' future is another focus on Ms. Hayes' class. Included in every STEM Sports curriculum is information on sports-based STEM careers that students can pursue. This gives students further insight on why learning STEM is important for their future.

"When students think of sports, they usually think of the athletes. But those athletes couldn't perform without the support of others. People run the scoreboard, build the stadium, keep the athletes healthy, run the concession stand. Each of those careers involves some aspect of STEM. I want my students to see there are other ways to be involved in STEM in their adult lives if this is something they love."

#### THE RECOMMENDATION

After four years of teaching STEM Sports, Ms. Hayes continues to relish in the joy from her students after each class. She encourages other educators to jump in head first saying, "It has been very, very rewarding. Anyone who gets the opportunity should take it."



#### LEARN MORE

[More than a Sample Size: STEM Sports at F. K. White Middle School](http://www.STEMSports.com/more-than-a-sample-size/)

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