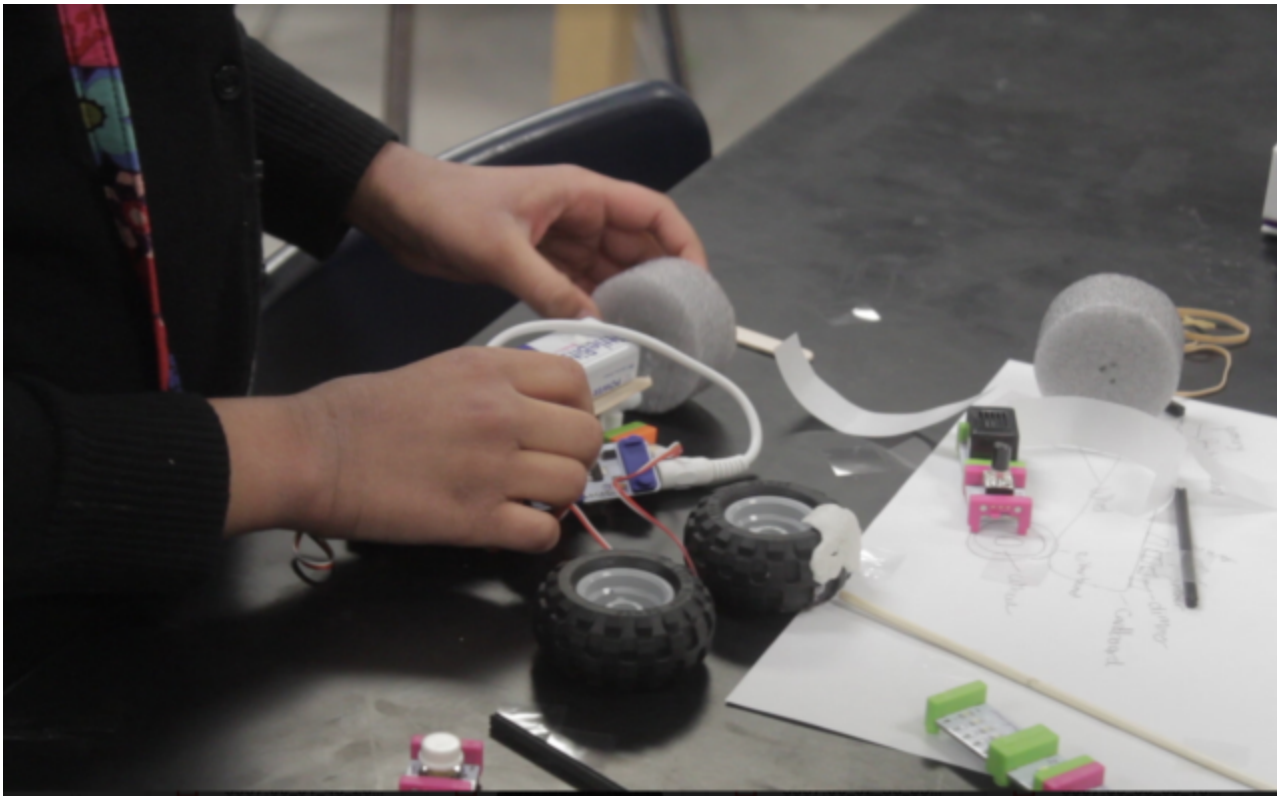


Invention Convention at Liberty Middle School fosters innovative thinking for youth

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Invention Convention at Liberty Middle School last week had students thinking about innovative and inventive thought processes.

The FUNshops are a 2.5-hour evening program taught by local teachers who are hired and trained by the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA). Student learning activities included discovery, exploration and problem-solving skills in a hands-on session. The motto during the presentations is anyone can be an inventor. Students are given an introduction to the science of circuits then they explore the world of littleBits (modular circuitry parts) and use them to complete an open-ended design challenge.

The IMSA was launched over 30 years ago by the State of Illinois to innovate the future of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. IMSA fosters a diverse pipeline of Illinois talent both at its tuition-free residential academy in Aurora for talented 10-12th-grade students and through educator curriculum, training and student enrichment programs.

Edwardsville School District 7 and many other area districts have been proponents of the IMSA work in their schools.

Dawn Waller, Metro East Field Coordinator IMSA, said the FUNshops encourage students to do problem-solving, risk thinking and innovative thinking.

Speaking on Friday night, she said, “All the students are solving problems tonight through inventive thinking. We have an interest in feeding the STEM pipeline and encourage them to acquire skills and knowledge and be more confident in pursuing STEM careers.”

Some of the students developed a self-driving car or worked with an art bot.

Beth Jacobs of the Edwardsville School District, said the activities were fun and engaging for students.

“The students love to get involved in STEM activities,” she said. “The best part of the evening was seeing the smiles on the kids’ faces. It is Friday night, and these kids are here to participate in STEM-based activities.”

IMSA made this statement about the program: “IMSA fosters discoverers and thinkers, along with innovators and experimenters. The problem-solvers of the future who can change the world through their life’s work. Global citizens prepared on a foundation of equity and excellence and upon a mission to ignite and nurture creative, scientific, ethical minds that advance the human condition.

"The IMSA Way is question-driven. Its unique education style fosters curiosity and exploration. It promotes out-of-the-box thinking and problem-solving. It makes for innovators and leaders that write the future; that change the world. IMSA outreach programs kindle excitement for STEM, providing engaging, hands-on lesson plans, summer camps, and after-school enrichment programs.

"IMSA students always love to learn and have a passion for math and science. They are diverse, high ability students from all backgrounds. IMSA parents know their children are passionate about STEM. They understand that an IMSA education will make their child successful and their families proud. The greatest educators crave STEM professional development and engaging turnkey lesson plans.”

