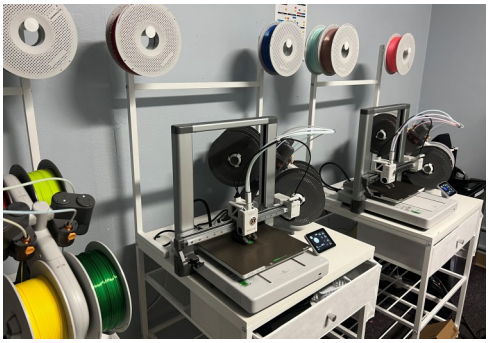
From Curiosity to Creation: ESTEAM Students Power Up with New Maker Lab

At The Arc Lane County, innovation and inclusion go hand in hand—and thanks to a $15,000 grant from The Braemar Charitable Trust at the end of 2025, students in the ESTEAM program are experiencing both in exciting new ways.



The new ESTEAM maker lab in Springfield.

ESTEAM—The Arc's after-school, no-school day, and summer break program—brings together children ages 5 to 11 with and without disabilities to explore science, technology, engineering, art, and math in a fully inclusive environment. With support from Braemar, ESTEAM teachers transformed their classroom into a hands-on maker lab, opening the door to deeper learning and discovery.

Today, students aren't just learning about science—they're doing it. They're extracting DNA from strawberries, experimenting with circuitry boards, and building real-world skills using soldering irons and 3D printers. What started curiosity is quickly becoming confidence.

"This grant has truly transformed what's possible for our students," shared Annie Wahto, the program's associate director. "We're seeing kids not only engage in hands-on learning, but take ownership of their ideas, collaborate with peers of all abilities, and build skills that will serve them for a lifetime."

Building on these hands-on experiences, students will also spend a dedicated week this summer touring local businesses. These visits are designed to expose them to a wide range of career pathways—from professional settings to skilled trades—helping them connect what they're learning in the classroom to real-world opportunities. By meeting business owners and workers, students gain early insight into different work environments and begin to imagine their own future possibilities.

This summer, that confidence will take center stage as students launch their very own 3D printing business. From concept to creation, they will learn how to design products, calculate costs, develop marketing strategies, and manage sales. It's a full entrepreneurial experience—one that blends creativity, teamwork, and practical life skills.

Even more inspiring is how students will use their earnings. Half of the proceeds will go toward sustaining the program by replenishing supplies. With the remaining funds, students will come together to make a collective decision: donate to a meaningful cause or create a scholarship to help another child attend ESTEAM.

This is more than a program—it's a place where young minds are empowered to explore, create, and give back. Thanks to The Braemar Charitable Trust, ESTEAM students are not only imagining the future—they're building it.