



## Glendale Adventist Academy Launches STEM Enrichment Program and Opens New STEM Innovation Center



Glendale Adventist Academy (GAA) hopes to encourage its students to become change-makers in society through enhanced learning of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). With the launch of the school's STEM program this year, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and representatives from Adventist Health (AH) Glendale, Southern California Conference (SCC), and GAA's school board gathered for the dedication of GAA's STEM Innovation Center this November.



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Cristina Lee-Escudero, GAA science teacher and STEM center director, and Kenneth Landaverde, GAA alumnus (class of 2010) with a background in biochemistry, spearheaded the effort to create an enrichment program for TK to eighth grade that is separate from the elementary grade-level math and science classes.

“I believe STEM is at the heart of Adventist education, and I support the study of the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics as we train students to appreciate and learn more about their responsibility to God by caring for what He has given us in nature—as commanded in Genesis 1:26-28,” said Israel Olaore, GAA principal.

Renovations for the center began this summer. The building, which holds the cafeteria on the upper level, was repainted and the driveway and parking lot repaved. The three rooms below the cafeteria that make up the center have been redesigned and restructured to accommodate three areas of focus: imagination, investigation, and innovation.



*Two students check out a display in the hallway that connects the three labs in the STEM Innovation Center.*

The Imagination Lab, with its vibrantly colored walls and relaxed seating, is a “think tank” that will engage students in topics to explore. In the Investigation Lab, students will conduct experiments and learn new concepts. In the Innovation Lab, students will apply what they’ve learned to find solutions to problems in a collaborative setting. These three labs are part of the 5E Model of Instruction encompassing five phases: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate.



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At the dedication, Lee-Escudero shared her goals for STEM education at GAA. “Short-term goals, I want the students to develop their curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, and STEM literacy,” she said. “Beyond the short-term goals, I have one long-term goal: How do I inspire conscious citizens of the future? People who see the problems that are here and have the courage and dedication to give of themselves to make things happen.”

Students officially began classes in the STEM Innovation Center the week following the dedication ceremony.

Though the current STEM curriculum is available to just elementary students, Lee-Escudero hopes to also service and engage high school students. “I hope to start a STEM club that meets once a week in the space, where we can explore various topics and the students can engage in developing community service activities and enroll in local STEM-related challenges.”

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*By Araya Moss*