

# News-Review

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## EDUCATION

# Petoskey elementary students, teachers prepare for hands-on STEM learning day



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PETOSKEY — After the COVID-19 pandemic limited access to hands-on learning, a group of Petoskey elementary school teachers set up a day to let kids apply the work they were learning in science and social studies for a day of fun, interactive learning.

Scheduled for May 10 — or May 17, if weather doesn't allow for the original date — fourth grade students from all four Petoskey elementary schools will be heading to Central Elementary School to use underwater ROV kits, do pond water studies, do buoyancy experiments, and more.

Central Elementary teacher Sarah Harju said the event was started to help some concepts click for students and actually put what they were learning in class into practice.

She said you can only reach so many students when working through verbal teaching or through paper and pencil. She said the hands-on piece of learning is “crucial, especially in an elementary classroom.”

“They actually get to put it into practice, and you can really see the engagement piece kick in with the kids and they are invested and they really have a lot of fun with it,” Harju said. “The more hands-on we can do, the more we can ensure that they are understanding the concept that we are trying to get across.”

The district teamed up with people from the Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District, the middle school and high school robotics teams, and the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. Harju also said parents will be helping out with buoyancy-related activities, engineering stations and game stations.

“We are extremely thankful and so appreciative that they want to be a part of our day, and it really started when a couple people had heard about what we had done last year and

requested to come and be a part of it," she said. "Then we reached out to more people, and they're more than willing, and so to know that the community and the other groups within the school system are really backing what we're trying really helps us to feel like we're doing the right thing for the kids."

Harju said she was excited the school could bring in experts in the fields to make sure the students are getting the best experiences they can.

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Harju said last year was the first time the kids had the STEM and social studies day, but that they really enjoyed it.

"They loved it," she said. "A lot of them went home and told parents, 'It was the best day, they loved so many of the stations.' It was just a really neat experience, because we don't have a lot of opportunities for them to do things with their peers in the other buildings. They don't get to come together very often, so they're able to make some new friends and really have a great day of hands-on learning."

The eight fourth grade teachers in the district worked together to make the event possible for the students. The teachers created and organized materials for each station and reached out to different collaborators to work with.

"It's just kind of a really cool, all-encompassing event to bring them together," Harju said.

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