

CASE STUDY: HOLY CHILD ACADEMY



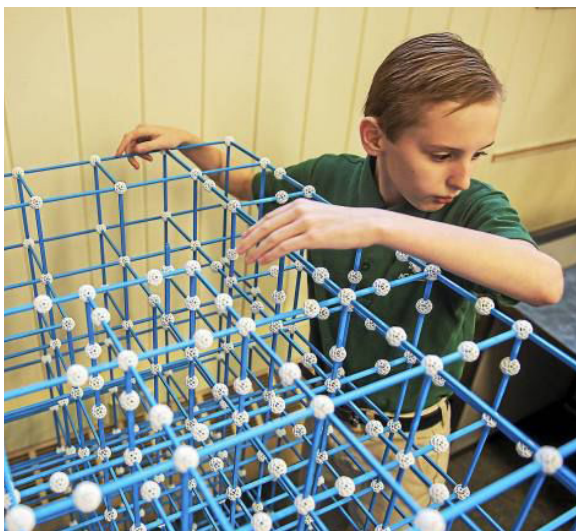
# ONE-PERSON TEAM USES INGENUITY AND CREATIVITY TO SECURE FUNDING



Holy Child Academy (HCA), a Nursery 2–Grade Eight, independent Catholic school in Drexel Hill, PA, knew it wanted to install a STEM lab, and began the process of investigating different options.

They formed a team to evaluate different approaches ranging from building the lab internally from the ground up, to a turnkey solution—like a SmartLab HQ offered by SmartLab Learning.

Ultimately, HCA determined that the SmartLab HQ offered the best programming for its youngest learners, while still offering challenging and engaging opportunities for its oldest students—eighth-graders.



Choosing the SmartLab HQ turned out to be the easy part. Raising the funds for the lab was daunting for a one-person development office working in a school with a little more than 100 families. And, since HCA is a religious school, many federal funding sources and grants were unavailable.

Ultimately, the fundraising efforts were successful, but it meant that they needed to fundraise in many different ways over the course of two years.

Director of Development, Rebecca Antczak, started the fundraising efforts by researching grants and writing several grant applications. Local and regional foundations proved to be a wonderful source of support, especially because HCA intended to open the lab to the community with after-school programming and summer camps.

With the grant applications pending, the development office launched a crowdfunding platform called Network for Good, which helped them quickly raise some money. During the same time, foundations began awarding money. Ultimately, six foundations awarded HCA almost \$60K.

To help fill the gap, HCA showcased a SmartLab HQ to the community at its annual fundraising meeting, and guests were invited to donate to the lab.

With nearly half of the lab paid for, excitement was growing and HCA received two large donations from individual donors, which made the SmartLab HQ a reality!

“Not only is the SmartLab HQ worth every penny, but it’s doable if you approach funding in a number of different ways,” Antczak added. “You have to approach it from all different angles.”

#### **A SMARTLAB DESIGNED FOR EVERY AGE**

Though the school initially purchased the lab with the intention of using it for K–8 students, the SmartLab Facilitator, Erica Zwilling, quickly adapted the materials to children as young as 2-years-old.

Also factored into the selection process was how easy SmartLab Learning makes it for clients and lab-users. “Even the labeling of the boxes and the way the room is set up—everything is well-thought out,” said Zwilling. “We went to see a lot of different schools and saw about 10 different solutions; none of them were as well-organized or run as well as a SmartLab HQ.”

#### **A PLACE FOR EVERY STUDENT TO EXPLORE AND PROBLEM-SOLVE**

As a testament to how learning in a SmartLab HQ is different, the school’s kindergarteners entered their first national coding competition last year.

Throughout the school, students are learning crucial 21st-century life skills. “This is a place where it’s OK to risk trying new things because it’s OK if your project doesn’t work,” said Zwilling.

“Even driven middle schoolers begin to realize they have a place where they can explore, problem-solve, and test things without worrying whether their project will work in the end—that is an ‘aha moment.’”

