

# Full Stream Ahead: Monica Haldiman '79

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Brayden Rollins '21

By Jana F. Brown



At Sacred Heart School in Roslindale, Mass., gone are the days of desks lined up in rows and teachers standing at the front of classrooms, sharing facts for students to memorize. They have been replaced by makerspaces filled with everything from scrap paper to scrap electronics to PVC piping to Velcro to wires to Styrofoam.

“Anything we can use to create something else,” says Monica Haldiman '79, Sacred Heart's principal since 2008.

Hands-on, inquiry-based learning is evident in every corner of the school, thanks to the STREAM approach, a curriculum that integrates science, technology, religion, engineering, arts, and mathematics. According to Haldiman, in 2011, Sacred Heart, which educates 275 students from preschool through grade eight, became the first Boston Catholic elementary school to implement STREAM.

The Brooklyn-born Haldiman is herself a product of Catholic school education, from elementary school through her four years at Saint Anselm. In her nearly three decades as an educator at Sacred Heart, she noticed a shift in skills required for her students to be productive citizens of the 21st century, and in the overall sustainability of Catholic school education. That's when she began asking questions of corporate leaders about the future of the job market. In terms of skills, Haldiman points to the "4 C's—collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking," which represent a departure from the days of memorize and repeat.

Working with her teaching team, Haldiman created a plan for Sacred Heart, first implementing STEM, then moving to STEAM to include the arts, and finally settling on STREAM.

"As a Catholic school, nothing is possible without God," Haldiman explains of the addition of religion to the multidisciplinary approach.

Being first in Boston has made Haldiman and her colleagues leaders in the STREAM movement. In 2016, the Sacred Heart preschool program received the Innovations in Catholic Education Award from Today's Catholic Teacher, while the school regularly plays host to peers looking to implement STREAM.

The annual STREAM night, which showcases student-driven projects, from bridges to robots, draws 600 guests.

"This shift mirrors the technological boom and the skills required to be successful in the workplace," Haldiman says. "We are telling kids to go for it. It's a whole different attitude. STREAM teaches them not to learn in isolation—and that it's okay to make mistakes."