

About IDEAS

Speaker 1: Kids on the autism spectrum have amazing minds. They can often be very inventive because they see the world in a unique way. The ideas project started with the goal of providing students on and off the autism spectrum with the opportunity to pursue their interests by designing, creating, making, and sharing with peers.

Speaker 2: So the ASD Nest program is the largest inclusion program in the country. We're in 45 schools in all five boroughs of New York City, serving over 1300 kids that are autistic, being educated alongside their typically developing peers. Nest really focuses and embraces the fact that children that are autistic, just like any other child, has unique strengths and abilities that if fostered can lead to career pathways. And so we don't pathologize restricted interests. We actually embrace them and utilize them in ways that produce some powerful learning outcomes.

Speaker 3: New York Hall of Science is a hands-on science center in New York City. We opened up a maker space uh 7 years ago and we've been running a variety of different kinds of programs really focused on tools and materials investigation. We created a summer camp that focuses on 3D design. We partnered with NYU and EDC to create an after-school program in schools that uh work with kids on the autism spectrum as well as general ed kids.

Speaker 4: The first year of the program the role of the engineering school and of the graduate students was to go into the classroom and see how the New York Hall of Science was facilitating the existing maker curriculum. The second year we designed adaptations and went into the classrooms again to test whether the adaptations we had made were effective and whether the teachers could understand how to teach the material.

Speaker 5: The redesign of the 3D design program has been a very iterative process. All the project stakeholders, especially the teachers, are able to offer their recommendations for changes to make the program meaningful to participating students and as sustainable as possible.

accessible video transcript

Speaker 1: We're also working with SRI International who's helping us measure the program's impact.

Speaker 6: A lot of the seventh and eighth graders that I have in my class they're also in the makers club and I think as a teacher I was able to actually get to know them a little bit more in the makers club because of the interest that they put into their project. So some of the students were really interested in presidents, some of the students had an interest in abstract art.

Speaker 7: Our students are helping each other out. They get to problem solve with each other, they get to talk to each other, they get to find common interests. It changes their lives in a way that they find connections with other students. I'm hoping that they carry these friendships throughout high school and hopefully throughout life.

Speaker 2: We also seen the benefit of combining the nest program with what the engineering school's doing with what the Hall of Science is doing and EDC. It's been a beautiful partnership.