Roosevelt Middle School Magnet program marches full STEAM ahead

2 mins read

In 15 months, Roosevelt Middle School will be rebranded for the 2020-21 school year as Roosevelt STEAM Academy Magnet. (Tim Berger / Glendale News Press)

At the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, Roosevelt Middle School will be rebranded and open its doors as Roosevelt Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics, or STEAM, Academy Magnet.

After years of talks and preparation, the Glendale Unified school board unanimously voted to make the change during its meeting on May 7.

"We have had a wonderful faculty and staff at Roosevelt, committed to making sure our students are committed to the best," Roosevelt principal Kyle Bruich said. "This project started with our former principal Mary Mason [now the district's executive director of elementary education]. It feels great to come through for students and future students who will get this opportunity."

Before Aug. 19, 2020, the first day of classes for that school year, Roosevelt will need to undergo a few changes to be considered a STEAM magnet.

"What we would like to do that would really, really make us stand out as a true STEAM academy is we would like to add STEAM curriculum for all students as part of their integrated curriculum and science classes," Bruich said.

With computer science now accepted as a lab science for admission to many University of California and Cal State University schools, Bruich is looking for enhanced implementation.

"It gives us wonderful opportunities for us to integrate on top of the basic coding we would teach," he said.

Roosevelt is planning to adopt Stanford University's bifocal modeling method, which calls for computer modeling and simulation to help supplement real-world lessons, Bruich said.

The school will also implement Google's applied digital-skills program, which won't cost the district additional money and includes curriculum such as learning how to research and develop a topic online as well as planning and budgeting and creating an editing tool with programming.

On top of the mandatory STEAM curriculum, Roosevelt will add an elective course in advanced coding, which will be taught by already-trained instructor Jean Marie Pascale Parra and will cover topics such as Thunkable, an app development program, and Advanced Scratch, according to Bruich.

The Advanced Scratch program will continue the basic Scratch curriculum already taught to students at Cerritos Elementary, he added.

"I'm so excited for our Roosevelt students and families," board member Shant Sahakian said during the May 7 meeting. "When our motto is 'Preparing Our Students for Their Future,' teaching STEAM skills to our students [is] essential."

Many of the courses already taught at Roosevelt, such as robotics, 3-D game design, visual/digital media arts, and dual-immersion languages already fit the STEAM magnet model.

Beyond the enhanced courses for students, one issue fueling the STEAM movement has been declining enrollment at Roosevelt.

According to California Department of Education statistics, Roosevelt's enrollment has dropped from 1,009 students to 756 over the past 10 years.

In comparison, district elementary schools Franklin, Jefferson and Keppel have all seen growth since becoming magnet schools in 2010, reporting 32%, 16% and 14% enrollment increases, respectively.

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