



McLeod
Innovation
Center

SUMMER CAMPS NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2024



Editor's Note



Welcome to the Summer 2024 Innovation & eSports Camps Newsletter! In this edition, we celebrate the incredible creativity, learning, and collaboration that flourished during our camps. A special highlight comes from three outstanding student leaders who took charge of sharing their experiences in the Innovation Camp. Their reflections offer a unique, firsthand look into the exciting projects they worked on and how their roles helped them grow as leaders.

In the eSports Camp, we had the pleasure of guiding students through Rocket League. While developing their gameplay, students also gained valuable skills in leadership, collaboration, and goal-setting—skills that are essential both on and off the screen. Students were challenged to apply these skills in various scenarios, emphasizing the broader value of discipline, focus, and teamwork in their everyday lives.

I hope you enjoy this glimpse at our campers' summer adventures at the McLeod Innovation Center.

Warm regards,
Dr. Rinat Levy Cohen
Director of Innovation at Fairfield Prep



FAIRFIELD PREP Innovation Camp



Paddle Boats



This activity challenged our campers to build little paddle boats from styrofoam boards, battery-powered motors, and other materials. The engineering design challenge was tough, but the campers stepped up like professionals. They started by sketching a boat design onto a piece of styrofoam for Mr. Ford to cut out using a styrofoam cutter. Then, campers added motors, batteries, custom-made propellers, and decorations to their boat.

A vital lesson everyone learned is that your project won't work very well unless you start by making a solid plan. Ultimately, we held a boat racing tournament where campers saw their boats in action. Observing them all fired up, raring to compete, and cheering each other on was a pleasure. Campers also competed against Prep students and teachers and won! Scan the QR code above to watch one of the races.

Joshua Sala '26

Digital Fabrication

Our campers' first activity involved digital fabrication, the process of modeling something on a computer before sending it to a machine to be physically fabricated. Campers were tasked with 3D modeling bubble wands on Tinkercad (a 3D modeling software). Each camper came up with creative, original designs. It was enjoyable to see their designs print on our 3D printers.

Another digital fabrication activity involved laser cutting, a process where a laser etches designs into surfaces. Campers created personalized designs that we then etched onto clear acrylic and became part of a nightlight. Most campers made sports or video game-themed designs, choosing activities that meant the most to them. Every morning, the campers rushed into our digital fabrication lab. They loved watching the machines, from bubble wands to night lights, bring their designs to life.

Arnav Sharma '26



Scribble Bots

Scribble Bots are the perfect blend of art and innovation. Our campers were tasked with designing a robot that moved in sporadic patterns on paper to, well, scribble. They were given various supplies—paper cups, motorized battery packs, and markers—but the real challenge was balancing the materials so the robot wouldn't tip over. Once the campers figured out how to balance their Scribble Bots, they started helping each other, and soon, everyone had a structurally sound robot.

Through this activity, the campers learned that with hard work and teamwork, they could accomplish anything—an essential life skill. I loved seeing their creativity shine as they made their Scribble Bots resemble dragons, warships, and other characters. Finally, everyone participated in a Scribble Bot party, where their creations came together to draw a beautiful mural—a vibrant display of their hard work, determination, and joy. Scan the QR code above to watch the Scribble Bot party.

Rudy Swaggerty '26

Reflection

The McLeod Innovation Center has always been a place of relaxation and creativity for us throughout the school year. Volunteering at the Innovation Camp deepened our appreciation for Fairfield Prep. Coming from middle schools without resources like 3D printers and laser cutters, we understand how vital this space is for exploration and growth. Every time we walk through those large glass doors, we feel like we're stepping toward the future we envision for ourselves.

This camp taught us the value of giving back, welcoming others into our space, and creating experiences that inspire a love of learning. Waking up early each morning, we were eager to work with the Innovation Camp team. Thinking of our campers' smiles, we built, tested, and refined the camp's engineering challenges. It reminded us of our younger selves, unable to contain our excitement after discovering the magic of engineering.

We loved watching our campers transform over the week—from being disappointed about missing a week of summer sleep to begging us to extend camp hours. The McLeod Innovation Center has always felt like home to us. It truly is our common home.

Rudy Swagerty, Joshua Salzar, & Arnav Sharma





This summer, our eSports Camp, led by Coach Bryant Recker, provided students with an immersive introduction to the world of competitive gaming through Rocket League. Under Coach Becker's guidance, students learned the ins and outs of Rocket League—mastering positioning, aerial maneuvers, strategizing with teammates, and refining their gameplay—while also gaining valuable life skills that extend far beyond the digital arena.

We emphasized the importance of leadership, teamwork, and setting SMART goals, helping students understand how these skills are just as crucial in eSports as they are in any other area of life. To reinforce this, we took the learning outdoors with a soccer game, showing our students how physical sports and eSports share common principles.

At the end of the week, parents joined us to watch their children showcase their new skills in a thrilling Rocket League match. As a special reward, each camper received personalized eSports game cards and a custom necklace featuring our logo, crafted in-house at the McLeod Innovation Center's digital fabrication lab, to commemorate their time with us at Fairfield Prep.

Dr. Cohen

