

# Tinker. To Tinker. Tinkering...

"When Ben Franklin created America's first public library, he intended it not as a book repository but as a democratic lab for new ideas."



What does that mean? The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word Tinker: "to repair, adjust, or work with something in an unskilled or experimental manner." That is exactly what will happen in our Tinkering lab

Whether it's tinkering with a jar of loose parts, creating with boxes or experimenting with goos and concoctions... kids LOVE to tinker.

A Tinkerlab is a space where "big thinking takes place". It can be a kitchen table, a science area, a play space, or ***even a dedicated design space at our beloved Saint Hilary School.*** It's a space where creativity, invention, experimenting take first place and become the focus.

One of the most exciting parts of tinkering with young children is watching in just as much amazement as they create and build.

## **Tinkering Lab Schedule:**

WHERE: School Library

WHEN: Lunch and After Care

WHO: Any interested SHS student with supervision from Ms. Carter, Ms. Fee or Ms. Turner

*Tinkerer:* one who experiments with materials and ideas to fully understand their capacities, and who further iterates on their learning to find better solutions to current problems.

*Tinkering:* playing with materials and figuring out how just about anything can be assembled and is hands-on experiences, learning from failures, and unstructured time to explore and invent. And through the processes of exploration and invention lies the potential for innovation.

## **Why is tinkering so important and why should we care?**

Tinkering is important because it can help children understand how things are made, enables children to have focussed and unstructured time to explore and test ideas, and it's at the heart of invention.

Consider the story of *Thomas Edison* . . . .

Edison may be best known as one of the most prolific inventors in history. He's responsible for the first light bulb, stock ticker, electrical power, motion pictures to name just a few.

And do you know how it all began? His mother chose to homeschool her son, where he learned at a much higher level than he would have been at in school. At age ten, Edison built a chemical lab in his cellar. Soon thereafter, he was obliged to take a job selling sweets and newspapers on a train. He found an opportunity in what could have been drudgery, and built another laboratory for himself in the back of the train (very industrious and tenacious of this young boy!). In this train job, he further learned morse code and became a proficient telegraph operator.

Overall, he learned how things work together, he was a resourceful self-starter, and he created opportunities to test his ideas from a very young age.

The world has changed a lot since Edison, but opportunities for tinkering and invention still abound! ***So I pose this question as something that we can unpack together:*** What can we do to give our children opportunities to think like Edison?

Raising a *tinkerer* doesn't mean we have to outfit our homes or classrooms with high tech equipment or tools that are outside of our budget or comfort zone. What we CAN do is provide our children with opportunities to explore materials, take things apart, and imagine new possibilities through the process of invention. And this can be done simply by providing them with low-cost materials and time to tinker.

We're entering a new era of invention and innovation, and if we want our kids to be prepared for this DIY movement, now is the time to provide them with cardboard boxes, rolls of tape, tools, and a lot of free time to explore and experiment.

