

Learning through experimentation and play

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PUTTING children in charge of technology is at the heart of Little Makers Club, an exciting new program launched in Sydney this year. Little Makers Clubs give primary school-aged children hands-on experience building their own electronic projects such as sound-activated lamps and racing cars.

Julian Lee, founder of Little Makers Club, said that the clubs aim to ensure Australia remains innovative by providing children with a really positive experience in science and technology early in life. Newtown Public School student, Grace, said that she likes Little Makers Club because, "Usually it is adults who get to invent things, but in the Club we get to invent things."

A recent report from international accounting firm Price Waterhouse Coopers, "Making STEM a Primary Priority", found that creating a science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) mindset in children at a young age is critical because, in most jobs, the digital world has taken over.

To create this mindset, Little Makers Clubs provide scope to learn through experimentation and play. They use electronic pieces that are attractive, colour coded and snap together magnetically. Jamie, also at Newtown Public School, said that the pieces "are amazing, because anybody can use them and now we can do electronics already. What we are making is just like what we use in the house, but with bigger circuits."

As there are electronics inside



Julian Lee with Genevieve Jackson, Grace Irvine-Wales and Jamie Irvine Photo: Bec Lewis

many everyday objects, Julian Lee believes that by understanding what is inside and recreating these objects for themselves, children can grow up to be inquisitive and discerning users of technology – not just passive consumers of technology.

"This is an extension of the DIY movement, where we become creators of our own objects and tools. It's more beautiful, rustic, tailored and individual. What the

children produce is unique and amazingly inventive," Mr Lee said.

By working with children's natural curiosity and creativity, and having put a strong art and design element into the program, Mr Lee hopes to inspire children to find their passion in life.

"By giving them the chance to explore and play with electronics in a design context, we give them the opportunity to discover their passion.

Apple is a stand-out example of what happens when great technology and great design come together."

As the father of two young girls, Mr Lee also has an interest in ensuring that girls and under-represented segments of the community participate in the program.

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