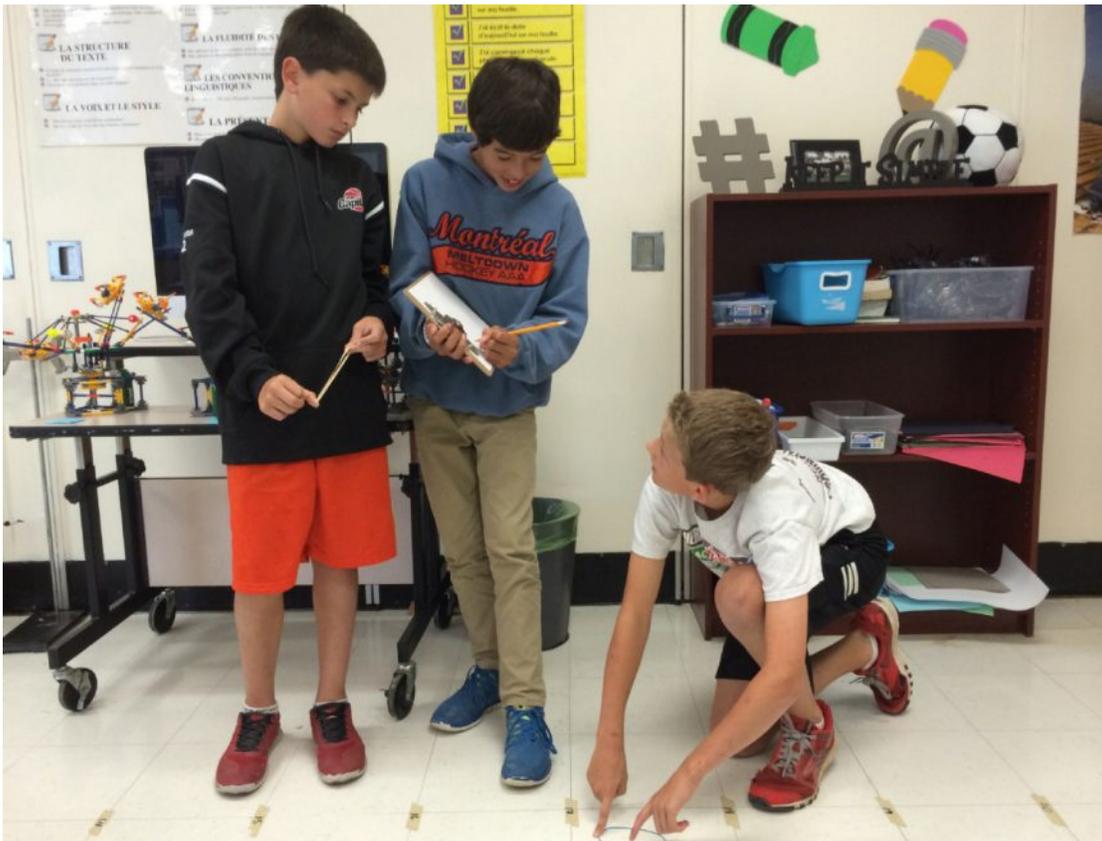


This copy is for your personal non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies of Toronto Star content for distribution to colleagues, clients or customers, or inquire about permissions/licensing, please go to: www.TorontoStarReprints.com

Middle-schoolers aim their elastic bands at academic journal

A group students in Fredericton's experiment on trajectory of elastic bands could land in an academic journal in the next year.



Fredericton students Cole MacTavish, Connor LeBlanc and Malcolm Christie work together on their experiment, testing the trajectory of various types of elastic bands. (CHRIS ABBANDONATO)

By **JOEL EASTWOOD** Data Journalist

SEAN WETSELAAR Staff Reporter

Sun., Sept. 21, 2014

Shooting rubber bands may be a risky classroom prank. But discovering the principles behind aiming them accurately could be just the kind of science middle-school students are made for.

A group of 10- and 11-year-old kids in Fredericton, N.B., are hoping that their work in tracking the trajectory of the common office item — resulting in a report called *The Secret Behind Flinging Elastic Bands* — could land them in the pages of an academic journal sometime soon.

The students, at Nashwaaksis Middle School, are part of the S for Science Club, run by 30-year-old teacher Chris Abbandonato.

The students set up the experiment, in which they shot three different types of bands — a short one, a long one and a thick one — from the same distance, using the same technique (patented by one budding researcher).

“We collected the data, and then we started to analyze it a little bit,” Abbandonato said. “In fact, the thick band on average seems to go the furthest. And the height of a kid didn’t really [affect] how far it was going.”

Abbandonato started the S for Science Club three years ago, with a crew of 25 students. This year, he had 160. The club encourages students to take active roles in science, with a goal of making science and math fun with concrete experiments like the rubber band research.

“If we can tell the kids, right now, at 11 years old, ‘You’re a junior scientist — you’re not just a student,’ that gets kids excited, Abbandonato said.

Abbandonato holds a bachelor of science degree, with a minor in chemistry from McGill and a master’s in applied math and statistics from the University of New Brunswick (UNB). He’s also earned a bachelor of education degree from St. Thomas University and has been accepted to two doctoral programs in the U.K.

He hasn’t started those yet, because he teaches middle school full-time while working as a part-time professor at St. Thomas and UNB in math.

“I stay quite busy,” Abbandonato says, laughing.

His students have also helped him produce four movies, including *The Mystery of the Neptune Leaf*, which Abbandonato is working on adapting as a novel.

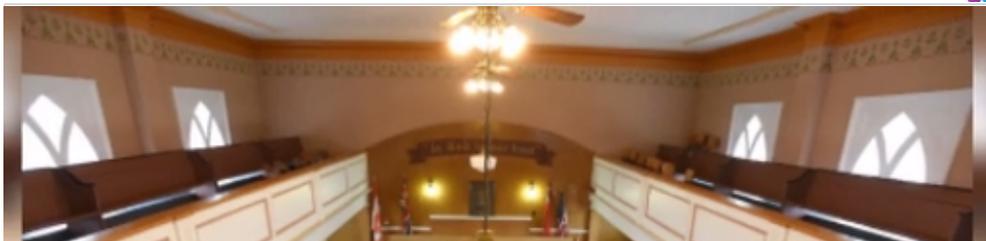
All this in an effort to get students interested in science from a young age. “It’s about engaging the students right away,” Abbandonato said.

“I really think that if we get the kids seeing and doing things right now in math and science ... the kids have an appreciation for it and they’re not scared to try the theoretical way afterwards.”

The class is working with St. Thomas University to submit the paper to the National Science Teachers Association Journal. The paper is at the editing stage.

The whole process could take six months to a year, Abbandonato said, but “being 10 and 11 and already possibly having your name in an academic paper is amazing.”

Read more about: [New Brunswick](#)





Church attended by Harriet Tubman in need of repairs, trustee says

Copyright owned or licensed by Toronto Star Newspapers Limited. All rights reserved. Republication or distribution of this content is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited and/or its licensors. To order copies of Toronto Star articles, please go to: www.TorontoStarReprints.com