

If You Could Make It Here

Andover adds makerspace to elementary school

What many people might not realize about the success of Bill Gates is that he had a leg up on the rest of us. In a story from Malcolm Gladwell's book *The Outliers*, Gates' elementary school in 1975 bought a used computer, a Teletype Model 33, one of the first computers that you didn't need a computer science degree to operate. The school didn't purchase the computer because they thought personal computing would change the world, but because they wanted their students to have every available resource to learn. In the same spirit, Andover Elementary has added a makerspace to their school.

These spaces are popping up everywhere as the cost for the hardware comes down. Unlike an ordinary teacher-led classroom, these spaces foster creativity and invention amongst students by giving them the tools to discover for themselves with teachers there for guidance.

According to an article in the *Journal Inquirer*, the project had a fairly low budget of just \$25,000, and was spearheaded by Kirstina Frazier. She was featured in another article early on in 2018 for winning the state's outstanding elementary school teacher for her efforts teaching coding to pre-schoolers. The curriculum encourages a focus on learning to learn and

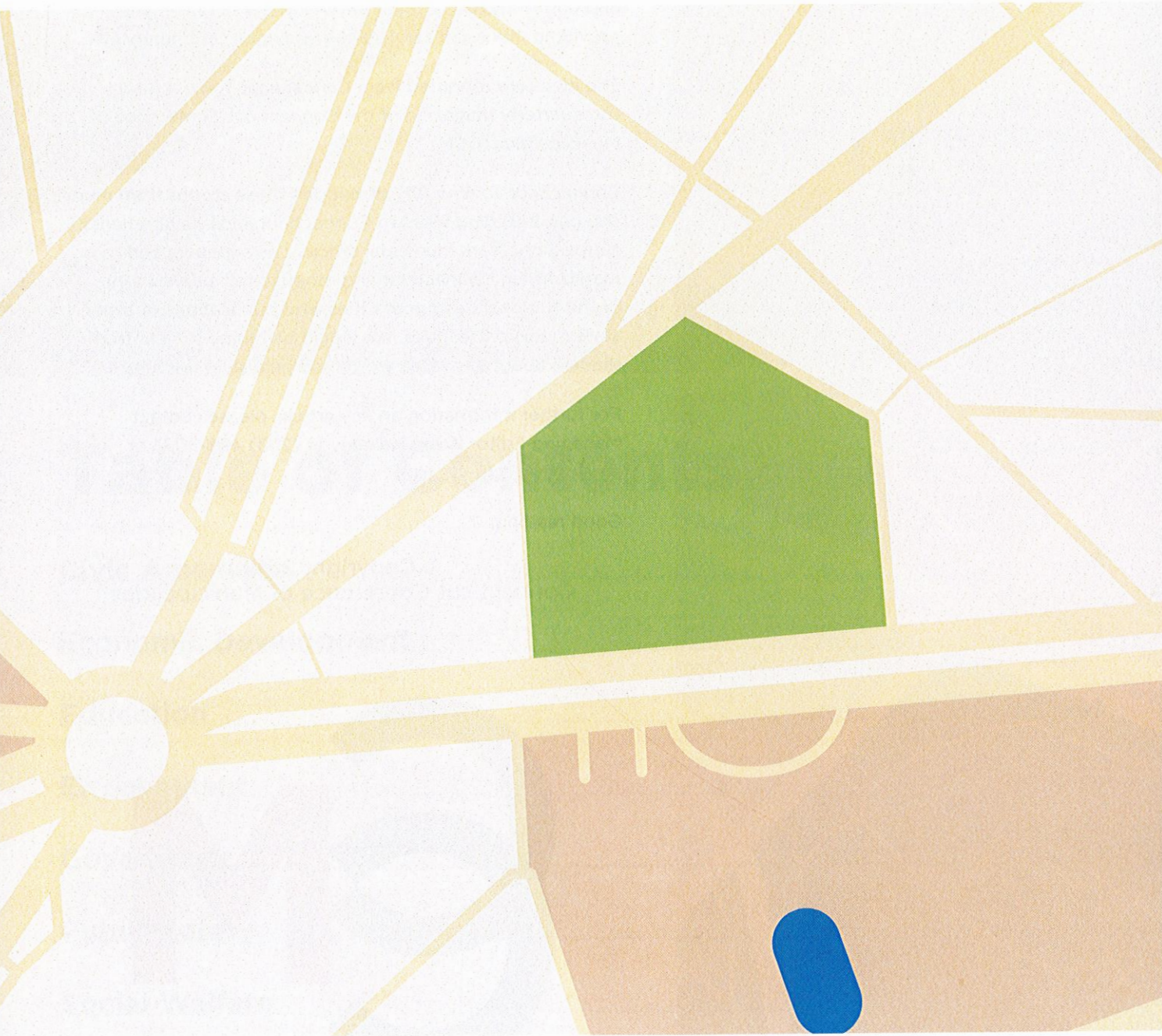
solve problems on your own. Principal John Briody said that he hopes to connect what the children are learning in the makerspace back to the classroom.

Some of the equipment that was purchased for this space was "circuitry kits, teaching robots, virtual reality goggles, two 3D printers, and a wide array of building supplies and tools." 3D printers have been particularly popular among makerspaces as they, like computers in the 70s, have seen their cost drop dramatically. In 2010, a single desktop HP printer would cost in the range of \$15,000, meaning that buying two printers would have driven the price over the total budget of the entire room. Some of these technologies would have been unthinkable just a generation ago, just as the internet was to that previous generation, but are important for children to have a leg up on the future.

Just like Bill Gates back in Seattle in the 70s, these children are preparing for a future world, one that we don't know what it will look like exactly. While virtual reality goggles, robots, and 3D printers might seem like a lot for elementary school children to be getting their hands on, these children might be creating the next technology to go in the makerspace.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS

FOR MANAGING LOCAL GOVERNMENT



2018-2019 Connecticut Town & City Compendium