



## SCI PREP

At the Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy (SciTech), a student is kind of like a stem cell—you know, those undifferentiated proto-cells that can give rise to brain, bone, or fingertip. The ones that can become anything—given the proper environment.

The differentiation takes place especially early at SciTech. These packets of potential narrow their foci as 10th-graders, when they can choose to concentrate in biology, computer science, engineering, or environmental science. The public school opened last year in the Frick building on Fifth Avenue and Thackeray Street.

SciTech teacher and School of Medicine alum Edwina Kinchington (Pharmacology PhD '97) has spent the past year honing the academy's Body & Behavior track with lead curriculum developer Stephen Pellathy, who earned his physics PhD at the University of Pittsburgh last year.

Those aren't the only ties SciTech has to Pitt. It seems natural that the school, embedded in the academic oasis of Oakland, would forge a relationship with its university neighbor. Pitt's Margaret McDonald, associate vice chancellor for academic affairs, health sciences, and David Malehorn,

research assistant professor of pathology, served on the school's advisory committees from its planning stages through its opening. And SciTech's bimonthly Science Forum brings students to the School of Medicine for interactive presentations by local scientists.

"We essentially want to arm our students with as much real-life scientific knowledge as possible," says Kinchington—who was the architect of SciTech's life sciences laboratory, which, she says, rivals its counterparts in Pitt's Biomedical Science Tower. In addition, she notes that nearly half of SciTech's ninth graders listed Body & Behavior as their top-choice track last year.

At the beginning of the school year, Kinchington helped students get to know their new toys by organizing a scavenger hunt requiring a hypothesis for each item's function. "I'd imagine this might be used to mix chemicals, possibly to separate them," says SciTech student Sam Rest, referring to a microcentrifuge. Rest says he'd eventually like to attend medical school and become an ophthalmologist.

—By Ben Korman

—Photo by Martha Rial