

2025 H. William Christ Educator Prize Recipient Dr. Catherine Cresson



Dr. Catherine Cresson is the Chair of the Science and Math departments and teaches Chemistry and Robotics at the Louise S. McGehee school for girls in New Orleans, Louisiana. In her 15 years of service at McGehee, she has developed an innovative curriculum that has broadened the scope of content as well as challenged her students to think outside of the constraints of a traditional science class. After stepping in to coach the Middle School robotics team in 2022, Catherine launched the Upper School Robotics course the following year to foster essential skills in coding, engineering, and teamwork. Catherine was an early adopter of standards-based assessment, employing an innovative approach that

emphasizes the mastery of concepts over traditional grading methods. By partnering with teachers in other departments, she developed the class “Calling Bull\$%@!” where students learned to use the scientific process to help navigate the onslaught of information that we are all subject to on a daily basis. All of Catherine’s classes encourage key skills for success in STEM fields: critical thinking, risk-taking, and collaboration.

Beyond the classroom, Dr. Cresson works tirelessly to provide real-world STEM opportunities for her students. Catherine is particularly proud of her work in planning and facilitating McGehee’s school-wide family engineering night (FEN). The event showcases her passion and creativity for all things STEM. She especially enjoyed this year’s pirate-based theme! Each year she also serves as a facilitator in McGehee’s Mentor Program, where she guides a 12th grade student who partakes in a yearlong “deep dive” into a subject of their choice. Each Mentorship is a comprehensive, self-driven study that culminates in a presentation that is modeled after a thesis defense. Her most recent mentees have studied robotics, the hydrogen economy, and the opioid crisis. Catherine has also cultivated a partnership with Tulane University to provide college level experiences for McGehee students. These include research opportunities for students particularly interested in chemistry, and organic chemistry experiments in the Tulane undergraduate labs for Chemistry II students. In her role as a Middle School robotics coach, Catherine aims to build

confidence in younger students and to get them excited about STEM. An important goal since taking over this role has been to ensure that all team members are confident coders as well as robot builders. Catherine was especially proud of her 2024 robotics team who won the STEM Legacy award at the National WWII Museum's robotics competition.

Catherine was born and raised in New Orleans and developed a love for all things learning at an early age usually found with a book in hand. She graduated from Tulane University, where her love of chemistry was born. She continued her studies at Princeton University where she earned her PhD in Chemistry after which she held a postdoctoral researcher position in Biological Engineering at M.I.T. This is where she realized that instead of working in a laboratory she belonged in the classroom. Hurricane Katrina brought her home to New Orleans where she began her professional teaching career. She landed at Louise S. McGehee in 2010 and hasn't looked back. Catherine is the proud mother of two amazing children: Zoey and Spencer. During this last year, she has truly enjoyed teaching her daughter in the classroom for the first time. It's been a special experience. She is also lucky enough to be married to David, the owner of a local ice cream shop.