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iRobot joins Google, Comcast to support STEM

By [Patricia Resende](#)

What do you get when you mix robots, a television show and Google? A collaborative effort to increase interest in science, technology, engineering and math in Massachusetts schools.

IRobot founder Colin Angle, with sponsorship support from Google, has teamed up with Comcast to launch "The Dr. Erika Show." The show is hosted by Erika Ebbel Angle, founder of Science from Scientists, former Miss Massachusetts and Angle's wife.

Available via Comcast's On Demand feature, the show was created to boost students interest in STEM subjects, and was produced by Joshua Seftel, the Emmy Award-winning filmmaker behind many educational programs for NOVA, PBS and WGBH.

"Every 3-year-old knows about dinosaurs, water and robots," Colin Angle said. "There's nothing we can do that will have remotely the same amount of impact than making our robots available to young students to generate excitement around science and engineering. It's like lighting sticks of dynamite."

The challenge with building excitement around STEM subjects, however, is by the time students hit high school, they have a deep-seated opinion about what's cool and what's not, according to Angle.

In fact, approximately 475,000 people are employed in STEM occupations throughout the state, comprising one-third of all managerial, professional and technical jobs, according to Angle. Still, less than one in four students indicate that they intend to pursue STEM in college or as a career.

"You have an unsustainable mismatch," he said.

Organizers and sponsors behind the show say they have a ways to go with the show, which has only been made available to viewers since Monday, May 14. One challenge is scalability.

Schools need support from public and private partners because they can not do it on their own, according to Angle. But companies cannot always afford to support programs such as



Erika Ebbel Angle, founder of Science from Scientists, former Miss Massachusetts and wife of IRobot founder Colin Angle, is host of "The Dr. Erika Show," available through OnDemand by Comcast.

the Dr. Erika show at a large scale without partnering with other organizations.

“We are all public companies and have a responsibility to our shareholders,” Angle said. “The challenge is how do we scale it.”

Science from Scientists has found students with undergraduate degrees in science to be role models for kids and the equipped them with framework compliant lessons and materials and brought them into the schools. Through year-long in-class instruction, the group motivates students in grades 4-8 with hands-on learning and ultimately helps students better prepare for the MCAS.

Angle credits his own middle school teachers for his career in robotics.


“I had teachers in middle school turn me on to science, and as a result had a desire to do cool things and start a robot company,” he said. “From our perspective if we can make the Dr. Erika show successful...It’s a commitment well beyond a check.”



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