



**Branksome Hall opens Canada's first K–12 Centre for Girls
in STEM, Innovation, Entrepreneurship and the Arts**

iCAST brings science, technology, entrepreneurship, media and the arts together in one hands-on learning environment

TORONTO, Sept. 17, 2026 – What if a student could learn physics by working backstage in a theatre, develop a business idea and prototype it down the hall, or move from coding a robot to producing a podcast, all in the same school day?

That is the idea behind Branksome Hall's new Karen L. Jurjevich Innovation Centre & Studio Theatre (iCAST), opening today in Toronto. iCAST is the first facility of its kind for a K–12 school in Canada, and one of only three in North America.

Rather than organizing learning around traditional subject boundaries, iCAST brings science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship, design, media and the performing arts together in one environment.

"At its heart, iCAST is about radically reimagining what learning feels like for girls," said Grace McCallum, Principal, Branksome Hall. "In a world where women are still too often underrepresented in innovation, technology and engineering, iCAST ensures our students don't just watch the future unfold—they build it with their own hands. Girls from Junior Kindergarten through Grade 12 can move from an idea to building, testing, refining and ultimately sharing what they create. They aren't merely preparing for what comes next—they are the ones shaping it."

That shift is especially significant for girls. iCAST gives students hands-on access to engineering, technology, fabrication, robotics, AI and entrepreneurship from an early age, helping them build confidence and see themselves as creators in fields where women remain underrepresented.

That focus on possibility extends throughout the space. To mark the opening of iCAST and the 10th anniversary of the global project *200 Women: Who Will Change the Way You See the World*, Branksome is presenting for the first time in Canada a curated collection of portraits and recorded interviews with women, including Margaret Atwood, Jane Goodall and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, surrounding students with stories of women who have reshaped their fields and the world.

Entrepreneurship is already part of that experience. More than 150 students in Grades 4 to 12 participate in Noodle, Branksome's signature student business accelerator program. Last year, Middle and Senior School students launched 47 companies—building real ventures from the

ground up with guidance from entrepreneurs and professionals. In iCAST, an idea can move from brainstorming to prototyping to pitching, allowing students to experience the process of turning an idea into something real and becoming founders of their own companies.

The same learning philosophy extends to the arts. The Lo Family Studio Theatre is more than a performance venue. Its professional production infrastructure becomes a learning lab where students can explore lighting, sound, technology, design and science alongside performance.

iCAST will also connect students with perspectives beyond the school through artists, entrepreneurs, industry experts and community organizations.

A multi-year partnership with Red Sky Performance, Canada's leading Indigenous contemporary performance company, will bring Indigenous artists, creative residencies and workshops into the space.

"iCAST creates exciting opportunities for students to see how Indigenous wisdom, creativity and innovation can intersect," said Sandra Laronde, Executive and Artistic Director, Red Sky Performance. "We're proud to bring our perspective into this dynamic space and inspire the next generation of creators and leaders."

The facility will also support programming and events beyond Branksome, extending opportunities for learning and collaboration into the wider community.

For McCallum, the ambition is ultimately larger than the building.

"Education has to prepare young people for a world where the most interesting problems won't arrive neatly labelled 'science,' 'business' or 'art'," she said. "iCAST gives students the freedom to make those connections now."

For more information about iCAST's facilities, learning spaces and programming, please refer to the accompanying fact sheet.

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About Branksome Hall

Branksome Hall, a leading independent International Baccalaureate (IB) World School for girls, challenges and inspires students to love learning and to shape a better world. Through a unique combination of outstanding academics, well-being and international mindedness, students become impactful leaders who give back to their communities. Valuing Sense of Community, Inclusiveness, Creativity and Making a Difference, Branksome offers a liberal arts curriculum that develops critical thinking and inquiry skills.