US and world leaders in education visit Pittsburgh in search of the future

Foundations award more than $800,000 to local schools, delegates from Finland visit to honor local educators at gala event, representatives from 20 US cities convene in Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh, PA (September 23, 2019) — As the new school year settles in, educators, researchers, tech entrepreneurs, and elected officials are descending on Pittsburgh this week to see how the region has become home to one of the most innovative educational ecosystems in America.

Today, Remake Learning, a Pittsburgh-area nonprofit network connecting educators and innovators, is announcing $800,000 in Blueprint for Learning grants that will support a cohort of 16 local schools and nonprofit organizations. The grants will enable educators to redesign classrooms into futuristic learning spaces. Developed in partnership with the National Design Alliance, Reimagine America's Schools, and the American Architecture Foundation, and funded by the Grable, Benedum, and Hillman foundations, Blueprint for Learning will provide $50,000 to each of the selected organizations.

"Where children learn has a powerful effect on how they learn," said Sunanna Chand, director of Remake Learning, which has facilitated more than 150 classroom transformations in the Pittsburgh region since 2007. "Through these grants, we're bringing educators together with architects and designers. Together they'll exchange knowledge and expertise as they design new kinds of classrooms, workshops, and community spaces for learning."

“I couldn’t be more proud of the schools who are being awarded Blueprint for Learning grants as they reimagine learning for our students,” said Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald. “Innovation is in our DNA in this region and I am thrilled to see it in our classrooms too. I look forward to seeing the new spaces for learning and to learning more about the educational programs that will create our next generation of innovators.”

The grant announcement, which represents the largest single investment in learning space design in the history of Remake Learning, comes on the heels of another major nod to Pittsburgh’s world-class K-12 educational landscape. Pittsburgh educators welcomed Lasse Leponiemi, co-founder and executive director of HundrED, a Finnish nonprofit that seeks and shares inspiring innovations in K-12 education with the goal of scaling them worldwide. Pittsburgh is the first U.S. city to be selected by HundrED for this spotlight treatment. In November, a delegation from Pittsburgh will travel to Helsinki, Finland to take part in the HundrED Global Innovation Summit, joining other education change agents from around the world.

Mr. Leponiemi is visiting Pittsburgh for a 3-day tour in which his organization will honor 12 schools and nonprofit organizations selected by HundrED as the most innovative, impactful, and scalable education programs in the Pittsburgh region.

“Since 2015, HundrED has been searching the world for the most inspiring innovations in education,” said Lasse Leponiemi, executive director and co-founder of HundrED. “Something remarkable is happening in Pittsburgh. The depth and breadth of innovation in your schools, universities, and neighborhoods deserves to be known worldwide. The innovations selected for the HundrED Spotlight on Pittsburgh have been proven locally, but they are also inspiring in a global context.”
Tonight, Mr. Leponiemi will release a comprehensive report and documentary video series on these 12 Pittsburgh innovations at celebratED, a 600-person event honoring Pittsburgh’s educators at the O’Reilly Theater downtown. The first-ever event of its kind in Pittsburgh, celebratED will recognize 10 after school program providers for excellence and quality, 4 school districts for embracing holistic approaches to innovation, and 4 major regional corporations for their work to build career connections for area high schoolers, among others.

Then starting tomorrow, educators, researchers, policy makers, and edtech entrepreneurs from more than 20 regions across the US will be in Pittsburgh to attend a two-day summit of Education Innovation Clusters (EdClusters) hosted by Digital Promise, a nonprofit organization with a mission to accelerate innovation in education to improve opportunities for all learners. EdClusters are local ecosystems that bring together educators, entrepreneurs, funders, researchers, and other community stakeholders to support transformative teaching and learning in their region. Digital Promise identifies Pittsburgh-based Remake Learning as a national model for this emerging approach to catalyzing regional innovation.

“We’re thrilled to be back in Pittsburgh, where we hosted our first EdClusters summit in 2014,” said Cricket Fuller, Director of Education Innovation Clusters at Digital Promise. “Pittsburgh has such a unique and powerful mix of schools, universities, foundations, and tech innovators. It’s one of the places we point to as being on the leading edge of education innovation.”

Throughout the week, these national and international visitors will explore Pittsburgh’s schools and communities to see what the future of education might look like. For their part, Pittsburgh’s educators are receiving some much-deserved attention for their pioneering efforts to help each and every child reach their full potential.

The organizations selected to receive $50,000 Blueprint for Learning grants are:

- Allegheny Valley School District
- Attack Theatre
- B.F. Jones Memorial Library
- Bible Center Church
- Boys & Girls Club of Western PA
- Center that C.A.R.E.S.
- Hope Academy
- Human Services Center Corporation
- Monongalia County Schools, North Elementary School
- Pittsburgh Public Schools, Brashear High School
- Providence Connections
- Riverview School District
- Senator John Heinz History Center
- The Campus Laboratory School of Carlow University
- Western Pennsylvania School for Deaf
- Wheeling Country Day School

More details about the Blueprint for Learning grants can be found at remakelearning.org/blueprint.

The innovations selected for the HundrED Spotlight on Pittsburgh are:
**Fabricating Change in Mental Wellness**: A digital fabrication lab (Fab Lab) at Intermediate Unit 1’s Colonial Campus where students diagnosed with mental health conditions design, prototype, build, and learn.

**The Finch**: A teaching tool created by BirdBrain Technologies that makes computer science more engaging and more accessible. Robots are loaned for free to educators serving underrepresented populations.

**Global Minds Initiative**: An after-school program, launched by students in Pittsburgh Public Schools, where participants create inclusive spaces to combat intolerance and foster intercultural friendship and understanding.

**Hillman Academy**: An 8-week summer learning program at the Hillman Cancer Center where high school students work alongside world-renowned scientists in real, hands-on lab settings.

**JAM**: A student club at Avonworth Primary Center where students have raised thousands of dollars for local charities by making and selling crafts and gifts right in their school's makerspace.

**The Labs @ CLP Summer Skills Intensives**: A summer program at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh that connects teens with local artists and librarians to explore photojournalism, filmmaking, beat making, personal branding, street art, and more.

**MAKESHOP**: A research-based learning environment for maker learning permanently embedded in the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh that provides materials and support for anyone ready to start their own makerspace.

**Manchester Craftsmen's Guild**: A community center that started as a ceramics program in 1968 and has grown into a comprehensive after-school arts program with an impressive track record for helping students graduate high school.

**Simple Interactions**: A practice-based, strengths-focused, and community-driven approach to support helpers who serve children and youth, led by researchers at the Fred Rogers Center, Harvard Graduate School of Education, and the University of Pittsburgh School of Education.

**Summer Dreamers Academy**: A no-cost premier summer learning program of Pittsburgh Public Schools that provides the academic benefits of summer school alongside the fun of summer camp to fight summer learning loss.

**transformED**: An initiative of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit to support educators growing their teaching practice together in a safe space that is filled with technology tools and other supports.

**Youth Express**: A program of SLB Radio Productions that equips teenagers with media making tools to create and distribute commentaries, discussions, documentaries, and other youth-generated media through a 24/7 radio station.

More information on each of these innovations and the HundrED Spotlight on Pittsburgh is available at hundred.org/pittsburgh.
About HundrED
HundrED.org is a not-for-profit organization, which seeks and shares inspiring innovations in K12 education. Our mission is to help spread pedagogically sound innovations cross borders so every child can flourish. For more information, please visit: http://www.hundred.org or follow on social media: Twitter: @HundrED.org and Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/HundrEDorg.

About the Grable Foundation
The Grable Foundation believes in possibilities: that a child will experience something new that will change his or her life; that a teacher will have the resources to nurture students; that kids will play and learn and grow on their own time, in their own way, guided by a community of people and places keen to make these possibilities a reality. The Foundation awards support to organizations that improve the lives of children and youth across the Pittsburgh region from early childhood through the formative years, inside the classroom and out. Learn more at grable.org.

About Remake Learning
Remake Learning is a network in southwestern Pennsylvania and northern West Virginia that ignites engaging, relevant, and equitable learning practices in support of young people navigating rapid social and technological change. An open group of interconnected, creative, and innovative people and organizations in the greater Pittsburgh region, Remake Learning is a collective effort to transform teaching and learning to better serve today’s young people. Learn more at remakelearning.org.

About Digital Promise
Digital Promise is a nonprofit organization authorized by Congress to spur innovation in education in order to improve the opportunity to learn for all Americans. Through its work with educators, entrepreneurs, researchers, and leading thinkers, Digital Promise supports a comprehensive agenda to benefit lifelong learning and provide Americans with the knowledge and skills needed to compete in the global economy. Learn more at digitalpromise.org.

Media Contacts
Joanna Doven
jdoven(at)premoconsultants(dot)com
724-420-0870