COMMON GROUND:

Cultivating Collaboration Between In-School and Out-of-School Environments

Today's out-of-school educators and classroom teachers have an opportunity to bring their communities together like never before.

The realities of modern life and learning have dissolved the walls between "formal" and "informal" education. The pandemic illustrated that learning can and does take place beyond the confines of the classroom. It created exciting new chances for educators to work together, engage students in deeper, personalized learning, and weave together their local learning ecosystems.

The key to activating this potential? **Collaboration.** Critical, creative, and comprehensive collaboration between in-school and out-of-school environments. Collaboration that goes beyond rigid and imbalanced partnerships and embodies equitable teamwork with a shared mission.

The road to true collaboration is long, and it requires building long-term relationships. In-school and out-of-school educators must develop a deep, mutual understanding of one another. They must know the unique strengths, challenges, and objectives of their counterpart and where their goals and opportunities align.

But, this road is also marked by joyful milestones. Collaboration allows educators to expand upon incredible existing programs and efforts. It can also unearth the stories and examples needed to fuel advocacy and funding for even more innovative (and collaborative) projects.

Ultimately, where this road leads is worth the investment: **Collaboration between in-school and out-of-school educators paves the way for the future of education.** It allows new and deeper opportunities for programming, learning, professional development, and family engagement. And most importantly, it allows youth to flourish as part of an interconnected community – one where they can build deep relationships, define their own meanings of success, and foster a love of life-long learning.

PARTNERSHIP VS. COLLABORATION

Partnership	vs.	Collaboration
Participants work **transactionally** with a "**partner**."	▶	Participants work **holistically** with a "**collaborator**" or "**teammate**."
Power dynamics are **imbalanced**. There is a clear lead partner and a relegated helper.	▶	Power dynamics are **balanced**. Collaborators respect and consider each other mutual experts.
The partnership's focus is **narrow**. The lead partner has identified their goal and the relegated partner is meant to help them achieve their goal.	▶	The collaboration's focus is **broad**. Collaborators work as a team to establish and execute shared goals. The focus can grow and change as collaborators engage in two-way conversation and understanding building.
The partners **do not share** an aligned or unified mission.	▶	Collaborators have agreed upon a **unified mission** that both are willing to fully invest in. Their mission can't be achieved by either collaborator alone and realizing their mission will benefit each collaborator in a meaningful way.
Partners **contribute at predetermined, specific points** in a project.	▶	Collaborators **work together to examine issues through many lenses** and generate solutions. They work together on projects from start to finish.

UNDERSTANDING OVERLAPS

Over a two-part conversation series hosted by Remake Learning in fall 2021, in-school and out-of-school educators identified the following strengths, obstacles, and opportunities of their respective learning environments.

CHALLENGES & OBSTACLES

Out-of-School Challenges
- Staffing
- Capacity building
- Navigating a shared space model with schools

In-school Challenges
- Relationship building with out-of-school peers
- Curriculum requirements
- Emphasis on testing and standards

Shared Obstacles
- Funding
- Securing K-12 teacher buy-in for out-of-school content areas

STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES

Out-of-School Strengths
- Project-based learning
- Relationship building

In-school Strengths
- Deep content focus and structure

Shared Opportunities
- Co-teaching, shared professional development, and resource sharing between out-of-school educators and K-12 teachers
- Relationship building and sustainable collaboration between educators to serve more students and families
- Deeper understanding and appreciation for youth's development potential in each space
- Increased adaptability and flexibility
- State advocacy to support funding for collaborations

IN PRACTICE: MODEL COLLABORATORS

The projects detailed here illustrate best practices in collaboration that build on a shared opportunity between in-school and out-of-school environments. In summer 2021, each pair received a grant from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit to support projects that addressed pandemic-related learning loss. Each pair received an additional mini-grant in the fall to further develop their relationship and build deeper conditions for collaboration.

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA (BGCWPA) & DUQUESNE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Shared Opportunity:
Relationship building and sustainable collaboration between educators to serve more students and families

Their Model:
Alliance Building Event

Duquesne City School District and BGCWPA hosted a family fun night together at Dave and Buster's. Youth attendees enjoyed fun and games (the first 100 youth attendees received $25 play cards) while parents and caregivers browsed a resource fair in the on-site conference room. This unique event format helped present an aligned, united front between school-day and out-of-school programming while connecting families to a variety of programs and services. Both the district and BGCWPA are deeply committed to family and child enrichment and creating high-quality environments that build trust and address a multitude of issues.

Outcomes & Considerations:

- This model helps build strong relationships between in-school and out-of-school educators – a necessary component of collaboration – while bringing families into the collaborative process, creating a stronger, more holistic learning ecosystem for students.
- In the future, more events like this could raise public visibility and discourse around in-school and out-of-school collaboration, driving a groundswell of support for additional projects or funding.
- **What is a simple but visible way you could work with a school or community partner in the future?**

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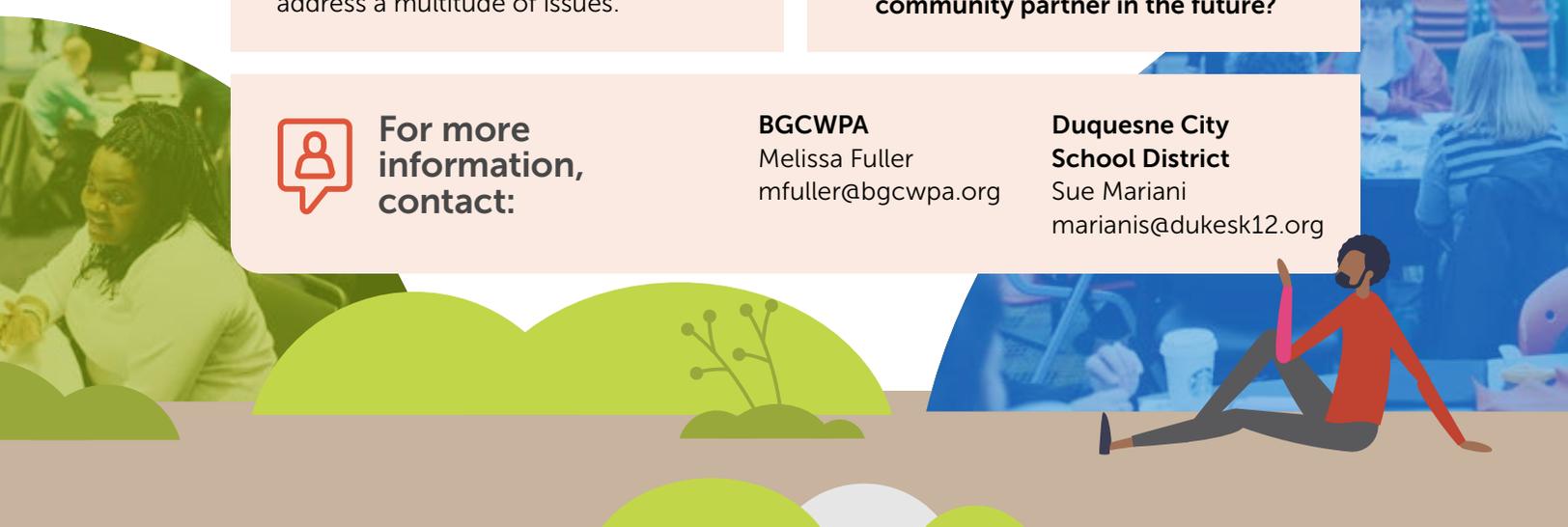
YWCA GREATER PITTSBURGH & WILKINSBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT

Shared Opportunity:
Co-teaching, shared professional development, and resource sharing between out-of-school educators and K-12 teachers

Their Model:
Flexible STEM Curriculum and Training

United by a shared understanding of the power of STEM learning, YWCA Greater Pittsburgh and Wilkinsburg School District worked together to enrich STEM learning for students at Wilkinsburg's Kelly Primary and Turner Intermediate schools. The YWCA provided 16 hours of project-based curriculum, all student supplies, and staff training to help the district implement on-site afterschool STEM programs. Importantly, the training sessions included two-way discussions on how teachers could scaffold lessons to meet the particular needs of their students.

Outcomes & Considerations:

- This collaboration expands students' access to and opportunity for high-quality, hands-on STEM learning.
- In the future, expanded flexible curriculum models could continue to increase student access to needed programming while also increasing the capacity of schools facing staff or funding challenges.
- **How could you offer and/or benefit from a flexible curriculum and training model?**

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STEM CODING LAB
& SHALER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Shared Opportunity:
Co-teaching, shared professional development, and resource sharing between out-of-school educators and K-12 teachers

Their Model:
Team-Based Professional Development

STEM Coding Lab collaborated with Shaler Area School District to offer on-site computer science professional development to K-3 teachers. Sessions took a broad approach, focusing on the many potentials of incorporating coding into other curricular areas. During sessions, STEM Coding Lab staff and classroom teachers formed teams and co-taught together. This helped STEM Coding Lab educators highlight examples of real-world STEM application and career connections, and it gave classroom teachers a direct line for questions, feedback, and dialogue.

Outcomes & Considerations:

- This collaboration makes computer science – an in-demand skill and career field – available to students who may not otherwise have access.
- In the future, more extended, team-based professional development could help drive paradigm shifts for in-school and out-of-school educators around what is possible in – and between – their learning spaces.
- **How could you team up with a local school or program for professional development?**

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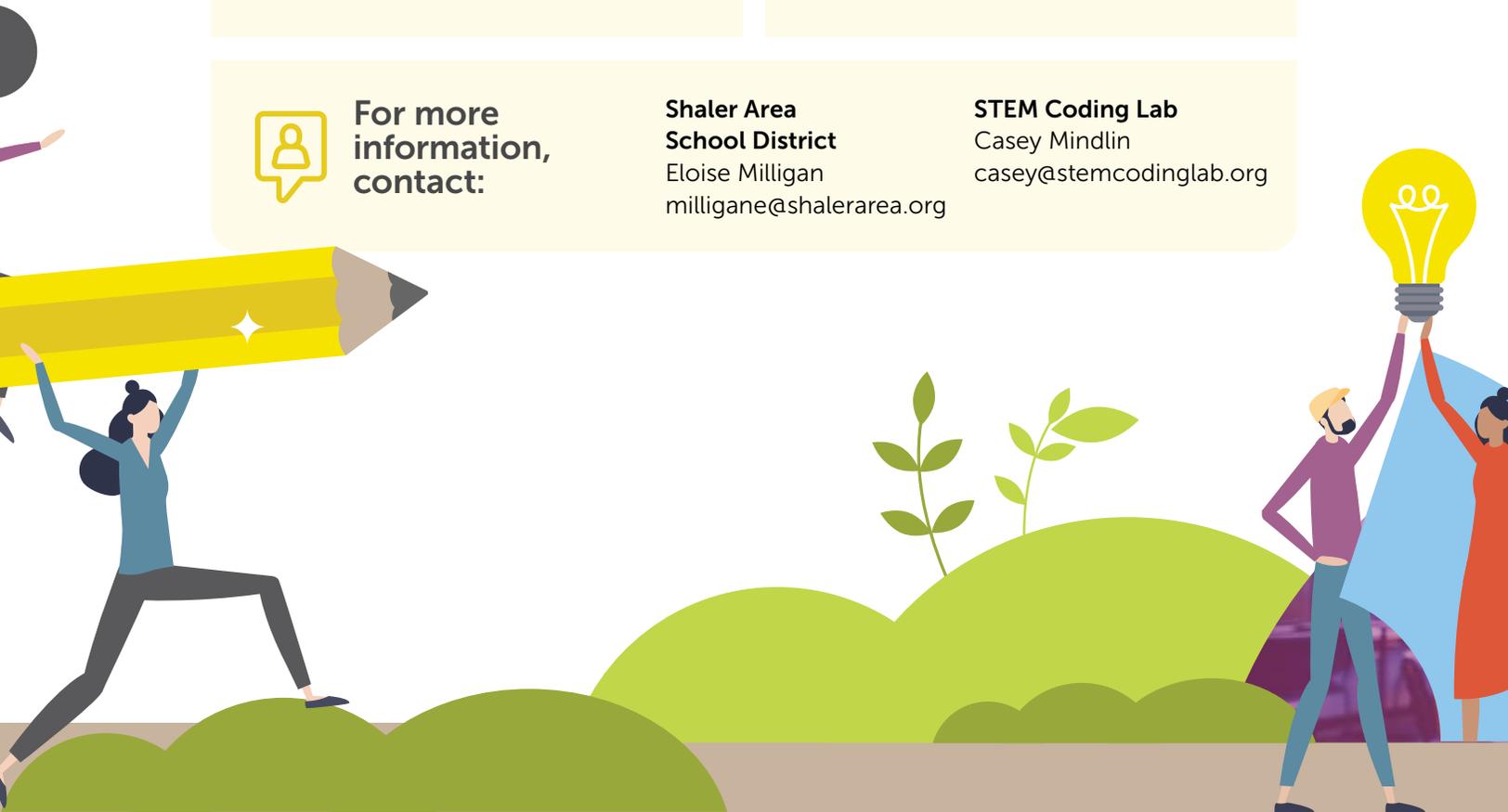
PITTSBURGH CULTURAL TRUST & CARLYNTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

Shared Opportunity:
Increased adaptability and flexibility

Their Model:
Reinvigorating Neglected In-School Programming

Embracing a flexible and collaborative approach to teaching, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust helped support theatre arts learning in Carlynton School District. Two teaching artists from the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust worked with 30 students involved in the district's fall play. Through mini-workshops during rehearsals, they demonstrated acting techniques and oversaw small scene group work, in addition to working with the stage crew on theatre tech best practices. Following the play, a working group convened to discuss reactivating the district's former Acting and Technical Theatre class, which was discontinued over the last several years.

Outcomes & Considerations:

- This collaboration expands the quality and depth of theatre arts programming for Carlynton students. The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust is elevating work already happening in the district while helping them address a need for sound and lighting design education.
- In the future, well-funded in-school/out-of-school collaborations could help sustain performing arts education at other districts or reinvigorate other under-supported school programs or content areas.
- **How could a collaboration like this support a school or program you know?**

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COLLABORATION CONSIDERATIONS

As you start building deeper relationships with out-of-school or in-school teammates, here are some thoughts to consider, offered anonymously by our collaborative pairs:

For out-of-school programs, from in-school educators:

"Be open to new ideas from both sides, and remember that collaboration takes open communication."

"If an outside provider is looking to collaborate with a school district, try to find the right person to talk to at the district. Ask what the district is doing or has done in the past and work together to develop the best ideas for the student population you're serving."

"Enter the partnership with an open mind and offer any and all ideas to district teammates. Our out-of-school collaborators listen to our needs and suggest many ideas, which allows us to offer so much more than we had ever planned! A solid and open partnership builds future possibilities."

For schools, from out-of-school educators:

"Invite your out-of-school partners to school events so youth see our faces at times other than afterschool hours! Additionally, include us in parent events or PTO/PTA meetings so we can best serve and co-design programs to suit parent needs."

"Don't be shy about asking us to develop customized programs for your students. We are familiar with personalized and culturally relevant learning."

"The services that many of us provide go beyond the out-of-school programming that students participate in. We love having the opportunity to talk with school administrators about all of the services we can offer, not just the program that is in your school. We are here to support the students, their families, and the entire school community."

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For more information and resources on in-school and out-of-school collaboration, visit remakelearning.org