

NEWS



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For Immediate Release

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Pittsburgh Maker Movement Takes National Stage at White House Summit on Next Generation High Schools

PITTSBURGH November 10, 2015 – Pittsburgh Allderdice Junior Jahnik Kurukulasuriya, District STEAM Coordinator Shaun Tomaszewski and Grable Foundation Executive Director Gregg Behr joined students, educators and philanthropist reinventing the high school experience at the first-ever White House Summit on Next Generation High Schools. Held today, the visit foreshadows the opening of the District’s STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) Mini-Grant Program to high school students next spring 2016.

“Rather than solely relying on adults to transform education in our schools, we want to empower youth to remake their own learning,” said Shaun Tomaszewski, STEAM Coordinator, Pittsburgh Public Schools. “Through the District’s formal K-12 STEAM pathways, the Fall Mini-Grant awards, and our upcoming spring awards we hope to touch close to 11,000 students with STEAM learning opportunities.”

Last Thursday, through a generous grant from Grable Foundation, the District announced 10 STEAM mini-grants, approximately \$2,500 each, for teachers and administrators to support STEAM projects across the city. An additional \$57,000 will be disbursed this spring. During the spring distribution cycle, the District is seeking at least one student-driven project to support with funding of up to \$7,500. The novel funding strategy is what got the attention of a White House Senior Advisor on a visit to Pittsburgh last month. Students will be competing with adults – their teachers and principals, for one of the mini-grants.

A student who exemplifies the Maker tradition is Pittsburgh Allderdice’s Jahnik Kurukulasuriya. Participating at the center of Pittsburgh biomedical renaissance Jahnik (17) is currently conducting research in cancer bioinformatics at the UPMC Magee Women’s Research Institute. Through his research project, he has been able to make nucleotide sequence probes that could allow for the detection of cancerous cell lineages by searching for fusion genes – particularly cell lineages implicated in the development of breast cancer.

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Excited about the opportunity for students to apply for STEAM mini-grants Jahnik noted, “While I have had the opportunity to benefit from support from my research, many students may not understand the impact and role they can have in their own learning and that of their peers. I want to thank Pittsburgh Public Schools and The Grable Foundation, for including the insight of students in the transformation of education in our schools.”

This past April, The Grable Foundation grant of \$480,000.00 supported the development of curriculum, professional development and technology as well as the creation of STEAM labs at three District schools: Pittsburgh Lincoln PreK-5, Pittsburgh Schiller 6-8 and Pittsburgh Woolslair PreK-5. Also a STEAM grant from The Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Chevron, The Benedum Foundation and The Grable Foundation will create a new Maker Space Lab complete with a CNC milling machine, 3D printers and 3D modeling software at Pittsburgh Perry High School.

Gregg Behr, Executive Director of The Grable Foundation gave a speech at the event about the Remake Learning Network.

“Making has been a part of Pittsburgh’s DNA since the 1800s. Makers today, such as Jahnik, are carrying on the great history of our city through new ideas and cutting-edge technology,” said Gregg Behr, Executive Director, The Grable Foundation. “STEAM education and the Maker Movement are cut from the same cloth, as both are contemporary, active learning pedagogies that integrate interdisciplinary thinking and hands-on, project-based learning. We are proud to be a part of this resurgence of Pittsburgh as a leader in the maker education movement.”

Today’s Summit will catalyze new thinking on challenges and opportunities for strengthening the countries high schools. It brought a broad range of stakeholders to the table, from teachers who work every day to inspire their students, administrators ensuring their teachers have tools and support they need, researchers breaking ground in learning science, industry and foundation leaders who are seeding exciting work in communities across the country, and the full spectrum of partners working to create a more equitable education system.

Multiple organizations have made commitments in response to the President’s Call to Action, including the Pittsburgh Public Schools and The Grable Foundation. The Commitments below were included in the attached Fact Sheet from The White House.

Pittsburgh Public Schools will be opening its STEAM Mini Grant Program to high school students in spring 2016, with the goal of providing grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$7,500 for students to develop innovative, hands-on curricula that can be used to engage their younger peers in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM). The Pittsburgh Public School District's STEAM Mini Grant Program was launched in fall 2015 to catalyze the development of innovative interdisciplinary projects and activities by teachers, principals, and schools.

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Pittsburgh Public Schools Commitment Continued

Fall cycle grantees received approximately \$2,500 each and expanded STEAM learning opportunities from 1,300 students to over 5,500 students across the District. During the spring cycle of the District's Mini Grant Program, an additional \$57,000 (approximately) will be disbursed. The second cycle of STEAM mini-grants will double, to 11,000, the number of students who have access to high-quality, interactive STEAM experiences across the District. The STEAM Mini Grant Program is part of a broader initiative across the District to roll out a K-12 STEAM Program. To date, this initiative includes formal STEAM programs in two high schools, Pittsburgh Brashear High School and Pittsburgh Perry High School.

The Grable Foundation will add to its nearly \$8 million in grants allocated over the past ten years to support innovative learning in high-school settings with another \$2 million in grants in 2016. In addition, with Grable's support, Pittsburgh's Remake Learning Network, a coalition of over 200 organizations dedicated to developing innovative approaches to learning in the Pittsburgh region, will host a Week of Remaking Learning next year to celebrate innovative teaching and learning and generate commitments from regional stakeholders.

About the Pittsburgh Remake Learning Network

Remake Learning is a collaborative network of people, projects, and organizations working together to remake learning in schools, libraries, museums, afterschool programs, community centers, and online. Representing more than 200 organizations, Remake Learning members are building a model for collaboration to connect Pittsburgh's regional strengths in formal and informal education, learning research, and technology innovation to create a thriving ecosystem where learning happens anywhere and anytime for all children. Learn more and see how network members are remaking learning in Pittsburgh at remakelearning.org.