



For Immediate Release

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**KID Museum Launches New Public-Private Partnership
to Promote STEM and Innovation for Local Youth**

KID Museum, a leader in maker-based education, is launching the *Invent the Future Challenge*, a new STEM initiative for middle school students in the DMV region. In a ground-breaking, district-wide partnership with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), the challenge will significantly broaden student access to hands-on, project-based learning experiences that build interest in STEM disciplines and promote innovation.

“This challenge is all about encouraging students to be inquisitive, innovative, and bold,” says Cara Lesser, KID Museum Founder and CEO. “As we blur the lines between in-school and out-of-school learning, the challenge provides a novel way to engage kids in STEM, while empowering them to realize their creative potential.”

The challenge is open to all students in the DMV region and KID Museum expects several hundred students to participate in the first year. With funding from MCPS, Montgomery County, and private sources, KID Museum has emphasized outreach to students from low-income families and populations traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields. Funding from the Inter-American Development Bank and Best Buy provide support for Latino and African-American students, in particular.

“MCPS is proud to partner with KID Museum to expand access to hands-on STEM opportunities for our middle school students across the county,” says Jack Smith, Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools.

The *Invent the Future Challenge* asks students to identify a problem facing our environment, and then design, develop, and prototype a solution to that problem. Students will work collaboratively in small teams and use technical skills, creative problem-solving, and STEM

concepts to design their solutions. Teams will present their solutions at a community showcase event in the spring, where judges will recognize teams for originality, potential impact, and design process, among other criteria.

The unique public-private partnership builds on KID Museum's highly successful Invention Studio program, which has shown to have measurable impact, exceeding that of other STEM enrichment programs nationally. A recent evaluation conducted in collaboration with The PEAR Institute: Partnerships in Education and Resilience, at Harvard Medical School and McLean Hospital showed the program produced significant gains in STEM interest, STEM enjoyment, and 21st century skills like perseverance, critical thinking, and relationships with peers and adults — skills critical for success in the 21st century economy.

“This program has helped students grow emotionally, socially, as well as professionally — preparing them to be college and career ready,” says Khanny Yang, Principal of Parkland Middle School, whose students have attended KID Museum's Invention Studio program for the past three years.

Students participating in the challenge will take part in a series of Invention Basecamp workshops at KID Museum, where they will develop skills related to coding, fabrication, engineering, and design, along with social-emotional skills like problem-solving, collaboration, and grit. “There is something magical in the integration of STEM skills with social-emotional learning,” says KID Museum Founder and CEO, Cara Lesser. “The students walk away with more than just technical skills — they experience what it takes to make an idea come to life and learn a great deal about themselves in the process.”

The collaboration between KID Museum, MCPS, Montgomery County, and private partners brings together a powerful coalition to expand these experiences to middle schoolers throughout the region. “With this partnership, we're redefining learning in our community,” says Lesser. “We know that hands-on, project-based learning builds confidence, critical thinking skills, and the sense of agency kids need to succeed in the future. We believe every child deserves the chance to develop these skills and we are thrilled that this partnership will dramatically expand access to these opportunities for kids in our region.”

According to Hans Reimer, Vice President of Montgomery County Council, “It's a win-win for us to support a great local organization and bring sorely needed new resources to our middle school students.”

About KID Museum

KID Museum is an independent, mission-driven nonprofit serving 55,000 people annually in its creative learning space, on-site at schools, and at community events. A national leader in maker-based education, the museum seeks to spark the creative potential of all children, and inspire the next generation of innovators. For more information, please visit

www.kid-museum.org.