



For Immediate Release

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**The Future is in Their Hands.
Area Middle Schoolers Take on *The Invent the Future Challenge*.**

Hundreds of area middle school students are poised to invent solutions to real-life problems through the *Invent the Future Challenge*. The Challenge, now entering its second year, is the cornerstone of a groundbreaking partnership between KID Museum, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Montgomery County, and private sponsors, designed to build an interest in STEM and promote innovative thinking.

“Most of the jobs of the future don’t yet exist,” says Cara Lesser, KID Museum Founder and CEO. “It’s essential that we prepare our kids with the skills and aptitudes they’ll need to succeed. The *Invent the Future Challenge* is a fun and engaging way to get kids interested in STEM, while empowering them to realize their own potential.”

The Challenge, which asks the question, “What will you make to protect life on this planet?” is open to middle school students across the DC region. Students can form teams through their schools or on their own with a parent sponsor. Teams have the option of taking part in multi-session skill-building and design workshops at KID Museum. Students then showcase their prototypes at the dynamic Challenge Summit on May 11, where they can gain inspiration from their peers, meet local innovators, and compete for prizes. Ninety-eight teams participated in last year’s Summit, which drew a crowd of 750. The museum anticipates double that amount for the coming year.

KID Museum’s partnership with MCPS focuses on providing the students from high-FARMS schools with the opportunity to participate in the Challenge in a meaningful way. Student cohorts

from these schools will take part in five intensive design and skill-building sessions at KID Museum throughout the year, where they'll learn coding, fabrication, electronics, and engineering — as well as how to prototype their designs. All MCPS schools have a dedicated teacher who will sponsor teams. The partnership also incorporates hands-on professional development workshops for teachers to support Challenge learning in the classroom.

“We want all of our children to benefit from these important, high-impact STEM learning opportunities,” says Dr. Jack Smith, Superintendent of MCPS. “All means all.”

Through the act of designing their own inventions, students learn to think critically, persist through failure, and collaborate with others — “21st century skills” often cited as critical to workplace success. “This is an urgent issue for us,” says Hans Riemer, Montgomery County Council President. “The county’s continuing economic progress depends on the quality of the workforce. We want our young people to be able to take the jobs that the companies want to create.”

“The students are making incredible prototypes, but it’s not about that,” says Liza Manfred, KID Museum Educator. “It’s about how they got there, about giving them the experience of asking questions, developing solutions, and being able to figure out problems for themselves.”

As part of a grant from the Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation, KID Museum is deepening the impact of the Invent the Future initiative this year by working directly with teachers from Parkland Middle School to develop new curriculum that supports the Challenge. The program, which will be piloted at Parkland, will integrate MCPS curriculum with social-emotional learning and hands-on skill-building, with the goal of creating a replicable model to be used by other schools.

“We don’t know what the future looks like,” says Lesser. “What we do know is that our kids will invent it.”

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. Core to its mission is ensuring that all youth, especially those who are traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields, have access to transformative learning opportunities that will pave the way for their future success — and the shared success of our community. For more information, please visit www.kid-museum.org.