

HUNDRED RESEARCH REPORT #015

# Spotlight: Learning Forerunners Across America

Report

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## Foreword from Gregg Behr / The Grable Foundation & Remake Learning

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Survey the forerunners of any innovation – whether in medicine, music, robotics, or other fields – and you’ll almost always find one or two people who’ve lived and worked in Pittsburgh.

In the 1950s, Jonas Salk revolutionized public health by developing a safe, effective polio vaccine at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Pianist Ahmad Jamal pushed the boundaries of jazz music, changing how players use texture and space. And with her 1962 book, *Silent Spring*, ecologist Rachel Carson helped make environmentalism a mainstream movement.

It was Carson who showed the world just how fragile its ecosystems are, and just how inspiring they can be for adults and children alike. “If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder,” she wrote, “he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in.”

When we first launched Remake Learning Days in 2016, that’s exactly what we set out to provide: opportunities for families to rediscover the “learning ecosystems” in their own communities. As children and adults moved side-by-side through

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schools, libraries, gardens, art museums, tech startups, and more, they started to see learning differently – not as an act confined to classrooms or to childhood, but as something that happens everywhere, at any age. They started to see learning not as a passive, one-way transfer of knowledge and skills, but as a playful, collaborative exchange among children, educators, and everyone else with a stake in young people's futures.

Sometimes, of course, those exchanges fail. But other times, they lead to something magic – something wholly original, with the power to change minds and improve lives. They create a vaccine. Or a song. Or a movement to save the Earth.

They create forerunners.

On behalf of The Grable Foundation and Remake Learning, I'm proud to present these 16 innovations that power such exchanges across the United States. Drawn from the cities and regions hosting Remake Learning Days Across America, each reveals the joys, excitements, and mysteries of the learning ecosystems around us. Each reminds us that for all of our advances and technological marvels, it's relationships that nurture children's wonder. And perhaps most importantly for the world's

learners, each points the way toward large-scale change – toward a better future that's within our collective grasp.

Gregg Behr

Executive Director, The Grable Foundation  
Co-chair, Remake Learning





Nico Segall Tobon

## Foreword from HundrED

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In education, we know that lasting change relies heavily on the strength of relationships between people. These relationships form learning ecosystems as communities, which are the bedrock of nurturing children to become healthy adults. Now that this remarkable year of disruption to education is in its last quarter, it is abundantly clear in the midst of uncertainty that cooperation, collaboration, and learning across multiple levels outside of these ecosystems is needed most of all—from policymakers to parents, from businesses to students, all regularly engaging in open two-way dialogue.

With this in mind, we are delighted to continue our partnership with The Grable Foundation and Remake Learning following on from a successful [Spotlight on Pittsburgh](#) in 2019. The Learning Forerunners Across America report expands the ambition and scope of the Pittsburgh Spotlight by focusing on the system-level best practices that foster innovation at scale in 16 trailblazer regions across the United States. The goal is to identify and celebrate one system-wide impactful and scalable innovation from each of the cities. These cities also participate as a host in the [Remake Learning Days Festival](#), which strengthens on the bond between adults and children through nurturing curiosity and learning together. On behalf of HundrED, we're very proud to present this report that exemplifies strong relationships across diverse stakeholders for more equitable access to quality education.

The innovations presented here focus on big-picture, system-level, impactful solutions at scale that are operating across multiple schools and/or institutions. You'll see there are many inspiring examples: from connecting K-12 teachers with innovative science and engineering research in Central Pennsylvania, to giving students the tools to design their own learning in Northeast Ohio. These 16 cities break the structural boundaries of outdated traditional systems in K-12 education, and exemplify partnerships on multiple connecting levels.

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I think we can all agree that no one individual or organisation can achieve lasting change at scale without outside cooperation and collaboration. The innovations presented in this report are outstanding examples that exemplify synergistic connections in unique ways. As you explore this report, we hope the innovations not only invigorate, but galvanize action, perhaps even to adopt and adapt some in your context. We envision that learning in this way will help further our mission at HundrED to help every child flourish in life, no matter what happens.

Christopher Petrie

Head of Global Research, HundrED





Building blended digital pathways  
to knowledge, credentials, and careers.

## Wisconsin: LRNG:Badgerland

Wisconsin, United States

Wisconsin – also known as the Badger State – is a network of urban and rural communities in the midwestern United States. Many communities' resources are stretched; as a result, sustaining meaningful educational partnerships in service of students can be a challenge. Communities across Wisconsin are seeking relevant, high-quality educational opportunities that connect students with job opportunities and postsecondary education programs.

### LRNG: BADGERLAND

LRNG is a national initiative that grew out of intensive research sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation and other leaders, and now powered by Southern New Hampshire University. WeThinkBig brought the initiative to Wisconsin and partnered with local schools, employers, and organizations to pilot and launch LRNG:Badgerland in 2018. In 2019, the Wisconsin Department of Education joined

to co-host the LRNG:Badgerland network. This network – and the digital badges it provides – serves as “connective tissue” for:

- Teachers looking for efficient ways to make curricula relevant to real-world situations
- Employers looking for meaningful ways to partner with schools and provide opportunity for young people
- Post-secondary programs seeking motivated students prepared for success
- Community leaders looking to leverage their philanthropic investments

The platform's digital badges introduce students to careers in nursing, construction, hospitality, manufacturing, information technology, science, and education. Badges are earned after a student completes a series of assignments (called a “playlist”) and submits evidence of their learning and competencies for each activity. Typically, this evidence is a combination of authentic learning artifacts: a portfolio or collection of new work that the student has created; their own analysis of real-world problems; quiz scores; and more.

Badges can serve as students' entry tickets to either a guaranteed job-shadow experience or an invitation for a job interview. Some badges pre-qualify students for entry into more advanced career program offerings, such as career academies, workshops, and other pre-professional programs. Other badges earn students rewards or incentives such as t-shirts, water bottles, digital devices, tickets to events, and more, in addition to professional or academic recognition. Soon, some badges may even count toward high school or college credits.

#### LRNG: BADGERLAND'S COMMITMENT

By bringing together stakeholders and students and connecting them to the educational experiences and resources available throughout Wisconsin, LRNG: Badgerland makes educational offerings seamless and available to every student, regardless of their socioeconomic status. The LRNG platform provides career-relevant educational experiences in a format that is engaging, exciting, and accessible for youth, regardless of ZIP code or schedule.

#### EXAMPLES AND HIGHLIGHTS

There are multiple ways to engage with LRNG:Badgerland. Students can access and explore the platform independently, or the experience can be embedded in the more traditional classroom or afterschool program experience.

For example, high school students with an interest in healthcare can dig deeper and discover available careers in that field via online sources and by connecting with local professional mentors. Activities on the platform include explanatory text and resources to help students familiarize themselves with the profession, identify the mentors they want to meet, and learn etiquette and best practices for making informational interview calls. As students deepen their learning and earn digital badges, the badges can be uploaded to an academic transcript, resume, or career platform, providing evidence of students' knowledge and experience.

Much like a diploma represents an institution's certification that a student has completed and succeeded in attaining a level of academic excellence, digital badges represent a community's certification that the learner has demonstrated a level of mastery and competence in specifically defined academic and career areas. For example, students wishing to job-shadow in a hospital must first demonstrate that they are familiar with the employer, understand conceptual foundations and procedures, and understand and follow privacy and safety protocols. Attainment of the badge pre-qualifies and “opens up” the opportunity to job-shadow, as both learner and employer are now assured that the student has the foundational competencies and confidence required for more sophisticated real-world experiences.

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<http://www.wethinkbig.org/lrngbadgerland/>

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All  
TARGET GROUP

2018  
ESTABLISHED

71525  
CHILDREN/USERS



## **HundrED.org**

is a not-for-profit organisation that discovers and shares inspiring innovations in K12 education. HundrED.org's goal is to improve education through pedagogically sound education innovations.