

Maker Education Initiative

● EVERY CHILD A MAKER ●

A Letter to President Obama on Makerspaces for Young Makers

June 18, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

There is growing recognition that the Maker Movement offers a new way to engage children as active learners -- by inviting them to make. Making motivates students to learn about science and technology as well as to gain valuable experience developing creative and innovative projects. As makers, children see themselves as producers, not just consumers. They develop as self-directed learners, a key attribute of 21st Century learners.

We have seen the crucial role that makerspaces play for adults in providing access to tools, materials, and mentorship. Makerspaces also develop an active community of makers who collaborate on projects and share their work. We believe that makerspaces not only promote making but also develop an ecosystem that contributes to the economic and cultural life of a community. As we see how makerspaces serve adults, we recognize the unmet need to create more makerspaces that serve young makers.

Already, there are some important examples of makerspaces for youth in schools, libraries, museums, and other youth-serving community organizations. Some exemplar makerspaces are:

- **Mt. Elliott Makerspace** is a neighborhood workshop in Detroit where people learn and make together. It creates a network of visionary makers with the skills and determination to create happier and more meaningful lives.
- **Creativity Lab** at Lighthouse Community Charter School in Oakland is a space where people from all walks of life are given the opportunity to participate in designing and making. They are building a K-12 program to serve their students and to help others see how design-make can be integrated into an entire school program.
- The **MAKESHOP** at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh provides children and families open-access to digital media resources and physical materials in a robust space designed to inspire curiosity, exploration, creativity, and innovation.
- The **4th Floor** at the Chattanooga Public Library is a public laboratory and educational facility with a focus on information, design, technology, and the applied arts.
- The **Exploratory** located near Los Angeles is a makerspace for families and adults providing an imagination lab for kids, an innovation lab for adults, and a community makerspace for all.

www.MakerEd.org

The Maker Education Initiative is a non-profit project of the Tides Center, Tax ID: 94-321-3100

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However, there is an opportunity to help accelerate the creation of youth-oriented makerspaces, with the ultimate goal of access for all children in America. With more than 130,000 K-12 schools, 17,500 public libraries, 35,000 museums, and countless community-based organizations, the potential to connect the organizers and leaders of youth-oriented makerspaces and help expand the number of makerspaces accessible to all youth is great. The Maker Education Initiative (Maker Ed) is prepared to do the following to foster a new makerspace network:

- Offer program models, professional development, and technical assistance for the management, programming, and sustainability of makerspaces to ensure they effectively engage young makers.
- Share best practices of pioneering leaders and practitioners.
- Support and expand networks of mentors and community volunteers.
- Develop a directory and map of youth-oriented makerspaces.
- Promote independent but coordinated action by partnering with youth-serving organizations, networks, and companies throughout America.

Maker Ed is committed to working with partners to build a nation-wide network of independently managed makerspaces that give children access to tools and expertise and the opportunity to develop as young makers. Some of our partners in these efforts include:

- Autodesk will align Autodesk software with maker specific projects, training, and curricula.
- Cognizant reaffirms its support for Maker Corps Host Sites nationwide and will increase its commitment to further professional development and a community of practice among educators through the Maker Corps Program.
- *FIRST* will provide K-12 programming and resources for use in makerspaces.
- Intel will support 100+ Computer Clubhouse sites as spaces for making that are inclusive to underserved youth.
- Maker Media will do outreach to the Maker community through Maker Faire and its media to enlist the support and action of makers as volunteers in youth-based makerspaces.
- US2020 commits to expand its efforts to recruit STEM mentors and connect them to critical volunteer opportunities that help support the work of developing makerspaces.

As we work together to build a network of makerspaces for young makers throughout America, we encourage and invite new partners, including parents, teachers, community leaders and funders, to join us in our effort to expand makerspaces into every neighborhood and community by pledging their support on our website at MakerEd.org.

Thank you for your recognition of the value of developing young makers and creating makerspaces. We look forward to working with you and your Administration to make this effort a huge success.

Signed,

Dale Dougherty, Chairman, Maker Education Initiative
Lisa Regalla, Interim Executive Director, Maker Education Initiative

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