

National Lab Day

President Obama Launches National Lab Day Partnership *200 Organizations, 6.5 Million Professionals Team Up* *To Improve Science and Math Education*

WASHINGTON, D.C., Nov. 23, 2009 -- President Obama announced the launch of a new initiative to reinvigorate science and math education in the nation's schools and learning centers.

President Obama's call to create a "National Lab Day" is an important step towards sparking greater science and engineering creativity among the nation's youth that ultimately will result in a wave of future innovators who will create new inventions and industries, while fostering improved U.S. competitiveness. More than 200 organizations representing 6.5 million professionals and educators have already pledged support for National Lab Day, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which today announced a \$2 million competition as part of the effort.

National Lab Day, which will occur annually in the first week of May, is designed as a nationwide initiative to foster scientific and mathematic experimentation and invention in young Americans through collaborations between volunteers, students and educators. Also, college students, scientists, engineers, parents and others will work together with educators and students to improve labs and inquiry-based science experiences for children in grades 6-12.

Jack Hidary, chairman of National Lab Day, a non-profit educational organization dedicated to improving science and math education across the country, praised President Obama's announcement, saying that it will jump-start academic achievement.

"Our children deserve a world class science and math education that includes exciting, hands-on lab experiences. Thanks to the President, we now have an opportunity to bring hands-on, problem-based learning to a new level in the United States," said Hidary.

"The growing body of work supported by foundations and innovators, coupled with an administration that is highly supportive of advancement in learning, will make for a powerful force in science and math education around the country," Hidary added. "The U.S. lags behind much of the developed world in math and science student achievement. National Lab Day will bring together teachers and professionals in an unprecedented collaboration that will truly strengthen the science and math education provided to our students. We appreciate the support of President Obama and other partners for this initiative, and we look forward to adding new partners in the coming weeks."

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National Lab Day Inc., 8 West 40th Street, 20th floor, New York, NY, 10010
www.NationalLabDay.org

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Thomas H. Lane, president of the American Chemical Society, said that President Obama's announcement would "elevate hands-on learning to an entirely new level in this country. Improving the ability of our young people to excel in science and technology is absolutely essential if we are to compete successfully in the global economy."

Dr. Francis Eberle, executive director of the National Science Teachers Association, said that "bringing together scientists, engineers and teachers in this nationwide volunteer initiative to improve labs and inquiry-based science experiences for middle level and high school students will have immediate effects on the classroom and instill a passion for and an appreciation of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in our nation's young people."

"Science, technology, engineering and mathematics education is a core pathway to college-readiness—one that has not always been available, especially to historically underserved students," said Vicki Phillips, director of education at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "By engaging the nation's business, science, technology, and education leaders, by tapping into their know-how and resources, National Lab Day can play a catalytic role in opening the STEM field to all students in a way that reflects high academic standards and exciting real-world relevance."

John J. Castellani, president of Business Roundtable, said that "President Obama's announcement underscores the importance of science and math education in preparing students to succeed throughout their future careers. National Lab Day is an essential step toward reinvigorating students' enthusiasm for science and math—and for keeping our nation competitive in the global marketplace."

"Digital media are the learning labs of the 21st century. Through our Reimaging Learning competition, educators, designers, and entrepreneurs will respond to President Obama's call to provide hands-on experiences that spark young people's interest and creativity," said MacArthur President Robert Gallucci. "We are pleased to partner with National Lab Day and align our competition with its goals."

In a statement from the U.S. Department of Energy, the agency said that National Lab Day will boost student access of DoE's vast educational resources and "will enable thousands of students to participate in research efforts that are focused on some of the grand scientific challenges of our era, including climate change and energy security."

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A History of Lagging Student Achievement

At issue is that the U.S. is lagging far behind in science and math achievement among school-age students. For example:

- In a 2003 study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development that ranked mathematics and science performance of 15-year-olds in 30 of the world's most developed countries, the U.S. ranked 18th and 24th, respectively.
- According to the National Center for Education Statistics, about one-third of the fourth-graders and one-fifth of eighth-graders can't perform basic mathematical computations, and U.S. high school seniors recently tested below the international average for 21 countries in mathematics and science.

Several private organizations are working with the White House to promote National Lab Day, including the MacArthur Foundation; the National Science Teachers Association; the National Science Foundation; the Jack D. Hidary Foundation; the American Chemistry Society; and Business Roundtable.

National Lab Day is partnering with a range of companies for its web platform, including ePals Inc., a social network for K-12 learning currently in over half a million classrooms around the globe, Pivotal Labs, which makes computer software that fosters innovation, and Donors Choose, an online charity for classrooms in need of aid.

About the National Lab Day organization

National Lab Day is a New York-based non-profit educational organization dedicated to improving science and math education across the country.

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