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## **Nurturing Future Innovators and Entrepreneurs in Manchester School**

**Manchester, NH-** Innovators and entrepreneurs transform communities by creating jobs and wealth. Introducing school children to the required skills and mindset is essential to nurturing future problem solvers and job creators.

The New Hampshire-based National Collaborative For Digital Equity (NCDE) and NH Tech Alliance (NHTA) will partner with EnCube Labs, based in Nashua, to launch an educational enhancement program at Manchester West High School on May 14th-15th, 2022. The program will showcase on Sunday May 15<sup>th</sup> projects developed by the 24 diverse students that weekend.

Zero2Maker, a two-day hands-on workshop developed from nine years of research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Asia School of Business by Prof. Rajesh Nair, combines creativity, STEM, CAD, electronics, coding, and mechanical design to enable students to make intelligent gadgets and toys, followed by five weeks of mentoring to grow their entrepreneurial interests and skills, and awareness of in-demand living-wage tech careers. The experience will build the youths' confidence, innovation and entrepreneurship skills.

"Exploring learning outside of one's comfort zone is essential for building creative confidence", Nair explains. "The workshop is designed to develop 'pre-entrepreneurs' by training people with little or no exposure to innovation and entrepreneurship to build skills and aptitudes to recognize their potential to pursue higher aspirations. Current entrepreneurship programs do not address this subset of the population of possible entrepreneurs."

Julie Demers, Executive Director of the NH Tech Alliance noted that "the Alliance has a longstanding history of celebrating NH's most impressive entrepreneurs and supporting innovation-based startups at the earliest stages through our Startup Initiatives. We are thrilled to partner on this program which will cultivate the next generation of entrepreneurial success stories here in NH."

"Kids learning to make robots and use 3D printers, challenging them to be bold, creative and dare to dream – this is what kids need, especially those who grow up in poverty and see too little opportunity with their name on it," NCDE executive director Dr. Bob McLaughlin explained. "We want them to know that an excellent future awaits them, if they persist, have courage, and have faith in their own abilities."

This workshop is conducted as a pilot to demonstrate the need for such initiatives to enhance youth abilities in schools and communities in New Hampshire. NCDE, EnCube Labs, and NHTA aim to implement longer-term programs that build grassroots ecosystems to improve digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and employability.

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