

# Great Ideas for Great Public Schools

## OHIO

### Union builds community support for change, lands \$550K grant, pioneers teacher-led reforms

Three years ago, Linden-McKinley High School met just two of 12 state indicators for student achievement. The graduation rate was 52 percent and the number of students—90 percent of whom were poor and African American—had declined by nearly a third. The Columbus Education Association (CEA) built support for radical change that the community initially opposed: a **new STEM curriculum** and combining middle and high school in the same facility. The 80-year-old building that houses the school is being expanded, renovated, and equipped for the new curriculum at a cost of \$38 million. A related professional development project kicked off in the fall of 2010. Called “Bringing Learning to Life,” it revolves around **service-learning**—using academic knowledge to solve real-life problems.

#### Linden-McKinley STEM Academy

- A new curriculum built around STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and 21st century skills was introduced in 2009.
- Required courses include forensics, in which students solve crime scene puzzles; principles of STEM, in which students learn about innovation through units on green technology and biomedical engineering; and two years of a foreign language—French and Spanish are offered.
- As Linden-McKinley’s student recruitment emphasizes, STEM workers earn 70 percent more on average. (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)

#### Engaging families and communities

- Opposition to the new STEM curriculum changed to support after CEA convened a community conversation that included a presentation on its potential to close achievement gaps.
- More than 300 people attended, including parents, teachers, administrators, business leaders, and representatives of faith-based organizations.

- Community volunteers transformed an abandoned building into a garden and learning laboratory for Linden-McKinley students in 2010.
- Columbus City Schools is part of the NEA Foundation’s signature Closing the Achievement Gaps initiative, which emphasizes family and community involvement.

#### Teacher-led reform

- In September 2010, NEA’s Public Engagement Project opened a new chapter in teacher-led reform with a pioneering professional development project in service-learning, a proven means of motivating students and raising graduation rates.
- The project, called “Bringing Learning to Life,” was awarded a \$550,000 grant from Learn & Serve America, a division of the U.S. government’s Corporation for National and Community Service.
- “Bringing Learning to Life” will culminate in development of a model of service-learning that can be replicated in public schools nationwide. The NEA Foundation, CEA, Columbus City Schools, and Ohio State University are partners in the endeavor.

#### For more information:

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Linden-McKinley STEM Academy: <http://bit.ly/hOdGMX>

NEA web site: *Building 21st Century Skills in Columbus*, [www.neaprioritieschools.org/ohio](http://www.neaprioritieschools.org/ohio)



*Great Public Schools for Every Student*