



The GE Foundation: Commitment to Improving K-12 Public Education



The GE Foundation has focused on helping to improve education for 60 years. It awarded its first grant to the United Negro College Fund in 1954 -- the same year the U. S. Supreme Court made its landmark decision in the case of Brown v. the Board of Education that segregation in public education is unconstitutional.

As education continues to be a cornerstone for our nation's ability to thrive in the global economy, the GE Foundation maintains a steadfast commitment to "re-imagining" education for K-12 students across the country. The GE Foundation has invested more than \$225 million in education programs over the past 10 years at the local, state and national levels – helping students gain college access, providing professional development opportunities for teachers to improve instructional practices, offering guidance to state departments of education staff and state leaders, and leveraging GE volunteers.

The GE Foundation investment in seven Developing Futures™ in Education school districts has produced a demonstrable impact. An evaluation report released by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) provides strong evidence that Developing Futures contributed to significant improvements in student performance in four districts: Jefferson County, KY;



Cincinnati, OH; Stamford, CT; and Erie, PA. For more information, visit: <http://www.cpre.org/impact-report>.

Going forward, the GE Foundation will support development of education initiatives at the state level. Its continued investment will ensure that the best education our country can imagine becomes reality for all students.

The GE Foundation Convenes Business Leaders to Support Education Initiatives

There is an urgent need to ensure that the American education system works for all students, as well as for the future of the country's workforce and overall economic growth and competitiveness. Last summer, the GE Foundation brought together 260 prominent business executives, nonprofit professionals, foundation leaders, educators, and policy makers for its 3rd annual Business and Education Summit to explore ways to strengthen teaching and learning in classrooms nationwide; close the skills gap that hampers hiring and productivity in key industries; and, ultimately, ensure the future economic competitiveness of the United States.

"The U.S. economy cannot thrive, nor can it compete in an increasingly sophisticated global economy without a well-prepared, highly-skilled workforce," says Kathy Payne, Senior Director- Education Leadership, State Farm Insurance Companies. "This means that business leaders must contribute to ensuring all students receive a world-class education."

Companies represented at the Summit included 3M, Apple, Boeing, Prudential, Cisco, IBM, Microsoft, and AT&T, as well as state and local leaders active in Chambers of Commerce and business-education partnerships from all parts of the country.

The Summit featured many prominent speakers, including College Board President David Coleman; the Honorable Jim Hunt, former governor of North Carolina; the Honorable Bob Wise, former governor of West Virginia;



The Honorable Bob Wise, President, Alliance for Excellent Education and former Governor of West Virginia, discusses importance of state leadership in implementation of education initiatives.

Kathy Payne of State Farm Insurance Companies; and David Patti of Pennsylvania Business Council. The speakers built the case for business involvement in local education initiatives as a key strategy for strengthening communities and the workforce.

"We need to keep building the case for business involvement in education," says Kelli Wells, Director, U.S. Education, the GE Foundation. "We are asking business leaders to provide mentoring, internships, and other opportunities for students to learn what it takes to succeed in the workplace. Another request is that they join local and state coalitions committed to supporting K-12 education, as well as work with policy makers to ensure that they make investment in education a top priority."

More Than 1,400 Businesses Attend the GE Foundation Education Road Shows

In the past year, the GE Foundation has started a series of road shows convening more than 1,400 businesses in meetings from New York to Florida, Pennsylvania to Utah, and states in between.

Former GE Foundation President Bob Corcoran led each group of business leaders in a discussion on how to improve the equity and quality of public education. "The presence of corporate leaders in our public conversation about raising the bar on education is critical," says Corcoran.

Corcoran shared a Harvard University study on education policy showing that the U.S. ranks 25th in math and 17th

in science among countries around the world. He charged, "Our students deserve a top-of-the-line education, and our nation deserves a highly skilled workforce that propels our economy forward."

John Cline, President & CEO of Sunburst Electronics, attended the road show in Erie, Pennsylvania. "Right now, the greater Erie area has 10,800 unemployed workers and almost an equal number of open positions, but there is a skills gap," says Cline. "When I have to hire from outside of the region, the first question from potential employees is, 'How are the schools?' As we work to ensure a best-in-class

education system across Pennsylvania, we will start to see our students competing on par with their peers from Erie to Boston to Mississippi. Strong cognitive thinking and skills mastery will allow our graduates to find employment in Erie or anywhere across the country.”



Longtime education advocate Ed Rust, CEO of State Farm, which is headquartered in Bloomington, co-hosted the event.

Civic organizations have been involved in planning and supporting road shows in each state. Advance Illinois, a non-profit, non-partisan education advocacy group, played an integral role in hosting the GE Foundation in both Bloomington and Chicago. “Engaging the business community in conversations about improving education in the state has been a priority of ours,” says Robin Steans, Executive Director of Advance Illinois. “It was tremendously helpful to have the GE Foundation drawing the connection between education and its impact on our economy. Illinois business executives came away from the road show with tangible strategies for supporting education in their local communities, as well as an understanding of how doing so will have a direct impact on their future success.”

After attending the presentations in Illinois, major power company Ameren Illinois, as well as the non-profit Brinson Foundation, gave similar presentations to their own constituents. They conveyed the link between ensuring a world-class K-12 education and the strength of Illinois’ social and economic future.

The GE Foundation Developing Futures™ in Education Summer Conference

For nearly a decade, annual summer education conferences have been a cornerstone of the GE Foundation’s efforts to help educators improve instructional practices and foster innovation in the classroom.

In July 2013, the 9th Annual GE Foundation Developing Futures™ in Education Conference drew 400 educators from 33 states to Orlando, Florida to continue this important work.

The 2013 conference theme was *Global Insights, Local Action*. Participants looked at top education models from across the world, while sharing best practices and improvement strategies between U.S. educators.

Renowned educator William Schmidt, co-director of the Education Policy Center at Michigan State University, shared results of an international study of mathematics teachers. A key finding was that although some U.S. teacher preparation programs are among the best in the world, a significantly low number of teachers receive adequate mathematics training before they enter the classroom. The problem is of particular concern in middle schools, where roughly three fifths of future math teachers will graduate at the bottom quarter of preparation programs.

Participants also attended a presentation on international trends in education by Michael Fullan, an author and expert credited with transforming the

Canadian province of Ontario into one of the world’s most effective school systems. Fullan conveyed the importance of training teachers not just as isolated individuals, but as part of high performing teams – helping them tie their own development to the development of their profession as a whole.



To highlight domestic best practices, a panel of principals spoke about effective school management techniques – those that ensure teachers have what they need to help students succeed at each stage of their K-12 education. A panel of English Language Arts/literacy coaches shared strategies for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing.

Groups of participants from similar subjects and grades also held breakout sessions to compare experiences overcoming top challenges in the classroom. They left armed with new teaching strategies, curriculum ideas, tools for better engaging students, and inspiration from hundreds of colleagues working toward the same goal.

Echoing the experience of many of the conference participants, one teacher commented, “It was a privilege to learn best practices from across the globe and our country, challenge our assumptions, and push our thinking and practice to new levels.”



David Booth, Professor Emeritus and Scholar in Residence, University of Toronto, offers global perspective on education reform.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Gives Teachers New Ways to Inspire Math and Science Students

This past July, NASA’s Kennedy Space Center got some new programmers. Math and science teachers from the seven GE Foundation-supported school districts came to the Center in Florida to program a robot to navigate the surface of Mars.

This was all part of a weeklong conference for math and science teachers hosted each summer by the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), the GE Foundation, and NASA. The conference provides educators with instruction on technology and skills used by NASA scientists, as well as ways to use them in the classroom.

At last summer’s conference, the teachers programmed a robot to navigate the surface of Mars using remote sensing technology through a combination of light and radar, commonly known as LiDAR.

They created a topographical map of Mars’ surface, just as NASA engineers do. Wendy Binder, Program Director of Professional Development at NSTA says, “The focus was on ways to integrate Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in middle school classrooms and tie them to higher math and science standards.” The STEM approach — weaving concepts from the various disciplines into lessons

— helps students develop critical-thinking skills through hands-on, project-based learning.

Once home, conference participants shared what they learned with both colleagues and students. For example, Cincinnati teachers provided STEM training to colleagues from elementary and high schools who were unable to attend the conference. And math and science teachers from Stamford Public Schools are using NASA supplies to enhance their STEM lessons.

“The Stamford team has worked to integrate STEM lessons directly into the science and math curriculum, as well as during after school programs,” says Jim Forde, science teacher, Stamford Public Schools. “We are also planning a city-wide STEM-fest to celebrate STEM learning in Stamford in April 2014. This event will include educators, non-profits, and local businesses excited about STEM learning.”

The conference, its training approach, and the application of learning back in the classroom all support the GE Foundation’s goal to assist teachers in deepening their content knowledge and instructional strategies. “We are raising the bar on the quality of our nation’s teaching tools, as well as relating our curriculum directly to real-world professions that excite students,” says Kelli Wells of the GE Foundation.



Case Study: The Essential Partnership Between School Administrators and Teachers' Unions

Collaboration among organizations that represent teachers, superintendents, and boards of education – the three anchors of any school system – is everything. Without it, deep, sustainable change in schools is not possible, and district goals for student learning cannot be accomplished. These are the findings outlined in a recent study by the GE Foundation that examines the labor/management relationship in school districts that have been awarded GE Foundation grants.

The Foundation's investment in sustainable improvement has always been based on an understanding that it is essential to: improve student learning in math and science, improve chances for success beyond K-12 education, and close achievement gaps.

"The GE Foundation is one of the first philanthropic organizations to understand the importance of sustainability in education reform," says Kelli Wells. She says the Foundation's grantee school districts practice sustainability by making significant commitments to change teaching practices, implement new curriculum, and engage in innovative professional development activities. This is possible only through bringing everyone to the table for substantive discussions about what it means to collaborate.

Another important reason for collaboration, the study points out, is to protect against the instability of transitions in key leadership positions, most noticeably the superintendency. "A common problem in education reform is that the reforms

never have time to take hold as districts change strategy with every new superintendent," says Wells. "The GE Foundation wants an approach that emphasizes continuity by having everyone at the table – especially the teachers – engaged in a thoughtful and flexible conversation."

Cited as an example in the study, the GE Foundation helped design and launch a steering committee – a union/management

joint committee – in the school district of Louisville, Kentucky. The Steering Committee took over and practiced a collaborative approach to such things as curriculum design, textbook choice, and educational coach identification. They set up joint structures that resulted in deep collaborative work; they were able to concentrate on failing students and restructuring schools in trouble; and they achieved deep changes in the district's school system.



In another example, Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) wanted to create sustainable professional development that would lead to long-lasting and effective change. A triad including a teacher, a school administrator, and a GE Foundation representative shared an office, shared decisions, and worked on implementation challenges. Learning teams, professional learning communities, expert cadres, and other practices came out of that collaborative structure and became institutionalized in teacher contracts. As a result, the district was able to become the first and only Ohio urban school district to be rated "Effective". CPS continues to be the highest performing urban district in the state.

Upcoming Important Dates:

- **60th Anniversary Brown v. the Board of Education**

May 17, 2014

Save the Date!

- **The GE Foundation Business and Education Summit**

July 14 – 15, 2014

- **The GE Foundation Educator Conference**

July 14 – 18, 2014