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## **DAVINCI MINDS WINS NATIONAL GRANT TO ADVANCE MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH, SCIENCE AND CAREER EDUCATION**

**Next Generation Learning Challenges grant will integrate math, science and  
career education and cross to national math standards.**

San Antonio, Texas  
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DaVinci Minds announced today it has been awarded one of nineteen *Next Generation Learning Challenges* grants by EDUCAUSE to advance DaVinci Minds' *WhyCareers* program and curriculum. The program provides integrated math, science and career education to middle school students based on Whyville, the learning-based virtual world for teens and tweens. Using the immersive experience of a virtual world, students will experience the simultaneous math and science of green and traditional energy activities in Whyville, earn virtual career badges, and explore real, local career pathways that lead to high-technology, high-wage jobs that require math and science skills, along with the critical thinking, communication and teamwork skills crucial to success in the marketplace.

"DaVinci Minds is thrilled to take our WhyCareers program and offering to another level," said Cliff Zintgraff, CEO of DaVinci Minds and the project's Principal Investigator. "Research indicates teaching and learning that is integrated across math, science and career education leads to improved learning and an improved ability by students to apply what they have learned. Integrated teaching and learning is fundamentally rigorous, and we are honored to be chosen by EDUCAUSE to advance this work, and to have the opportunity to learn from and contribute to the experience of EDUCAUSE, the Gates Foundation, and the Hewlett Foundation."

"We need to enhance our country's educational system in ways that engage students both inside and outside of the classroom and provide them with the 21st century skills required for today's workforce," said Ira Fuchs, EDUCAUSE Executive Director of Next Generation Learning Challenges. "The innovative work of our grantees demonstrates how the thoughtful application of technology can help us achieve these goals."

"We look forward to seeing Whyville used even more in schools to teach middle school students," said Dr. James Bower, CEO of Numedeon, Inc., the creators of Whyville. "For 12 years, Whyville has engaged close to 7 million members in inquiry-driven learning. Through our partnership with DaVinci Minds and the support of EDUCAUSE, we will continue our mission to improve learning outcomes both outside and inside the classroom."



“WhyCareers is an interesting innovation in education” said Raymond Rose, WhyCareers Project Director, “because it incorporates gaming and simulations, both of which have been shown to be highly effective learning strategies, especially for middle grade students.”

The grant will be used to expand use of the program in partnering schools, to deepen math content and connect that content to national math standards; add tracking of state and national standards in Whyville; and to rigorously evaluate program outcomes. As part of the grant award, DaVinci Minds staff has been invited to participate in a conference on College and Career Readiness. The conference will be hosted in late July in Seattle, WA by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Numedeon, Inc., the creator and developer of Whyville, is a partner in the project, as are multiple school district participants including: Northeast Independent School District in San Antonio, Waco Independent School District, and Beaumont Independent School District. Lopez Middle School in Northeast ISD has hosted the pilot site for an ongoing WhyCareers state grant awarded by the Texas Governor’s Office with funds from the U.S. Department of Labor, with the grant managed by the Texas Workforce Commission. “Our many prior supporters and partners have made significant contributions to this work, which enabled us to win this highly competitive award. We want to thank the Texas Governor’s Office, the Texas Workforce Commission and our state partners, Power Across Texas and Alamo Colleges, and Waco Independent School District, for their past and continuing support that helped make WhyCareers successful”, adds DaVinci Minds CEO Cliff Zintgraff.

Next Generation Learning Challenges is a multi-year program that will help address the challenges facing students, teachers, and schools in the U.S. from grades six to 12 through higher education. It solicits proposals for technology-enabled solutions to critical educational challenges approximately every six to 12 months, through an open process assisted by experts and educators with deep experience in the field.

The initiative will evaluate the projects it supports to build evidence of their impact, and will bring together an active community of innovators and educators committed to driving next generation learning forward to dramatically improve college readiness and completion in the U.S.

Nonprofit educational technology leader EDUCAUSE, which works to advance higher education through the use of information technology, leads Next Generation Learning Challenges in collaboration with a network of organizations, including the Council of Chief State School Officers, the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, and the League for Innovation in the Community College. Each offers deep, practical expertise in educational instruction, leadership, and management. The initiative is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

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