

MVS Education Innovation Challenge

The Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) has an unprecedented opportunity to undertake an ambitious set of reforms with the vision of transforming LPS into a system of outstanding individual neighborhood schools. To accompany this vision, the district is establishing ambitious goals for improvement in the areas of student academic growth, proficiency in core subjects, and high school graduation, among others. LPS has a unique opportunity to become a leader in education nationwide.

The Deshpande Foundation and the Merrimack Valley Sandbox (MVS): A key focus of the **Deshpande Foundation** is to catalyze innovative thinking that results in significant social and economic impact. It has helped establish the Merrimack Valley Sandbox which has been working to help connect and strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Lowell and Lawrence through a number of programs encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship in the schools, higher education institutions and business and community organizations. As part of its ongoing efforts to encourage innovation, the Deshpande Foundation is partnering with the Lawrence Public Schools to announce the **MVS Education Innovation Challenge**.

The Challenge: At the core of LPS's turnaround plan is the notion of outstanding individual schools that have the autonomy to develop innovative ways to improve education. The **MVS Education Innovation Challenge** aims to encourage teachers to seize this opportunity to highlight innovative and entrepreneurial approaches within their schools. Teachers in LPS are invited to develop innovative proposals that address some or all of the following focus areas:

- **Augment core academics.** Approaches that include identifying effective and innovative instructional methods and tools that increase student achievement, help students reach proficiency or address skill or knowledge deficits.
- **Leverage technologies.** Proposals that apply technology or online learning to supplement or support instruction or that use data to help monitor student progress.
- **Enhance teacher collaboration.** Proposals that address approaches that improve collaboration and enhance communications across teams and within the school community
- **Strengthen enrichment programs.** Proposals might include enrichment programming that is connected to state standards, builds student skills and interests, and deepens student engagement.
- **Help build 21st century skills.** Approaches that help students develop 21st century skills of critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and collaboration.
- **Build on school and community partnerships.** Proposals that offer opportunities for engagement with the community (private school, college and university students, business leaders, etc.) to inspire, tutor, and mentor students.

Applicants are encouraged to submit innovative proposals that have the potential for strategic change in these areas. Some examples of ideas that might be considered interesting:

- Developing an enhanced literacy program that leverages eBooks and augments writing skills using iPads might be an exciting new opportunity.
- Designing an interactive program that helps bridge science and art and requesting funds to jumpstart such an endeavor would be more innovative than just a request for supplies.
- Covering costs of afterschool meetings with parents and community members by itself would not be as innovative as putting together a workshop or activity that engages parents and the school.
- A proposal to fund field trips may not be considered strategic. However, a new program that enhances science engagement by visiting appropriate field locations and uses some of the funds for expenses might be considered innovative.



In general, the selection team is looking for ideas that have the potential for long term impact within the schools. We will not fund a proposal with the sole purpose of purchasing books or other supplies that will enhance an existing program.

Application and Selection Process:

Who Can Apply?

The 2013-2014 MVS Education Innovation Challenge is open to all teachers in the Lawrence Public Schools.

How to Apply?

Teachers are invited to submit an online proposal that outlines their approach to bring innovation to their schools. Teachers are encouraged to work in teams.

- Proposals deadline extended to **NOVEMBER 15th**, 2013.
- Proposals should be submitted via an online application form that will be available at <http://merrimackvalleysandbox.org/education-challenge/apply-now/>
- Teachers that are selected for the Challenge will be informed by **November 25th**, 2013.

The applications are limited to the first 100 teacher applications that are received at or before NOVEMBER 15th. Apply early to ensure you are considered

How will the proposals be evaluated?

A panel of judges selected by the Deshpande Foundation in consultation with the Superintendent of Lawrence Public Schools **will select up to 30 teams** from the proposals submitted. Proposals will be evaluated and priority consideration given for proposals that:

- Demonstrate an innovation approach
- Invite cooperative learning
- Encourage collaborative efforts among teachers, administrators, parents and community organizations
- Have a broad impact on the school system
- Address some of the focus areas specified in this document

Awards and recognition

Teams whose proposals are selected will be provided project funds **up to \$1000** to pilot the proposed project. All teams selected will need to attend the three teacher workshops during the year and participate in an Education Innovation Showcase in June 2014. Teams will provide updates on their projects at the workshops.

Key Dates

2013-2014 School Year

October 2013	Kick-off and Awareness campaign for MVS Education Innovation Challenge
NOVEMBER 15th, 2013	Applications due
November 25 th 2013	Awardees announced
December 11 th 2013	Teacher Workshop
February 26 th 2014	Teacher Workshop
April 30 th 2014	Teacher Workshop
June 9 th 2014	MVS Education Innovation Showcase

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