



MY EXPERIENCE with Newark STEM Ecosystem

Andrea was introduced to the Newark STEM Ecosystem by the Jersey Shore STEM Ecosystem and learned about their mission to connect educators, industry and organizations to collaborate, expand and improve STEM and career-connected learning in northern New Jersey. A series of conversations resulted in NIHF sponsoring and attending Newark STEM's 2nd Annual Convening in January 2025.



WHAT WAS LEARNED

Educators are hungry for hands-on innovation programs, but didn't know how to access them. The disconnect was right there in the room - passionate educators and a proven solution, but no bridge between them.



WHAT WE DID WITH THIS KNOWLEDGE

We identified five schools immediately ready for our Invention Projects program. We awarded mini-grants for March STEM Month experiences, trained educators, and created family engagement workshops. What started as one conversation with Newark STEM became a systematic approach to embedding innovation thinking into existing STEM curricula at a faster pace than we could do alone.



THE RESULTS

The results speak for themselves: from that January convening, we scaled to six school districts, two private schools, and two NGOs by summer, reaching:

- 1,000+ students in PreK-8th grade
- Provided leadership experience for 49 teens and young adults
- Trained 29 educators
- Engaged 35 families in hands-on workshops

This wasn't a pilot program - this was proof that when you connect the right partners, innovation education scales rapidly.