

In-Class
ActivitiesSTEM
Competitions

MAKERMINDED:

Digital Competition Promotes STEM Career Exploration

MakerMinded, a digital platform launched by LIFT (Lightweight Innovations for Tomorrow) in partnership with Battelle in 2016, is connecting Ohio's middle school and high school students with innovative ways to gain STEM skills while learning about the opportunities ahead in 21st century manufacturing.

"MakerMinded brings together and provides easy access to diverse programs that promote STEM learning, and it creates a fun competition that motivates teachers and students to engage," said Jacey Cavanagh of MakerMinded. "We carefully select the activities so any teacher or student can benefit."

It's easy for schools to participate, she said. After signing up at no cost on the MakerMinded website (oh.makerminded.com), teachers and students can select from hundreds of activities that include field trips, in-class activities, gaming activities, competitions and more. Schools earn points for each activity completed, with prizes awarded to top scorers at the end of the school year.

Ohio launched the program in August 2017, joining a national campaign that is now seven states strong. More than 90 middle schools and high schools across Ohio competed in the first year, with more than 1,300 participants. At the end of the school year, the four top-scoring schools received Oculus Rift virtual reality systems they can use to deliver STEM and advanced manufacturing learning in their classrooms. Currently in its second year, MakerMinded has grown to 124 Ohio schools and 1,500 users.

A public-private partnership, LIFT created MakerMinded as part of its mission to develop and deploy advanced lightweight materials manufacturing technologies, and implement education and training programs to prepare the workforce. LIFT is one of the founding institutes of [Manufacturing USA](#), and is funded in part by the Department of Defense with management through the Office of Naval Research. Other key MakerMinded supporters include the Ohio STEM Learning Network, The Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) and Tennessee Tech University.

"We are proud to stand behind MakerMinded as an initiative that will help companies connect to the future talent they need to grow and ensure the workforce has the skills to excel," said OMA President Eric Burkland. "An estimated 2 million skilled manufacturing jobs are expected to go unfilled in the U.S. by 2025, so it's important we prepare students to take advantage of those opportunities."

MakerMinded is constantly researching new activities so there are plenty of options whether a school is in a city, suburb or rural area, said Cavanagh. The program also works to support diverse learning styles.

"MakerMinded helps directly connect students with the manufacturing environment so they can see it, touch it, feel it and do it," Cavanagh said. "It's like having Manufacturing Day throughout the entire year."

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