



2023

ANNUAL REPORT

The EdVenture Group's Annual Report is a testament to our commitment and dedication to transforming K-12 education. As we reflect on the past year, we celebrate the milestones achieved and the impact created through innovative programs, collaborative initiatives, and unwavering support for educators and students alike.



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A LETTER FROM LYDOTTA

On behalf of The EdVenture Group, I am honored to share this annual report reflecting our teams accomplishments for 2023. We continue to expand our programs with new ideas to bring resources to our communities and schools. Throughout this report you will see the expansion of many of our on-going programs and the development of new efforts to bring innovative solutions to today's challenges.

The EdVenture Group prides itself on listening to our customers, and by doing so we have applied the things we've heard from students, teachers, families, administrators, and communities to influence our thinking. We are the partner that hears the concerns and the dreams and responds in ways that make a difference in lives. Our team works passionately to provide hope and help to those we serve.

In 2023 we added staff with backgrounds to help us continue to grow and we have spent time together creating a plan of action to make 2024 even more successful. Our planning allowed us to learn more about each other and take the time to discuss how we can continue to build new opportunities to meet the real dreams in our communities.

From family engagement to entrepreneurship to prevention efforts, after-school programs, leadership, and more we are excited to work with partners to strengthen future programs.



PRESIDENT & CEO

the **Ed**venturegroup[™]
www.theedventuregroup.org








FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

WEST VIRGINIA FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CENTER

In 2023, WV FEC finished its work with Cohort 4 schools, rounding out the 100 schools served since the project began in 2018. In Cohort 4 alone, the WV FEC supported the following:

-  1,013 high-impact activities that supported academic achievement
-  986 high-impact activities that helped build infrastructure for family engagement
-  3,747 caregivers with services

The reach of the WV FEC stems far beyond the 100 schools served, and in 2023, included the following supplemental activities:

- Higher Education Workshops to preservice teachers at Marshall University, West Virginia State University, and the University of Charleston.
- Level-Up Literacy, Empowerment, Math FUNdamentals, and Social Emotional Learning activity kits for skill development and enhanced connection between school and home.

WVDE INVEST CONFERENCE

Over the summer, the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) hosted the INVEST Conference for administrators and educators from across the state to learn innovative strategies to support student learning. The WV FEC was invited to host a full-day session at each of the conferences (Charleston and Morgantown).

Over 105 administrators and educators participated in the interactive sessions: "Family Engagement: Beyond Checking the Box" aimed to support educators in establishing and growing meaningful and sustainable family engagement practices that go beyond checking the box.

"Awesome job. I will be holding a meeting with staff at school to make sure all understand."

2023 INVEST Participant



WVFEC-LED TRAININGS

In 2023, the WVFEC team lead the following presentations and trainings:

- Institute of Educational Leadership (IEL) National Community Schools and Family Engagement Conference: Planning a Family Leadership Program in Your Community
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Coalition: Social Emotional Learning & ACEs in the Classroom
- Handle with Care: Birth Through Adolescence: Understanding Behaviors
- Appalachian Studies Association: L.I.F.E. (Leaders Investing in Family Engagement)
- Communities and Schools Together: Rippling Anxiety
- National Council on Family Relations Conference: Addiction Attitudes and the Student-Teacher Relationship
- National Council of Teachers of English Conference: Growing Partnerships Within and Beyond the University



THE EDVENTURE GROUP AWARDED \$4.4 MILLION FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO EXPAND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS ACROSS WEST VIRGINIA.

\$4.4 MILLION IN NEW SFEC FUNDING

In October, The EdVenture Group was awarded a \$4.4 million U.S. Department of Education (USDE) grant to expand family engagement initiatives across West Virginia. This grant builds upon the foundation laid by the initial 2018 USDE SFEC grant, which led to the establishment of the WVFEC.

Led by The EdVenture Group, the 2023 SFEC will continue to partner closely with the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) to work with a broader group of schools, families, and

communities across the state of WV, ultimately serving all 55 counties.

"The WVDE is thankful that the USDE recognized the great work of the [West Virginia] Family Engagement Center, led by The EdVenture Group, and have provided a second round of funding. Family engagement is a critical component to the success of our schools and individual students."

Michelle Blatt, WV State Superintendent of Schools

EdV remains dedicated to its ongoing mission of fostering meaningful connections between families, schools, students, and communities. Through research-based programs and initiatives, the team empowers families to be active partners in their children's education, leading to improved student success and well-being.



SUPPORTING STUDENTS, GRANDFAMILIES, AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Through need sensing across the region, The EdVenture Group, in partnership with REL Appalachia, are facilitating a grandfamilies community of practice in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. The purpose of this CoP is to support leaders across the region to collaborate in ways that help the understanding of available research, and available resources, and to support the sharing of ideas and information around the increasingly common experiences of grandfamilies and kinship caregivers. Quarterly session topics in 2023 included:

1. Kickoff Meeting
2. Inclusive Language
3. Creating Family Engagement Opportunities for Kinship Caregivers and Grandfamilies
4. Gaining Perspective to Inform Actions

The CoP will continue through 2024, with the possibility of a culminating virtual summit in early 2025.



LINCOLN COUNTY FAMILY LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

The EdVenture Group received a \$17,300 grant from The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation to support the Lincoln County Family Leadership Summit (LCFLS). The LCFLS will take place in March 2024 and will expand upon the current work of the WV FEC. The LCFLS will help elevate, amplify, and empower the voices of 48 families from these schools through educational workshops that build leadership capacity and guide collaborative partnership building between families and schools. As of December, the team has hosted focus groups with each school, and began collaboration with key Lincoln County stakeholders in all aspects of planning and delivering the summit.





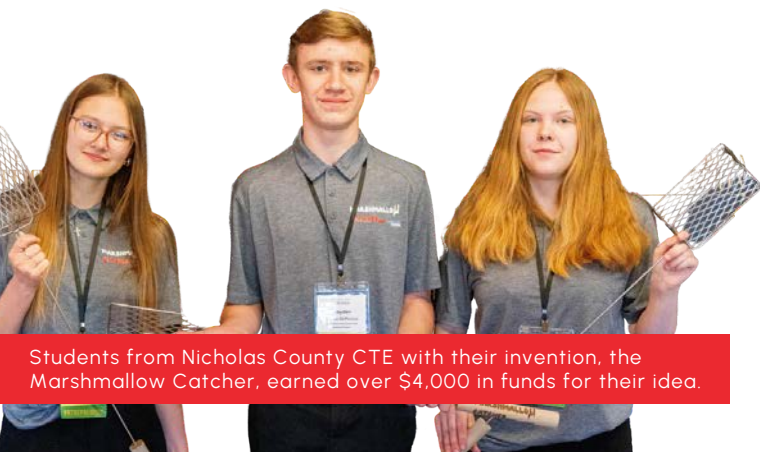
INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SIMULATED WORKPLACE ESHIP EDUCATION PATHWAY

EdVenture's Innovation and Entrepreneurship team supports West Virginia's first formal career and technical education pathway in entrepreneurship education. Scaled statewide in the 2023-2024 academic year, the pathway is currently offered at fourteen sites and includes four scaffolded courses:

-  **ESHIP 1: THINK**
entrepreneurial mindset and design thinking
-  **ESHIP 2: BUILD**
lean canvas and project-based learning
-  **ESHIP 3: GROW**
business model canvas and simulation
-  **ESHIP 4: LAUNCH**
business launch and scaling

To date, over 350 students have participated in a pathway course since its pilot launch in 2021.



Students from Nicholas County CTE with their invention, the Marshmallow Catcher, earned over \$4,000 in funds for their idea.

JAMES RUMSEY TECH COMPANY LAB



JRTI's Company Lab pioneers a new model of community support through its innovative business coaching and education model. In its first 18 months of operation, the Company Lab has served over 40 clients, licensed 12 new businesses, created 15 new jobs and saved clients over \$200,000 in revenue and other business expenses.

BUSINESS COMPETITION

The EdVenture Group coordinates SparkWV, an idea and business generation competition for middle and high school students in West Virginia. In partnership with WVDE, the competition has over 40 Round 1 submissions in December 2023.



ELEVATE CTE LEARNING NETWORK

ELEVATE CTE is a learning network that supports career readiness, career technical education, and traditional classroom teachers in advancing their knowledge and application of entrepreneurship within their curriculum. The program's inaugural cohort welcomes 28 individuals from middle and high schools across 14 counties of West Virginia and will conclude in April 2024 at Bridging Innovation Week.

WEST VIRGINIA ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM

The EdVenture Group currently serves as the fiscal agent and coordinating organization for WVEE, a collaborative network that advances entrepreneurship-led economic development across the state. The network engages thousands of stakeholders annually through:

 **MONTHLY CALLS**
Opportunities, updates, and live troubleshooting for entrepreneurs

 **BRIDGING INNOVATION WEEK**
5-day annual symposium convening stakeholders statewide for learning, networking, and collaboration



THE EDVENTURE GROUP HAS SECURED OVER \$300,000 IN FUNDING FROM FEDERAL & PRIVATE SOURCES FOR WVEE SINCE ASSUMING LEADERSHIP.

ARC-FUNDED SUBCOMMITTEES

Made possible with support from the Appalachian Regional Commission's Federal Co-Chair funds, WVEE is standing up three targeted subcommittees focused on essential ecosystem building blocks:

 **CAPITAL**
Focused on mapping and understanding how and where entrepreneurs get funding

 **GOVT. SUPPORT**
Focused on understanding and identifying government and regulatory systems that support entrepreneurs

 **TALENT**
Focused on supporting entrepreneurs in identifying and sourcing quality talent to scale their businesses

Click to read EdV Director of Innovation's Educating an Ecosystem WV Executive article.



BRIDGING INNOVATION WEEK 2024 HUNTINGTON, WV

On April 8-11, 2024, Bridging Innovation Week will be held in Huntington, West Virginia. Over the course of the week, The EdVenture Group will help coordinate, manage, and present a series of events that will engage thousands across the state, including:

- Tuesday, 4/9: West Virginia Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Conference, featuring thought leaders from across the state and nationally providing education to two audiences: entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial-support organizations
- Wednesday, 4/10: Competition Day, featuring over \$200,000 in equity-free funding for entrepreneurs and small businesses, and
- Thursday, 4/11: Entrepreneurship Education Day, featuring engaging sessions for middle- and high-school students and quality professional development opportunities for educators across West Virginia



**BRIDGING
INNOVATION**



PREVENTION

The EdVenture Group is focused on bringing awareness to and preventing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and their negative impacts by working with children, families, schools, and communities. Below are some examples of EdVenture's prevention efforts across the Appalachian region.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Breaking the Cycle (BTC) is a prevention-focused program aimed at creating customized materials for high-need communities. BTC utilized targeted needs-sensing activities to identify areas of concern related to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and collaborated with community members to design tailored, evidence-informed programming for five high need counties in West Virginia (Logan, Mercer, Nicholas, Roane, and Tucker).

BTC is made possible through a partnership with the Benedum Foundation, and provides needs-sensing and program activities that include:

- Needs-Sensing: an anonymous survey conducted across the five counties. Responses indicated that substance use, extended family raising children, and poverty were the top three priority needs. 90% of respondents felt that these needs caused harm in and to the community.

- Online Learning Resources: a resource page that features brief, informational videos, and fact briefing reports that support and enhance community-level understanding of the high-need topics including Community Needs, ACEs, and Toxic Stress, Addiction: The What's Why's and How's, All Kinds of Families, What is Stigma, and many more.
- Starting Conversations Series: a series of youth empowerment video lessons that are evidence-based and include topics like advocacy, communication, empathy, empowerment, growth mindset, and stigma & inclusive language.





RACCOON & FRIENDS

Through BTC, the team authored and illustrated the first in a series of Prevention StoryWalks® titled "Raccoon & Friends: A Trip to the Pumpkin Patch". The StoryWalk® is designed to connect children, caregivers, schools, and communities around prevention-related topics. A Trip to the Pumpkin Patch helps children understand and build empathy skills, and features a relevant story-line that includes a grandparent raising a grandchild.

Each page of the story includes conversation prompts to help facilitate discussions between the children and adults walking the story with them. These prompts are paired with supplemental materials to support schools and caregivers in continuing important conversations with the children in their lives.

"The EdVenture Group, Inc. is honored to receive this funding, and eager to collaborate with our partners and community stakeholders to learn, connect, and support as we begin this important work. Our team understands that this is so much more than a project- it is a commitment to making a meaningful impact by listening to, elevating, and empowering the voices of West Virginians from students and our K-12 schools, to families, employers, and community members."

Kayla Benson, Director of Impact



ELEVATING VOICES FOR EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES

In October, The EdVenture Group received \$48,733 from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) INSPIRE Initiative to expand prevention efforts. Through this effort, the team will partner with community stakeholders to enhance and expand communities' recovery ecosystems through a three-step approach, that includes community need sensing, identification of recovery deserts, and synthesizing this information to inform partners and implementation across four counties in West Virginia. Needs sensing surveys will target individuals in recovery, families of those in recovery, employers, and community members.

The EdVenture Group will then take steps to identify specific geographic regions lacking in recovery services, or "recovery deserts." Finally, collected data will be synthesized to inform project partners and best practices for program development and implementation.



CAREER READINESS

GREENE COUNTY INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

The Greene County Innovation Ecosystem (GCIE) is a collaborative effort made possible through funding from the EQT Foundation and facilitation by The EdVenture Group. The group convenes annually to brainstorm innovation projects centered on career readiness and emergent technologies, including eSports, AR/VR, and more.

One PA school district that participated in GCIE's 2022 eSports competition has made a \$50,000 investment in their own eSports program as a result.

In 2023, GCIE has created collaboration with the PA Rural Robotics Initiative to host a county-wide drone competition. Middle school teams from the five Greene County school districts will convene on May 15, 2024 to compete in three rounds of activities: 1) build a drone, 2) code a drone, and 3) fly a drone.

The EdVenture Group also provides as needed technical support and assistance to Greene Co. school districts' STEM efforts. As seen below, EdV supported Carmichaels Area School District's summer STEM program in June 2023.



DISCOVER YOUR FUTURE

In partnership with WVDE, EdVenture is supporting middle school career awareness efforts statewide through evaluation, technical assistance, and thought partnership. This includes:

-  **RESEARCH**
collecting student, family, and instructor perspectives on industry and career clusters and language to build meaningful programs
-  **COACHING**
supporting academic coaching and technical assistance for career readiness instructors at the middle levels
-  **DESIGN**
creating course and activity design tools to scaffold career readiness for middle grades

EMPOWERMENT COLLABORATIVE

As part of an Appalachian Regional Commission ARISE planning grant, The EdVenture Group is partnering with Mountain State Educational Services Cooperative on a multi-state effort for middle school career readiness within Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

As part of this partnership, The EdVenture Group will assist MDESC in designing:

- State-level supports for community and industry engagement
- A model for community and industry engagement focused on academic outcomes in the middle grades
- Measures and evaluation tools for community and industry engagement



AFTER SCHOOL

PRESTON COUNTY AFTER SCHOOL EXPLORERS

The EdVenture Group provides various levels of capacity building/support, professional development, and strategic consulting to Preston County's 21st CCLC program, After School Explorers. To address the challenges of staffing with professional development participation, The EdVenture Group developed and implemented 17 online professional development modules for staff to complete virtually negating the need to cancel the student program for in-person training sessions.

The longevity of The EdVenture Group's involvement allows us to continue providing ongoing support to the program as the planning and writing for a new 5-year grant begins.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The EdVenture Group continues to grow as a leader in after school program consulting, support, and professional development. The organization has provided technical assistance and conference presentations for several organizations, including:

- the West Virginia Statewide After School Network (WVSAN),
- West Virginia DHHR's Early Care and Education Division,
- the 21st CCLC Multi-State Conference, and,
- the 2023 Nita M. Lowey 21st CCLC Summer Symposium.



BUILDING EFFICACY IN STEM TODAY PROJECT

The B.E.S.T. project uses a community of practice based approach to build the STEM efficacy of out of school time providers, students, and families in partnership with the West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network (WVSAN) and West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), Division of Early Care and Education, and through funding from STEM Next.

Over 30 out-of-school time staff/providers will increase their knowledge of STEM and Family Engagement and be exposed to meaningful STEM learning activities, thus increasing their overall comfort level and interest in STEM.



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The EdVenture Group was selected as one of five organizations to participate in a national project to learn more about how to effectively build capacity for family engagement in STEM among educational systems, programs, and families. The project is being sponsored by STEM Next in partnership with the [Institute for the Study of Resilience \(ISRY\)](#) at McLean Hospital and Harvard Medical School.



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

SIMULATED WORKPLACE LEADERSHIP SERIES

The Simulated Workplace Leadership Series (SWLS) is a leadership development program designed to serve career and technical education (CTE) students and other student leaders across the state of West Virginia. In 2023, SWLS wrapped up its 2022-2023 cohort featuring graduates from Calhoun Gilmer Career Center and Mingo Central High School.



As part of this effort, EdVenture collected insights from high school students and teachers on their understanding of career readiness and youth leadership. Check out the White Paper below for the findings.

NAILLER LEARN2LEAD

In July, The EdVenture Group led youth leadership workshops as part of the Monongalia County Schools' Summer Avalanche Program. This year's workshops were held at the Monongalia County Technical Education Center (MTec). Participating students are all part of Monongalia County Schools RISE Program and represented South Middle School, Suncrest Middle School, and Westwood Middle School.

Special thank you to the Charles R. Nailler Foundation for over 20 years of support of the Nailler Learn2Lead program in Monongalia County.

Students engaged in discussion and hands-on leadership activities on leadership styles, leadership characteristics, core leadership functions, communication, goal setting, and design thinking. To date, EdVenture has averaged nearly 20 students per year reaching students across Monongalia County as part of the program.



LEADERS INVESTING IN FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

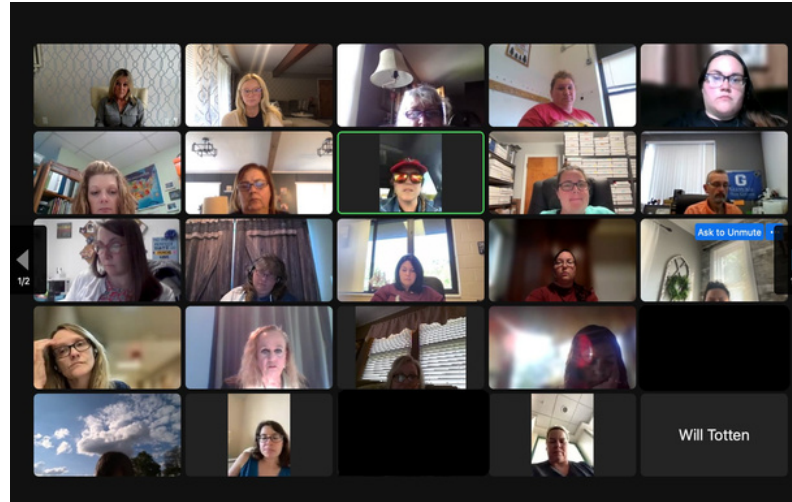
The L.I.F.E. Program focuses on building leadership capacity, effective family engagement strategies, and connected supportive networks for strong leadership. The program, designed for school leaders, supports personal leadership exploration, leading in challenging times, empowering learning recovery, and cultivating family engagement. The third Cohort of the L.I.F.E. program started in September 2023, and includes 31 new school leaders representing 10 total schools. A key component of the L.I.F.E. Program are the collaborative, grade-level pods. Participants meet twice a month, and each month has an area of content focus including:

- Building and Managing Confident Communities Communication
- Cultivate a 21st Century Leadership Plan
- Embrace Change for a Resilient Culture
- Empower Others
- Inquiry and Agile Leadership for Growth
- Intercultural Competence
- Leadership Signature
- Social Emotional Well-being

The first monthly session is a learning session that focuses on evidence-based learning, and the second monthly session is a pod activity session. A key component of the L.I.F.E. Program are the grade-level pods that provide participants an opportunity to collaborate to apply learning to family engagement strategy and create community with other elementary, middle, and high schools.

"I am truly thankful that I completed the program and I know that my family engagement efforts will grow leaps and bounds using the ideas and the confidence I gained."

2023 LIFE Participant



EVERYDAY LEADERS

In 2023, the Flamboyan Foundation committed funds to support the development and implementation of the Everyday Leaders Program. Everyday Leaders is a caregiver leadership program focused on empowering families by providing leadership skills to enhance family engagement, promote positive change, and give caregivers a voice in their student's education. Caregivers meet virtually on the second Tuesday of every month (September-February) for one hour to learn about their leadership skills and style and collaborate with other caregivers and school liaisons. Inspired by the L.I.F.E. program, the second monthly meeting is an opportunity for collaboration and partnership between caregivers and the school liaison to apply content learned into action at their school.

The initial 2023 cohort of Everyday Leaders includes 3 caregivers and 1 school liaison from 6 schools (2 elementary, 2 middle, and 2 high schools). 2023 session content includes:

- Building Confidence
- Communication
- Equity & Inclusion
- Wellness & Social Emotional Learning
- Culture & Empowerment
- Action & Future Planning