


# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2024

 [www.theedventuregroup.org](http://www.theedventuregroup.org)



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

The EdVenture Group’s Annual Report shines a light on our unwavering commitment to transforming K-12 education. This year’s milestones reflect not just progress, but powerful impact—driven by innovative programs, dynamic collaborations, and steadfast support for educators and students alike. As we look back, we celebrate the strides we’ve made and the lives we’ve touched, fueling a future of learning and opportunity.

## A LETTER FROM LYDOTTA

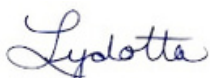
On behalf of The EdVenture Group, I am honored to share our 2024 Annual Report, which highlights the accomplishments of our dedicated team. As we continue to expand our programs and grow our staff, we remain focused on bringing innovative ideas, resources, and opportunities to communities and schools across West Virginia and the greater Appalachia region. Within this report, you'll find highlights of our ongoing initiatives and new efforts aimed at addressing today’s challenges.

We are grateful to all of our stakeholders, and we take great pride in actively listening to our communities and bringing their ideas to life. Our team is driven by a shared mission to provide hope and opportunity for the future of West Virginia through the programs we offer.

A special thank you to our Board of Directors and generous funders for their unwavering support. Your belief in our mission and investment in our work make our initiatives possible. We fully recognize the responsibility that comes with managing these funds and are committed to using them with the utmost care, transparency, and integrity to achieve meaningful impact. Thanks to your partnership, we are able to create positive, lasting change.

We invite you to enjoy this report and learn more about how, together, we are shaping a brighter future for our communities.

With appreciation,



# PROGRAM UPDATES

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# CAREER READINESS

## WEST VIRGINIA CAREERS INITIATIVE

The EdVenture Group, Inc. has been awarded \$1,956,655 through the [United States Department of Education's](#) Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education for the WV CAREERS (Career Awareness, Readiness, Education, and Experiences for Rural Students) Initiative. The initiative will support school districts across the state in increasing recruitment, retention, and completion of students in career and technical education (CTE) pathways aligned with postsecondary programs.

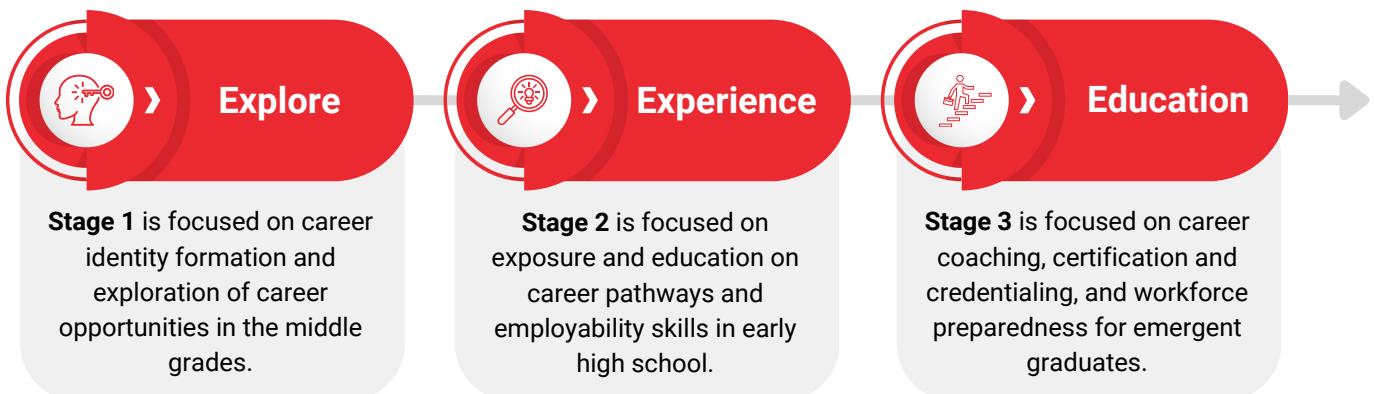
**"The West Virginia Career Awareness, Readiness, Education, and Experiences for Rural Students (CAREERS) grant will enhance teachers' access to vital career pathway resources. This funding will open new avenues for students, enabling them**

**to investigate career options within West Virginia while acquiring the necessary skills for success in the workplace. By collaborating with The EdVenture Group, we are fostering a more promising future for our rural communities through investments in our students, educators, and business partners."**

Clinton Burch, Assistant Superintendent of WVDE's Division of PK-Adult Instruction & Career Engagement

WV CAREERS will provide students beginning as early as middle school with CTE experiences aligned with high-growth industries including education, entrepreneurship and innovation, hospitality and tourism, manufacturing, and social services. The effort provides schools and communities with academic supports, technical assistance, and capacity building resources to drive sustainable change.

**\$1,956,655**  
in new funding





## DISCOVER YOUR FUTURE




The EdVenture Group is partnering with the West Virginia Department of Education to gain a deeper understanding of middle school career readiness programs and explore potential improvements. To achieve this, The EdVenture Group has developed a series of surveys to assess students' career interests and knowledge before and after participating in the Discover Your Future program.



In Fall 2024, The EdVenture Group's surveys were completed by **1,182 students** across six counties. Over 50% are undecided on future CTE participation.

## WEST VIRGINIA IDEAS INITIATIVE

The WV IDEAS initiative, a powerful collaboration between The EdVenture Group and the West Virginia Department of Education, is designed to ignite innovation and cultivate future-ready skills. WV IDEAS supports students, educators, and communities along the entire educational journey—from K-12 to adult learning. WV IDEAS prioritizes:

-  **Experiential Learning for Students:** Hands-on opportunities that spark curiosity and build real-world skills.
-  **Empowering Educators:** Dynamic professional development and technical assistance to equip teachers with cutting-edge strategies.
-  **Supporting Leaders:** Collaborative design support and network-building for WVDE and district leaders to drive systemic change.



# ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

## WEST VIRGINIA'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION PATHWAY

The EdVenture Group's Appalachian Regional Commission SWEEP project wrapped up in Summer 2024, leaving a powerful legacy of innovation in entrepreneurship education. West Virginia is now positioned as a national leader in entrepreneurship and education, offering one of the few comprehensive, policy-backed entrepreneurship pathways in the U.S. Key highlights of the pathway include:

- **Tailored Curriculum:** Four core and two enrichment courses, culturally responsive and designed with local needs in mind.
- **Empowered Educators:** Over 40 teachers earned advanced credentials, with exponential growth expected by 2025.
- **Student Impact:** Nearly 150 students enrolled for Fall 2024, with five new schools joining the pathway.
- **Community Connections:** Integrated into the broader WV Entrepreneurship Ecosystem, fostering sustainable relationships and economic revitalization.

## SPARKWV PITCH COMPETITION

The EdVenture Group proudly awarded over \$10,000 to outstanding middle and high school entrepreneurs in the inaugural SparkWV Competition. Held during Bridging Innovation Week in April 2024, finalists from 11 West Virginia schools pitched their big ideas and small businesses to industry experts.

### 2024 Top Awardees:

- 🏆 \$1,500: The Mad Jammer – Grafton High
- 🏆 \$1,500: SE4SONS – PikeView High



In its second year, SparkWV encourages participants to develop business concepts, enhance problem-solving skills, and gain entrepreneurial experience, with the chance to compete for prizes. Round 1 submissions, due November 15, reached over 120 entrepreneurs across 20 counties to bring 81 innovative business ideas to life.



## WEST VIRGINIA ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM

West Virginia aims to support entrepreneurs and small business owners through the West Virginia Entrepreneurship Ecosystem (WVEE), launched in 2019 by various entrepreneur support organizations. The initiative fosters collaboration, shares resources, and connects business owners with opportunities to enhance their success. Open to all organizations focused on entrepreneurial development, WVEE serves as a catalyst for economic growth, gathering stakeholder input to identify barriers and inform future strategies. In 2024, The EdVenture Group supported the development of a growth strategy, which outlines WVEE's contributions and future priorities for supporting entrepreneurship.



[Read the Report >](#)

## BRIDGING INNOVATION WEEK



Bridging Innovation Week (BIW) is the state's premier entrepreneurship event, organized by the WVEE. BIW 2024, held in Huntington, WV, saw over **1,000 attendees** across the week. Non-dilutive investments for new entrepreneurial endeavors totaled over **\$380,000**.



Entrepreneurship Education Day, a day devoted to student and educator learning, engaged seventy-eight students and 16 educators, representing 16 schools, participated in hands-on engaging activities to increase their understanding of entrepreneurial mindsets.



Bridging Innovation Week 2025 will take place on April 28-May 2 in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

[Learn More >](#)



# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

## WEST VIRGINIA FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CENTER

The West Virginia Family Engagement Center (WVFEC) is a federally funded Statewide Family Engagement Center established in 2018 by The EdVenture Group. The WVFEC partners with the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), districts, schools, caregivers, and broader communities to create a collaborative environment where families, educators, and community members are integral partners in the educational process. In its five years, the WVFEC effectively served over 100 schools across the state, focusing on building capacity for family engagement. As the initiative grows, the WVFEC is serving stakeholders state-wide, reinforcing a commitment to strengthening family-school-community partnerships.



WVFEC engages schools, families, and the community to transform family engagement across West Virginia based on current evidence-based practices in the field. Through a partnership of schools, students, families, and community partners, the Center encourages families to be actively involved in their student's education at school, becoming full partners in educational planning for their children, and active participants in decision-making processes. WVFEC is grounded in the idea that an inclusive family-school environment creates a culture of learners that involve families and the school's community in meaningful contributions to improve the educational results of its students.



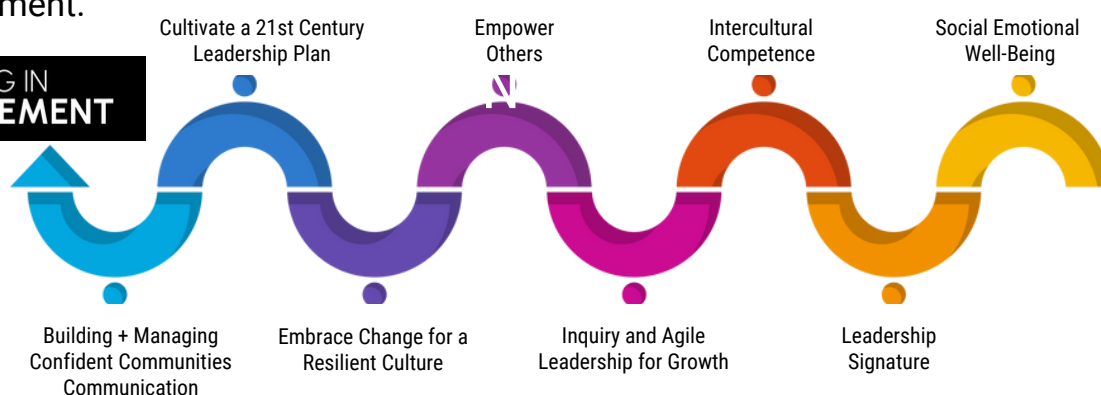
**Since 2018, the  
WVFEC has served  
over 8,983 individuals.**

**Learn More**



## L.I.F.E. PROGRAM

The L.I.F.E. Program focuses on building leadership capacity, effective family engagement strategies, and connected supportive networks for strong leadership. The program, established in 2021, is designed for school leaders and supports personal leadership exploration, leading in challenging times, empowering learning recovery, and cultivating family engagement. In 2024, the team concluded the 3rd cohort of L.I.F.E. participants and kicked off Cohort 4 in the fall. Cohort 4 includes 63 new school leaders representing 21 schools, and includes teams representing the WVDE Grow Your Own program. A key component of the L.I.F.E. Program are the collaborative, grade-level pods. Participants meet twice a month live, and watch one recorded session to strengthen their knowledge and inspire action as leaders of family engagement.



## EVERYDAY LEADERS

The Everyday Leaders Program, in partnership with The Flamboyan Foundation, is an innovative family leadership program that connects and empowers family leaders by strengthening their ability to actively engage in their children’s education. Inspired by the L.I.F.E. Program, participant teams of three caregivers and one school liaison collaborate to enhance leadership knowledge and skills, amplify their voice in their children’s learning, and promote family engagement within their school. 100% of Cohort 1 (2023-2024) participants reported feeling confident in participating in family engagement efforts since completing the Everyday Leaders Program. Recruitment of Cohort 2 is underway, and we look forward to collaborating with another great group of family leaders!



**\$41,485**  
in new funding

**“This program has given me a good roadmap and skills that will be utilized to establish positive parent engagement opportunities.”**

2023-2024 Participant

## LINCOLN COUNTY FAMILY LEADER SUMMIT

In April 2024, The EdVenture Group partnered with The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, and Lincoln County Schools to host The Lincoln County Family Leader Summit (LCFLS). The LCFLS expanded upon The EdVenture Group's West Virginia Family Engagement Center (WVFEC) work to elevate, amplify, and empower the unheard voices of families in WVFEC Lincoln County schools. The WVFEC has built a rapport and works closely with these schools to enhance family engagement, primarily from the school's perspective.

The LCFLS considered Lincoln County data to customize a family-facing summit to build confidence in family voice and create a lasting, sustainable family-school connection. The EdVenture Group collaborated with Lincoln County's key stakeholders through development and implementation.



## ADVISORY COUNCIL

The WVFEC hosts a quarterly Family and Community Engagement Advisory Council that includes representatives from diverse communities across the entire state. The council meets to collaborate, form connection, and provide ongoing guidance and oversight, ensuring that the WVFEC remains aligned with the needs of all counties and that the voices of various stakeholders are heard and considered in opportunity identification and decision-making process. The advisory council plays a crucial role in maintaining the focus and direction of the WVFEC, helping to identify emerging issues and opportunities, and advising on the best strategies to address them.



# OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

## PRESTON COUNTY SCHOOLS' AFTER SCHOOL EXPLORERS

The EdVenture Group has supported the Preston County Schools' After School Explorers Program for over 12 years, expanding assistance significantly in recent years. In 2024, it backed eight ASE sites across multiple K-8 schools and the county's middle and high schools. Their expertise enhanced the program's capacity, leading to the creation of 17 online professional learning modules, with 19 staff completing 160 hours of training.

To foster peer learning, live online sessions were also held, facilitating collaborative learning among staff. Feedback indicated that combining self-paced modules with live sessions is an effective professional learning model.

**\$17,000**  
in new funding

**"It was great being able to have a conversation with more than the two people I worked with. Doing these virtually gave me the opportunity to have a better discussion about the topic and to listen to many others' views."** 2024 Participant



## B.E.S.T. COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The Building Efficacy in STEM Today (B.E.S.T.) Community of Practice concluded in May 2024, receiving excellent feedback from participants. Session topics included Growth Mindset, Family Engagement, Foundations of S.T.E.M., Family Voice, and Welcoming Environments. A total of 23 participants earned STARS credit for attending at least one Community of Practice (CoP) session, while 10 participants completed all program requirements to receive 17 hours of STARS continuing education credit. These participants also earned a STEM Kit incentive sponsored by the Department of Human Services – Division of Early Care and Education. Over the six-month program, The EdVenture Group staff observed participants significantly increase their capacity and comfort with STEM concepts and family engagement strategies. Many participants also developed actionable plans to integrate their learning into their classroom programs effectively.



# PREVENTION EFFORTS

## EMPOWERED TO PREVENT

The Empowered to Prevent project focuses on assessing prevention resources, collaborating with community partners, identifying specific needs, and developing tailored materials to address gaps in prevention efforts. Made possible through a partnership with the Benedum Foundation, the project promotes prevention initiatives, particularly among high-need populations. Targeting families and children in Nicholas and Roane Counties, the project addresses the higher likelihood of these communities facing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), including poverty, abuse, neglect, addiction, and challenges faced by grandfamilies, kinship caregivers, and foster families. Activities included data collection and organization, activities on change and growth mindset, and educational infographics and handouts on community wellness.



## ELEVATING VOICES FOR EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES

In 2024, The EdVenture Group expanded prevention efforts through the implementation of the Elevating Voices for Empowered Communities (EVEC) project through funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)'s INSPIRE Initiative. EVEC aims to enhance and expand communities' recovery ecosystems through a three-step approach to identify needs and begin program development in and around Braxton, Calhoun, Clay, and Gilmer counties of West Virginia.



- Assessing needs in the recovery ecosystem,
- Identifying recovery deserts through analysis of current services and practices, and,
- Synthesizing data to inform partners and identify best practices for program development and implementation.

The project contributes to robust ecosystems by addressing recovery deserts, reducing barriers to recovery and employment, and ultimately increasing accessibility to workforce employment in the distressed region.



# REL APPALACHIA

The EdVenture team provides leadership on a variety of projects in partnership with the Regional Education Laboratory Appalachia (REL-AP). Utilizing our expertise in training, professional development, coaching and consultation, and event planning, EdVenture supports the efforts of REL-AP in serving diverse rural communities in West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. Currently, our team partners with REL-AP to support needs sensing in the REL-AP region and beyond, specifically focused on general need sensing across West Virginia, as well as:

## SUPPORTING STUDENTS, GRANDFAMILIES, AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The EdVenture Group, in partnership with REL Appalachia, facilitates a community of practice (CoP) of educators, social workers, school counselors, nonprofit leaders, and other school-supporting professionals to answer the question:

### **What do schools need to do to better support students living with kinship caregivers and grandfamilies?**

The CoP includes members from the REL Appalachia region of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia who convene quarterly to collaborate to increase understanding of available research and resources, and enhance school and community capacity to best support kinship caregivers and grandfamilies. CoP topics include family engagement, inclusive language, gaining perspective to inform action, improving attendance, navigating legal education issues, asset mapping, and continuous improvement. The CoP will conclude with a culminating summit in 2025.

## GOVERNING BOARD

The EdVenture Group organizes two annual governing board meetings for Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia – SRI, ensuring thorough planning and execution. In 2024, the Spring meeting was virtual in April, and the Fall meeting was in-person in Charleston, WV, in October. The group handled all logistics and provided on-site support, with staff facilitating sessions and record keeping. For the Spring 2025 meeting, EdVenture Group will play a larger role from the outset, using their expertise to improve planning and outcomes.



# STEM EDUCATION

## RURAL WINGS DRONE SHOWCASE AND COMPETITION

Middle school students from across Greene County showcased their skills in building, coding, and flying drones at the Rural Wings 2024 event. Held on May 15th at the EQT Rec Center, the event brought students together for a day of career exploration, team building, innovation, and competition.

This collaborative effort involved Greene County school districts, For The Win (FTW) Robotics, Innovation Institute 4 Tomorrow (II4T), and The EdVenture Group, Inc. Generous funding from the EQT Foundation and support from Remake Learning Days made the event possible. Building on the success of Greene County's previous county-wide eSports competition, the initiative introduced innovative learning opportunities like drone programming to rural schools, creating a lasting impact.

**"Empowering middle schoolers with drone programming not only cultivates technological literacy but also fosters creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking. It's not just about flying high; it's about lifting their imaginations to new heights. We hope to build further interest in both drones and aviation because of the definitive workforce need. Through our partnerships with The Edventure Group, EQT Foundation, Innovation Institute for Tomorrow, and Remake Learning, we can build interest and determine the scale of sustainability moving forward, with the hopes of filling high-paying and in-demand jobs for our future graduates."**

Eric Gaydos, Director of Curriculum and Instruction at West Greene School District





# TRAINING AND CONSULTING

## EMPOWERMENT COLLABORATIVE

Through Appalachian Regional Commission ARISE funding, the Empowerment Collaborative fosters transformative learning by connecting education with the broader community. Through innovative instructional principles and engagement strategies, students develop leadership, problem-solving, and career-ready skills. In December 2024, the effort received a \$7,030,989 award from the Appalachian Regional Commission to implement the effort over a five-year period, impacting 12 counties across Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.



As a partner in the effort, The EdVenture Group provides thought partnership and strategies for community and employer engagement. Together, we foster student-led workplaces, authentic problem-solving, and career-focused mindsets—developing future-ready graduates and strengthening the local workforce.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT

The EdVenture Group collaborated with the Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (EntreEd), a nonprofit dedicated to advancing entrepreneurship education, to analyze service areas for Junior Achievement (JA) in West Virginia, aiming to identify counties for potential program expansion and establish a vision for future growth. The project involved three phases:



1. **Phase 1:** Collected and analyzed quantitative data (student demographics, school details, local industries) to create a ranking model for program priorities.
2. **Phase 2:** Conducted qualitative assessments through interviews with stakeholders to gather insights on the community's interest in JA's programs.
3. **Phase 3:** Synthesized data to develop implementation recommendations, presented in a report to assist JA in securing future funding.

This comprehensive collaboration provided Junior Achievement with a clear roadmap for strategic program expansion and future growth opportunities in West Virginia, including emergent opportunities for growth.

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

The EdVenture Group is proud to showcase its diverse participation in local, regional, and national conferences over the past year. Through engaging presentations, workshops, and panel discussions, our team has shared expertise on family engagement, entrepreneurship, leadership, and innovative educational practices. These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to empowering communities, supporting students, and enhancing professional development opportunities.

- Bridges Community Coalition Building Conference, *Professional Use of Self*
- National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement's National Assembly for Family Engagement in Education Conference, *Communicating About Adverse Childhood Experiences: An Innovative Approach*
- National Family Engagement Summit, *Leveraging Language to Improve Educational and Family Engagement Equity*
- National Forum to Advance Rural Education, *Equipping Educators to Support Kinship Caregivers and Grandfamilies*
- Student Engagement & Attendance Center Webinar Series, *Co-Creating Solutions: Addressing Engagement & Attendance Challenges with Historically Underserved Populations*
- USDE Statewide Family Engagement Center Project Directors Meeting, *SFEC Project Directors Panel*





## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- WELD Leadership Conference, *The Power of Relationships*
- WV Afterschool Quality Conference, *The “S” in STEM Doesn’t Stand for Scary - Building Self and Family Confidence in STEM*
- WV Culinary Boot Camp, *Build Your Business*
- WV Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Annual Conference, *Scaling Sustainably: Cultivating Entrepreneurship in West Virginia*
- WV Future Business Leaders of America State Leadership Conference, *Stage Presence*
- WV Student Success Summit, *Engaging with Entrepreneurship*
- WV Student Support Conference, *Beyond the Bell: Building Relationships for Increased Family Engagement and Efficacy*
- WV Student Support Conference, *Empowering Every Family: Family Engagement Strategies for Student Success*
- WVDE INVEST Conference, *Engaging Families for Student Success*
- WVDE INVEST Conference, *Entrepreneurship Innovation Pathway Training*
- Young West Virginian Empowerment Conference, *Youth Leadership Programming Development*



# LOOKING AHEAD

## EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES IN 2025 AND BEYOND

As we conclude the 2024 Annual Report, we reflect with pride on the milestones achieved and the lives impacted by The EdVenture Group. This year has been a testament to the power of collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to building brighter futures for communities across West Virginia and beyond.

Through our programs, partnerships, and outreach, we have cultivated stronger connections among students, families, educators, and professionals. Together, we have expanded access to resources, fostered entrepreneurial spirit, and championed educational equity. These accomplishments are a reflection of the unwavering dedication of our team, partners, and supporters.

But our journey doesn't stop here. Looking to 2025, The EdVenture Group is poised to deepen its impact by embracing new opportunities, addressing emerging challenges, and scaling innovative initiatives. Thank you for being an essential part of our mission. Together, we are shaping a future filled with opportunity, resilience, and success.

For more information about our programs, upcoming initiatives, and ways to get involved, visit [www.theedventuregroup.org](http://www.theedventuregroup.org), contact our leadership team at [leadership@edvgroup.org](mailto:leadership@edvgroup.org), and follow our journey on social media [@TheEdVentureGroup](https://www.instagram.com/TheEdVentureGroup).

