

LEVELING UP MAKER EDUCATION





Mount Vernon Ventures is a Transformation R&D Company, an integral part of The Mount Vernon School Organization, based in Atlanta, Georgia. Ventures has a team of industry-recognized experts and practitioners partnering with educators and leaders worldwide to strengthen brand identity, deepen organizational innovation, scale community impact, and build a transformative curriculum.

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First published in 2023 by Mount Vernon Ventures
A Subsidiary of The Mount Vernon School

ISBN: 979-8-218-29433-5

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OUR STORY

Making has been an important part of learning at The Mount Vernon School for over ten years. Our program has evolved through many living prototypes along the way and will continue to evolve as we learn and grow, in response to our ever changing world.

In 2013, when we were just starting out, the Maker Lab at The Mount Vernon School was a spare classroom in the Lower School called Studio(i). It was filled with cardboard, tape, markers, construction paper, and other recycled materials for making low-resolution prototypes. It was messy and joyful and empowering. Teachers and learners had their first taste of what making could be and we were hooked.

Over the years, we continued to refine and develop our maker program both physically and conceptually. We have a total of four maker labs across divisions serving students in grades PK-12. Our Upper School students use their maker skills to create high-resolution prototypes that stand up to industry-level designs and have been presented to a range of real businesses from small local startups to Fortune 100 companies like Delta and Mercedes-Benz.

Today, our students seek opportunities for making things to positively impact the world around them. We hope that our story and this book will serve as an inspiration for you and your student makers.

Join us on our unfolding story of exploration through making real things for real people.

LET'S MAKE SOMETHING TOGETHER.



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For over a decade, we, as makers at The Mount Vernon School, have been on a journey with maker education. As a school of inquiry, innovation, and impact, our PK-12 maker program has continuously evolved and will continue to do so as we learn, grow, tinker, and prototype.

Our youngest Preschool makers will graduate in fifteen years. While we cannot predict this future world, the pathways, experiences, and classroom settings enroute to the future will be less familiar, not as linear, more ambiguous, yet filled with creative possibilities and exciting opportunities. We value human connection and we know that we must embrace the skills that are uniquely human, especially in the context of generative AI and a range of global challenges.

Even now, innovation and technology are revolutionizing the way we live, work, play, and gather. Our older learners, part of Generation Alpha, are learning, playing, and connecting in ways unlike alumni



before them. As Digital Natives, technology is playing an integral part in the development of Generation Alpha. They have access to information and communication tools that allow them to instantly connect with knowledge and people all over the world. Consequently, they are showing signs of being more culturally and environmentally aware. They embody an entrepreneurial and activist mindset and show a strong desire to make their own pathways and design a better world. Yet, this generation is also increasingly physically isolated. We know that relationships are foundational. Humans are meant to live in community and our brains are wired for connection.

The rapidly changing contexts in the world will require something different. “We no longer have the luxury of preparing students for a predictable culture and world experience.”¹ We must ask new questions. We must create new insights. We must design new ideas with integrity and quality.

In the face of an ever-changing world and within the context of the boom in popularity of school Maker programs and Maker spaces over the past ten years, we decided to analyze what’s really at the core of Maker education and how to intentionally level up our Maker program.

This book is designed to be an interactive roadmap for leveling up Maker education to intentionally and systematically build learner co-agency, positive identity development, and development of competencies and skills for making real things for real people in the real world, right now. Each section contains practices to “unmake,” and specific practices to “level up.”

Just as we advocate for learner-driven making, we also encourage you to take this book as inspiration, reflect on your current Maker program, and then create or iterate a program that works for your school. Write in the margins. Use the Recap at the end of each section to begin planning. You don’t need to read this book cover to cover; start with what speaks to you and build from there.

We hope this inspires you to get started. Be brave to try something new and then try again; everything is a prototype to test and iterate.

**LET'S MAKE
SOMETHING TOGETHER.**



Section 1

WE MAKE LEARNERS

