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Nonprofits Announce Partnership to Bridge Digital Divide for Students

The State Charter Schools Foundation and Inspiredu set goal of providing devices to 1,500 students.

ATLANTA, GA – July 27, 2020 – The State Charter Schools Foundation of Georgia (SCSF), a nonprofit foundation dedicated to supporting high-quality state charter schools in Georgia, and Inspiredu (formerly PowerMyLearning Greater Atlanta), a nonprofit focused on technology literacy, have announced a partnership to “bridge the digital divide” for state charter school students. The two organizations have set a goal of providing electronic devices, along with a backpack, training, and technical support, to 1,500 vulnerable state charter school students in the next year. The \$600,000 initiative will be funded by philanthropic support, and the organizations ask for donations and sponsorships to make this goal a reality. So far, more than 160 low-income students have been served at four state charter schools through this partnership – Brookhaven Innovation Academy, Fulton Leadership Academy, Ivy Preparatory Academy, and International Academy of Smyrna. These initial devices were made possible through grant funding, including a \$1,000 grant from the Steve & Marjorie Harvey Foundation.

The SCSF estimates that more than 5,000 state charter school students lack access to an electronic device and/or the Internet at home. With the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, schools are opening virtually or creating contingency plans for distance learning in the case of closures, making the need for access to technology at home critical.

“The digital divide is not just a ‘pandemic problem,’ but COVID-19 has highlighted the need for every child to have access to an electronic device,” said Michele Neely, President of the SCSF. “Our children need to graduate high school with solid computer skills and the ability to communicate through digital devices to be successful in today’s workforce. Starting in elementary school, more instructional content is delivered through electronic devices, and even homework is now digital. Children without their own device were already at a disadvantage. Now, though, these children miss out on critical learning opportunities while school buildings are closed. Providing devices to children is a matter of ensuring equity in access to public education.”

“The Covid-19 pandemic has expedited the urgency of our work, particularly for children in marginalized communities,” said Inspiredu CEO Richard Hicks. “Inspiredu aims to serve the community through its Learning Spark Initiative which includes technology-based services for youth and adult learners, family workshops, and STEM education.”

The partnership with Inspiredu was a natural fit, stated Neely. “Inspiredu is not just giving devices to students. They ensure that children are ready to learn on their new devices.” The Inspiredu model includes providing families with training on using devices as well as a warranty and technical support. One main difference with this initiative from other efforts is that children keep the devices they are given. Schools have been loaning students devices since March, but loaning devices means logistical challenges for schools and only temporary access for students. “When we give children their own electronic devices, we are telling them that we are investing in them. There is something powerful about having something to call your own and being empowered to access learning,” said Neely.

Added Hicks, “With the partnership with SCSF, we hope that the aid we provide to our families will make an impact that lasts well beyond the moment a child receives a laptop or

training. We've seen first-hand it be a catalyst that can literally alter the course of that child's life. Access to technology should not be limited to students at well-funded schools. The work we do helps weaken the system that keeps these kids from achieving their full potential.”

The SCSF and Inspiredu invite individuals, foundations, businesses, and other organizations to support this initiative by making a donation at <https://scsfga.org/>. 100% of donations will go directly to providing devices and Internet access to low-income state charter school students.

Families needing electronic devices and access to the Internet should contact their school for assistance.

About the State Charter Schools Foundation

The State Charter Schools Foundation of Georgia (SCSF) is a nonprofit foundation dedicated to supporting high quality state charter schools serving children throughout Georgia by leveraging resources to help schools launch, build capacity, and grow. As of Fall 2020, 39 state charter schools will serve more than 33,000 students throughout Georgia. For more information about the State Charter Schools Foundation, visit <https://scsfga.org/>

About Inspiredu, Inc.

Inspiredu, formerly PowerMyLearning Greater Atlanta, is a nonprofit organization that has been serving families and schools in the Metro Atlanta region since 2007. Inspiredu's vision to be a key connector that drives digital inclusion and literacy. For more information about Inspiredu, visit www.iuatl.org.