FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Contact: Lexi Cerilli
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LIFT And Learning Blade® To Launch Interactive Web-Based
STEM Curriculum System for Students
Program to bring lightweight materials and careers to life for students

Detroit, MI. – On July 15 Lightweight Innovations for Tomorrow (LIFT) and Learning Blade®, an interactive web-based STEM learning system announced Mission LIFT. Mission LIFT is an initiative focused on increasing students’ interest in science, engineering, technology, and math (STEM), and motivating middle and high school students toward careers in Advanced Manufacturing. Utilizing Learning Blade’s unique “Mission” system, LIFT and Learning Blade will create a new curriculum for students to explore lightweighting methods, materials, and technologies used by welders, machinists, industrial designers and drafters, engineers, and materials scientists.

“Manufacturers’ expanding demand for a highly skilled science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce creates increasing opportunities for students with these skills,” said Larry Brown, executive director, LIFT. “The purpose of Mission LIFT is to allow students to immerse themselves into STEM fields in the area of metal technologies at an early age and help reconnect today’s youth to high quality, middle skills jobs.”

The Learning Blade system is organized into “Missions” that focus on societal problems and needs, enabling students to participate in engaging lessons, such as building an environmentally-sound orphanage after a major earthquake or solving energy and transportation needs in a particular city. Each task reviews specific academic skills presented in real-life context and highlights how STEM skills are used in the real world and how they link to real careers.

“Students today need meaningful experiences and learning opportunities that expand beyond what a standard classroom can provide,” said Emily Stover DeRocco, workforce and education director, LIFT. “This is an opportunity to engage students and allow them to explore career opportunities that are essential to the STEM economy and its future success.”
More than 25,000 students are registered in the Learning Blade system within 22 states, including the 5-state LIFT region – Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Additionally, all current and future licensed Learning Blade sites will have access to the new Mission LIFT curriculum, putting the new initiative in several hundred locations by Fall 2015. LIFT’s goal is to expand the number of middle schools using Learning Blade in this 5-state region.

“Using technology to deliver real-world experiences is the future of teaching,” said Sheila Boyington, president, Thinking Media. “Using our digital platform to bring STEM career awareness to students and provide them with an opportunity to become part of the future manufacturing workforce is our goal.”

Mission LIFT partners include Thinking Media, BattelleEd and STEMconnector®.

For more information on Mission LIFT and other LIFT education and workforce development initiatives, please visit www.lift.technology or contact LIFT Workforce & Education Director, Emily DeRocco, at ederocco@lift.technology.

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ABOUT LIFT

Lightweight Innovations For Tomorrow (LIFT) is a public-private partnership that will develop and deploy advanced lightweight materials manufacturing technologies and programs to prepare the workforce. The LIFT region includes 5 states: Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee.

LIFT is operated by the American Lightweight Materials Manufacturing Innovation Institute (ALMMII) and was selected through a competitive process led by the U.S. Department of Defense under the Lightweight and Modern Metals Manufacturing Innovation (LM3I) solicitation issued by the U.S. Navy's Office of Naval Research. LIFT is one of the founding institutes in the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation, a federal initiative to create regional hubs to accelerate the development and adoption of cutting-edge manufacturing technologies.

ABOUT LEARNING BLADE®

Learning Blade®, owned and operated by Thinking Media, creators of ACT’s KeyTrain®, is designed to provide engaging resources that will expose students to STEM related career opportunities and help them develop key skills as they move forward. This innovative approach to STEM education focuses on activities that can be utilized both in a self-paced game environment and as practice in academic classrooms.
BUILDING 21st CENTURY MANUFACTURING TALENT

Mission LIFT: Interactive Web-Based Curriculum from Learning Blade®

An Education & Workforce Development Initiative for LIFT...Lightweight Innovations for Tomorrow

THE PROBLEM

Exposure to new technologies and careers is lacking in today's classrooms. Fewer and fewer students are entering science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields than ever before. In 2009, only 18% of new college graduates completed a bachelor's degree in a STEM field. This is down from 24% two decades ago. While enrollment in STEM majors is declining, employer demand for workers with these skills is on the rise and the gap will continue to widen. Pending retirements coupled with a declining flow of new workers and an increasing need for talent are creating a large gap for the STEM economy. High-tech manufacturers will not have the talent they need for success if more students do not choose STEM careers. The #1 reason students do not choose STEM careers is lack of exposure!

This is especially a problem for high-tech manufacturers in the sectors poised to use new lightweight metals, composite materials, and technologies. As the manufacturing sector increases the use of lightweighting technologies and materials, students are less and less likely to pursue the educational opportunities to gain any related experience, making it difficult for them to know whether a career in manufacturing is right in their future.

Alignment to LIFT Workforce & Education Goals

Attract more young people to manufacturing careers
Ensure students gain STEM foundational skills
Connecting disconnected students to high quality, middle skills jobs

THE SOLUTION

Technology allows today's students to have experiences and learning opportunities that expand beyond what a standard classroom can provide. Learning Blade® is an interactive, web-based STEM curriculum system focused on increasing student interest in and attitudes towards STEM careers. LIFT is partnering with Learning Blade® to bring lightweight technologies, materials and careers to life for middle and high school students. Using Learning Blade®'s unique Mission system, LIFT and Learning Blade® are creating a curriculum for students to explore the science and technology used by welders, machinists, industrial designers and drafters, engineers, and materials scientists. The learning materials are organized in Missions that focus on societal problems and needs that attract all students, particularly girls. With Learning Blade®, students pursue engaging Missions and lessons that solve a problem, such as rescuing an injured dolphin and creating an artificial prosthetic tail, building an environmentally-sound orphanage after a major earthquake, or solving energy and transportation needs in a new city. Each activity in a Mission reviews specific academic skills presented in a real-life context that highlights how these STEM skills are used in the real world, and link to real careers using new technologies. The web-based Mission format provides a truly 21st century way of teaching the 21st century workforce.

PARTNERS

Thinking Media
The creators of Learning Blade® and the creators of ACT's KeyTrain® system

BattelleEd
Provides validation for the Learning Blade® system

STEMconnector®
Provides promotion and national exposure for Learning Blade® and STEM activities.
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Thinking Media will create new online curriculum materials within the Learning Blade® platform focused on lightweight metals and manufacturing technologies and careers as part of the curriculum available to all Learning Blade® users nationally. The new “Mission Guide” and “Mission Conclusion” lessons will highlight the lightweight metals industry and will be disseminated to all Learning Blade® users in the Fall of 2015. In winter of 2015/2016, participating schools will provide feedback with a final evaluation and report in spring 2016.

NATIONWIDE IMPACT

All currently licensed Learning Blade® sites will have access to the new LIFT Mission curriculum, putting the new Mission in several hundred locations this Fall 2015. Learning Blade® is currently in schools within 22 states, including the five LIFT region states. Over 25,000 students are registered in the system.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

As previous data and studies indicate, students who complete the Learning Blade® LIFT Mission will demonstrate a 70% greater awareness of lightweight metals and lightweighting technologies. Not only will students learn more about the science and materials, but also they will be more aware of careers that encompass lightweighting technologies. The LIFT Mission is designed to increase interest in manufacturing careers by 35% in students who successfully complete the curriculum and post-Mission activities.

Many students who would not otherwise have the opportunity to learn about or have exposure to lightweight materials and technologies will gain experiences and knowledge to increase the likelihood that they enter advanced manufacturing careers. More student exposure further increases the size of the potential workforce, closing a portion of the talent gap.

Learning Blade® has been validated as a supplemental tool for increasing STEM career awareness and interest by BattelleEd. Learning Blade® was identified as a suggested STEM resource in ACT’s Condition of STEM 2014 Report.

For more information please see lift.technology or contact LIFT Education & Workforce Director Emily DeRocco at ederocco@lift.technology.