



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **NCFL's new project engages JCPS students and families in wonder, immersive learning, and service**

**LOUISVILLE, KY (March 8, 2022)** – What happens when we combine inquiry-based science education, virtual reality, and family engagement? Students and their families at several Louisville, Kentucky schools will find out soon.

The [Carnegie Corporation of New York](#) has selected the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) as one of only ten organizations to receive a Family Engagement to Improve Student Learning grant. The Corporation is a leading philanthropic funder of research and programs supporting family engagement as a proven model for dismantling longstanding educational inequities and creating lasting change. Of the nearly 350 organizations to apply for this grant, NCFL scored in the top three percent.

This opportunity is designed to support science education and address family engagement learning opportunities with students at Title I schools in Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), Kentucky's largest school district. In partnership with JCPS, NCFL will be providing curriculum-based professional development for educators to implement eight-week programs where families engage in activities that promote inquiry and build skills through service learning experiences. Connecting the program efforts to the NextGen Science Standards and JCPS curriculum (OpenSciEd) will provide opportunities for deeper learning.

Developed by NCFL in 2013, [Family Service Learning](#) is a deliberate, research-based educational process in which families identify problems within their own communities and carry out service projects to address them. The projects are researched, designed, and executed by families in their own communities. Families will practice and apply the science standards in projects designed to address real-world and authentic science-related challenges in their communities. Extending learning beyond the school walls ensures continuous learning and builds deeper engagement.

NCFL plans to leverage its popular digital learning resource, [Wonderopolis.org](#), to enhance and supplement the science-based curriculum units throughout the program. Using Wonderopolis®, families will build scientific knowledge and understanding transferable to everyday concepts of science. Wonderopolis is well-known for providing high-quality learning content on a variety of topics. In fact, the site offers over 1,200 Wonders of the Day® on science topics alone. Participating JCPS educators will learn how to incorporate Wonderopolis curriculum and Family Service Learning into their instructional practices with students and engagement with families.

Finally, families will demonstrate their science skills and knowledge as a capstone to their shared learning experience. NCFL will make available opportunities for students and families to design a demonstration of their learning through the use of virtual reality (VR) technology. In partnership with the Kentucky Science Center, NCFL will co-design a culminating exhibit of family-created VR presentations to be viewed by museum-goers and the community.

“By combining inquiry and wonder, a relevant way to apply new knowledge and skills via Family Service Learning, and virtual reality technology to showcase families’ work, the benefits are twofold,” said Dr. Felicia C. Smith, NCFL president. “Families, particularly Black and brown families, have the opportunity to be at the forefront of quality science learning experiences and technology tackling local challenges as changemakers in their communities. Furthermore, educators will build their capacity to engage families in practical and meaningful ways, creating more equitable instructional experiences.”

“JCPS is excited to be partnering with NCFL to extend classroom experiences into the home, collaborating with families to enhance deeper learning in science education,” said Michelle L. Dillard, assistant superintendent of Teaching and Learning at JCPS. “This work will build on our existing partnership with NCFL ensuring families are central to advancing learning outcomes. All of us continue to be impacted by science-related challenges in our community, and students and families working together with educators will increase our collective learning and outcomes.”

Lacey Eckles, the district’s K-12 Science Lead said, “Getting students and their families excited about science is a goal for many science educators. This partnership with NCFL will expand learning opportunities of the *OpenSciEd* curriculum implemented in classrooms across the district. When educators, students, families, and content come together it represents the most promising practices for ensuring engagement and learning occurs.”

The project launches this spring. As a culminating event for this endeavor, the Kentucky Science Center exhibit will occur in the spring of 2023. To learn more about this or other NCFL initiatives, follow NCFL on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Instagram](#).

#### **About the National Center for Families Learning**

The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) is a national nonprofit that works to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families. Partnering with educators, literacy advocates, and policymakers, NCFL develops and provides programming, professional development, and resources from the classroom to the community that empower and raise families to achieve their potential. For more information on NCFL, visit [familieslearning.org](http://familieslearning.org).

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