NEW ENGLAND INNOVATION ACADEMY

Innovation at the Core

New England Innovation Academy (NEIA), in Marlborough, MA, opened its doors in the fall of 2021 with 75 students. In the next five years, it intends to grow to almost 600 day and boarding students across grades 6–12. The school’s vision is to “Prepare the next generation of innovators to pursue their dreams and shape a better world.”

Matthew Kressy, founding trustee and head of innovation at NEIA, describes problem solving as “The act of asking people what they need before you start creating solutions for them. So instead of immediately building a car, a designer might ask those who will drive it what they want the car to do.” This is the exact approach the NEIA’s founders practiced during the planning stages of the school. They interviewed students, families, and educators about what they wanted to see in education. The answer? Something different. To achieve this, NEIA’s founders decided to rely on something they knew well: innovation. Innovation, it appears, isn’t simply the name of the school but the foundational core of NEIA’s values.

Human-Centered Design

Human-centered design is the cornerstone of NEIA’s educational approach. This focus on empathy, interdisciplinary teamwork, and a structured innovation process helps students develop the skills and habits of mind to work toward solutions. This commitment to providing an innovative, relevant, and future-focused learning experience is achieved by making learning personal. They work with each student to identify their own ‘PIN’ to bring passion to purpose, take ideas to impact, and prepare for what’s next.

What’s a PIN?

- **Passion-driven purpose.** Passion is understanding yourself and realizing your true potential. Purpose begins with belonging and calls us to create greater good.
- **Idea to impact.** Discover needs with empathy. Solve problems creatively and resourcefully beyond conventional means.
- **Next generation of innovators shaping a better world.** NEIA incubates future innovators who will be the change they want to see in the rapidly evolving world.

Real-World Inclusion

When NEIA’s founders began envisioning their curriculum, one of the elements core to their requirements was real-world inclusion. Their goal was for the students at their school to be able to take the concepts they learn and apply them in real-world situations. Outside partnerships with universities, local community groups, government, and businesses are critical for preparing NEIA’s young innovators with perspectives and experiences vital to their growth as next-generation problem solvers.

The combination of NEIA’s human-centered approach and real-world inclusion empowers students to understand that their work can have an impact far beyond themselves or their classrooms. This deep-rooted discovery that their lives and actions matter locally and globally is the key to NEIA’s students looking toward their future with purpose and passion.

ABOUT NEIA

New England Innovation Academy (NEIA) is the first human-centered design middle and high school in the U.S. A new global school for day and boarding students in grades 6–12, NEIA is preparing young innovators with a future-focused approach, human-centered design, and real-world inclusion. Set on a 26-acre campus in Marlborough, Massachusetts, NEIA offers a custom curriculum that encourages students to build empathy, take risks, and engage in hands-on community, environment, and industry projects.

Learn more: neiacademy.org