



I am sure that there are any number of poignant, meaningful quotes that could capture the zeitgeist of 2020. Today I find myself drawn to the simple wisdom of Jersey native Jon Bonjovi who sings “When you can’t do what you do, you do what you can.” As a nonprofit committed to ensuring that all young people graduate high school college and career ready, we have long understood that education is so much more than school. Experiences outside the classroom matter. Despite the enormous challenges that parents, students, educators, and program providers are facing, we celebrate their extraordinary accomplishments during these extraordinary times.

So many of our amazing partners have demonstrated their ability to respond quickly and effectively. In our case, this fall has been busier, more impactful, and satisfying than ever. What we’ve been able to do over the past several months would not have been possible if strong, positive relationships were not already in place. We would not even be here without the support of civic leaders, funding partners, district support, and a willingness of a small but mighty staff to jump headfirst into an entirely different reality while trusting that everything was going to work out. Thank you. We are humbled by and grateful for your support.

Our Programs:

- When our programs became virtual, it enabled us to open them up to students attending schools that we do not traditionally serve.
- Because our Career Pathways Advisors have relationships with young people, families, and school personnel, we have been able to stay in constant contact with the high school seniors already in the program while recruiting our incoming class of juniors.
- With the support of the United Way- Foundation for the Carolinas through the Covid Relief Fund, MeckEd began offering paid virtual internships beginning in the Spring and continuing through the Fall.
- MeckEd’s Male Mentoring Program was launched in late September and early indicators point to a transformative long-term impact.

And then there is the Learning Lab:

- When we realized that our students would not be going back for in-person learning in September we converted our offices to a safe place where students can learn. Beginning on September 8, with temperatures getting checked at the door, masks and hand sanitizer in use, learning stations set eight feet apart and lined on three sides by acrylic “Sneeze Guards,” an electrostatic germ zapper that cleans doorknobs, seats, desks, phones, and laptops, and daily hospital grade cleaning, MeckEd’s “Learning Lab” opens its doors to our Career Pathways students at 7:30am every morning.
- With the amazing support of our partners at Charlotte Works, Duke Energy, Bosch, and our Board of Directors (including the unstoppable Tchernavia Montgomery who managed to use her contacts to hook the students up with snacks (thank you Pepsi) as well as a ping pong table to enjoy some socially distant down time!
- The Learning Lab has quickly become an amazing place. In between “blocks” we engage our seniors in goal setting and cultivating college and career readiness skills.



During “free college application” week, we hosted three evening events where the entire team assisted with forms, applications, and essays. In some ways the pandemic has led us to offer the same programs multiple times to fewer students keeping overall numbers the same but increasing impact.

- To see and hear what students have to say about the Learning Lab, click [here](#)!

Charlotte NEXT

- Launched in December 2016 in collaboration with the Office of then Mayor Jennifer Roberts (and current MeckEd Board Chair), Charlotte NEXT is focused on ensuring that all young people, particularly middle school aged students benefit from experiences outside of the traditional school day. This year with the support of the Gambrell Family Foundation and a grant from the NCDPI, MeckEd is supporting high quality Out of School Time programming at five CMS middle schools: Albemarle Road, James Martin, Druid Hills, Wilson STEM Academy, and Ranson Middle School. A special shout out to our amazing partners- Firm Foundations, Simmons & McCrorey YMCA, The Dottie Rose Foundation, and Digi-Bridge for providing those experiences necessary to thrive in and beyond school.
- The Locator, a tool to help parents and students find afterschool and summer programs is getting an update in the next two months. Be sure to keep an eye out on Social Media and in your email for an invitation from MeckEd to add to and/or update the information on The Locator.

What’s New?

Over the next few months we will be updating the visuals and graphics on our website, our marketing collateral, as well as social media platforms. To get a peek at our new look, check us out at www.mecked.org.

Stay tuned for more news as we find even more creative ways to ensure that all young people have access to the knowledge, skills, and experiences to thrive in and beyond school. NO MATTER WHAT.