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Peg Zokowski - [CreositySpace](http://CreositySpace)  
508.740.5906 / [Peg@CreositySpace.com](mailto:Peg@CreositySpace.com)

Benjamin Roberts – AT&T  
716.262.5883 / [ben.roberts@att.com](mailto:ben.roberts@att.com)



## **Capital Region *Cool Kid IP Challenge* Powered by AT&T Provides Unique Opportunity for Elementary School Students to Showcase their Ideas and Entrepreneurial Skills**

***Young finalists will present their ideas at a live pitch on the Rensselaer campus to panel of judges from the academic and business community***

**Albany, NY** - More than 130 elementary school students from across the Capital Region in grades 3 and 4 have been challenged to channel their creativity by developing a business or product idea as part of the *Cool Kid IP Challenge* powered by AT&T. The six week-long challenge, which follows the format of the ABC hit entrepreneurial business show *Shark Tank*, launched on October 13. The top three teams from each school will present their concepts and compete for educational prizes at a live pitch event on the Rensselaer campus to a panel of judges from the academic and business community on Dec. 8.

The STEM and entrepreneurial education initiative is a combined effort of CreositySpace, Rensselaer Paul J. '69 and Kathleen M. Severino Center for Technological Entrepreneurship (Eship@RPI), AT&T, Phillips Lytle LLP, Troy Innovation Garage and Recovery Sports Grill.

The *Cool Kid IP Challenge* powered by AT&T was conceived by [CreositySpace](http://CreositySpace) and connects elementary students and their teachers to STEM by bringing entrepreneurs and innovators into the classroom—both virtually and in-person. “Entrepreneurs and innovators are on the front lines of innovation, and we believe they are ideal role models to make STEM current, real and relatable to young students at a time when kids begin to ask, ‘What do I want to do when I grow up?’ They realize that STEM is a part of their future,” said Peg Zokowski, founder and CEO. The Challenge actively incorporates key elements of the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards, and is designed to connect kids to their own ideas, and to see value in those ideas, while introducing them to the engineering design and product development process.

Students from each of the four schools participating in the Challenge—**Sheridan Preparatory Academy in Albany, School 14 in Troy, Slingerlands Elementary in Bethlehem, and Castleton Elementary in Schodack**—will work in teams to answer the Challenge question, “If you could change something in your home, school or community, what would it be and how would you do it?” Once they have brainstormed their solution teams must also identify the target market, manufacturing methods, and the sale and protection of their product.

The students’ teachers, with assistance from CreositySpace and four external coaches, will guide students through 10-12 half-hour creative sessions covering the evolution from idea to product. In addition, the students and teachers will use materials developed by CreositySpace including its *Book of Ideas – NY*, student reference guide and workbook, and a slide template for students’ presentations.

Each of the teams will first pitch to a panel of teachers from their school who will select the top three teams to compete in the Live Pitch final on Dec. 8. Team finalists will present their inventions and solutions before a panel of 5 judges comprised of representatives from AT&T, Recovery Sports Grill, Phillips Lytle Eship@RPI and the Small Business Development Center.

“AT&T is proud to collaborate with these dynamic organizations to develop and support this innovative experience for these students as it further enhances our commitment to providing resources for STEM-related educational programming throughout the Capital Region,” said Marissa Shorenstein, New York president, AT&T. “Our economy continues to transform at a robust pace – requiring a workforce with a focus on technological

education and literacy – and STEM programs like this one are vital to ensure that the students of today are equipped to compete in the global innovation economy of tomorrow.”

“The educational initiative of this challenge is consistent with the Severino Center’s mission to train the next generation of entrepreneurs,” said Jason Kuruzovich, associate professor in the Lally School of Management, who also serves as academic director of the Severino Center. “This initiative recognizes that in today’s world, entrepreneurial skills are life skills and entrepreneurial opportunities occur in business, technology, the arts, socially and culturally. We believe that encouraging young minds around the Capital Region to begin to think entrepreneurially also aligns with Eship@RPI’s commitment to expanding and enhancing the region’s startup community. “

Kuruzovich noted that the group also hosts a regional meetup called StartUp Tech Valley that allows early-stage startups to pitch their companies to other entrepreneurs, potential investors, and customers.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Department of Labor, STEM focused initiatives are critical for our youth because much of the growth in the domestic and global economy will come from STEM-related jobs—a highly lucrative and competitive field—and which is an underlining motivation of establishing the *Cool Kid IP Challenge powered by AT&T*. It is estimated by 2020 there will be 2.4 million unfilled STEM jobs with more than half made up of computer and coding careers, underscoring the importance of providing the youth the tools and skills necessary to compete in this innovation economy.

AT&T’s support this program is part of the company’s legacy of supporting educational programs focused on STEM disciplines in New York through AT&T Aspire, the company’s signature \$350 million philanthropic initiative that drives innovation in education by bringing diverse resources to bear on the issue including funding, technology, employee volunteerism and mentoring. Aspire is one of the nation’s largest corporate commitments focused on school success and workforce readiness by creating new learning environments and educational delivery systems to help students succeed and prepare them to take on 21<sup>st</sup> century careers. AT&T has given more than \$103 million to support STEM initiatives since 1987. Projects supported by AT&T contributions range from after-school programs and camps for students at risk of dropping out to hands-on technology labs and elite robotics competitions.

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#### **About CreositySpace**

[CreositySpace LLC](#) is working to inspire a generation of dreamers, inventors and innovators by connecting kids to STEM through entrepreneurship. Based in the Albany, New York and Seattle, Washington regions, CreositySpace collaborates with STEM entrepreneurs and innovators to help kids tap into their natural creativity and curiosity at a time when they ask, “What do I want to do when I grow up?” Our in-school program, *Book of Ideas*, and hands-on activities keep STEM current, real and relatable to young minds, while our Educator Guides, *FireSci™* videos, and STEM company database, are designed to help educators integrate STEM into all classes.

#### **About Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute**

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, founded in 1824, is America’s first technological research university. The university offers bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in engineering; the sciences; information technology and web sciences; architecture; management; and the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Rensselaer faculty advance research in a wide range of fields, with an emphasis on biotechnology, nanotechnology, computational science and engineering, data science, and the media arts and technology. The Institute has an established record of success in the transfer of technology from the laboratory to the marketplace, fulfilling its founding mission of applying science “to the common purposes of life.” For more information, please visit <http://www.rpi.edu>.