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Van Andel Institute for Education Celebrates a Year of Promising Growth and Renewal

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (December 7, 2022) — The mission of Van Andel Institute for Education (VAI) has always been to create modern classrooms where curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking thrive. Over this past year, several new programs aimed at supporting students, teachers, administrators, and parents, have been put into motion and are showing positive results. These new initiatives range from hands-on STEM lessons to summer school programming, and even a support network for new or incoming teachers! Additionally, VAI has also witnessed an impressive expansion within its existing student and teacher programs and is working diligently to continue this growth into 2023. By building off these milestones, VAI reaffirms its commitment to education while also striving toward new horizons.

These new initiatives from VAI are making learning memorable, meaningful, and fun!

- **[Curiosity on Wheels](#)**
Curiosity on Wheels takes inquiry-based science to new heights as participants think and act like scientists by conducting hands-on STEM investigations. Whether it be addressing science standards, enhancing thematic units, or just having fun, VAI can program and deliver an event to meet a school's content, time, and budgetary needs.
- **[Inquiry in Action](#)**
Inquiry in Action offers a variety of inquiry-based lessons that are sure to engage students and get them thinking deeply about science. These 15 to 30-minute experiences allow teachers to introduce a variety of relevant concepts without added prep and planning to their busy schedule!
- **[New Teacher Network](#)**
VAI's New Teacher Network allows beginning teachers to receive the targeted support they need as they get started in this rewarding, but daunting profession. By learning great content, sharing their experiences, and receiving validation from their network, teachers grow as people and as professionals as they embark on their learning journey.
- **[NexGen Inquiry Quests](#)**
NexGen Inquiry Quests come with story-driven videos which guide students through a process of scientific inquiry and hands-on experimentation. Students exercise critical and creative thinking through scientific journaling, collaborate with peers, and apply what they learn to make the world a better place.
- **[Project-based Summer School](#)**
Summer School played a significant role in filling instructional gaps and accelerating student learning during the 2022 school year. VAI knew Summer School teachers didn't have the time or bandwidth to create robust PBL units and match them to core content curriculum. So, VAI

jumped in to provide customized projects that met grade level, scheduling, and content needs. This allowed teachers to spend less time planning and more time doing what they do best — teaching! VAI worked with 7 new schools as a result of this initiative.

- **Timely Topics**

This year saw the addition of several new Timely Topic lessons, such as Valuing our Veterans and Hispanic Heritage Month, as well as a resurgence of interest in VAI's existing activities. Timely Topics saw over 5,000 downloads, and in over 40 countries, with many educators even reaching out to express their gratitude for the free lessons.

Furthermore, these existing programs have increased in scope and are now welcoming participants in higher quantities.

- **Professional Development**

The educational landscape is ever shifting, and VAI is here to help educators meet new challenges and elevate their instructional practices. Flex PD is a comprehensive and affordable professional development program designed to meet the needs of all teachers. This year VAI offered Flex PD solutions to more than 25 schools and provided professional development services to more than 2,300 educators.

- **Instructional Tools**

VAI offers Blue Apple™ projects based on an internationally recognized gold standard, delivering lesson plans, online resources, cross-curricular mini-lessons and a host of other tools that make it easier for teachers to get started right away. This 2021-22 school year, VAI shipped 324 Blue Apple projects to teachers, an increase of 16% over the prior year.

- **Field Trips**

VAI Field Trips encourage students and teachers to think and act like scientists with unique, grade-specific investigations that emphasize hands-on discovery. Coming out of the pandemic, teachers have been particularly interested in exploring VAI's Field Trips. The Education Institute hosted more than 2,500 students for field trips, an increase of 50% over the prior year.

- **Summer Camps**

Through VAI Summer Camps, students can attend unique camps which celebrate science, engineering and robotics. The demand for these week-long, affordable camps was at an all-time high in 2022, so VAI doubled up on many camp offerings, meeting with a total of 305 students, compared to 168 in 2021!

Van Andel Institute for Education is confident that the coming year will see even more progress in its teacher and student programs. By investing in the community, supporting teachers, and committing itself to academic excellence, VAI is excited to reach for even loftier goals while leading the way in comprehensive STEM education.

VAI never wants cost to be an obstacle to great learning. If price ever becomes an issue, please reach out over email at information@vaei.org. We may be able to help. For more information about VAI's latest resources, please [visit vaei.org](http://vaei.org).

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ABOUT VAN ANDEL INSTITUTE

Van Andel Institute (VAI) is an agile biomedical research and education organization that unleashes innovation to multiply impact. Established in Grand Rapids, Michigan, by the Van Andel family, VAI

collaborates around the world to advance bold ideas in biomedicine and education. With a staff of more than 400 and a growing network of partners, VAI studies the origins of cancer, Parkinson's and other diseases and translates its findings into breakthrough prevention and treatment strategies to improve human health. The Graduate School at VAI offers a Ph.D. in molecular and cellular biology through a research-intensive, interdisciplinary program that prepares students for successful careers as independent investigators. VAI also is dedicated to creating classrooms where curiosity, creativity and critical thinking thrive, offering engaging programs for K-12 students and transformative professional development and instructional tools for teachers. Find out more about Van Andel Institute by visiting vai.org.