Inclusive STEM
Actionable Ideas from Silicon Valley thought leaders
Making a more just world means creating more diversity and inclusion in the tech sector.

In the spirit of design thinking, Benetech CEO, Jim Fruchterman, posed three key questions to 200 Silicon Valley thought leaders from the education, philanthropy, technology and nonprofit sectors.

Here are their ideas.
Design Thinking Challenge Questions:

- How might the education and tech communities work together to empower all kids to unleash their STEM passions and talents?
- What have you seen work to encourage more diversity in STEM in both the classroom and workforce?
- What can tech leaders do to make the tech industry more supportive and a model for diversity and inclusion? And what do they need to stop doing?
Idea 1.1 Provide mentors and role model examples in the classroom and opportunities to visit companies to listen to leaders of color or minorities.
Idea 1.2 Project-based learning and Real-world, industry involvement at ALL ages.
Idea 1.3 Change the sensory & social biases. e.g. in my work - if you teach math through dance, other groups emerge as leaders.
Idea 1.4 MODEL diversity -- don't just talk about it, please
Idea 1.5 Listen - to what community members say and how they describe their problems and needs. Provide - toolkits, pieces, combineable bits to let them build their own solutions.

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Idea 1.6 The question implies its own answer, in part: Find each student's passion and kindle it.
Idea 1.7 Mentorships and apprenticeships for high school kids in local tech businesses.
Idea 1.8 Access
Build independence
Provide opportunity
Family/school/community engagement
Find projects important and meaningful to community
Celebrate culture everyday
Idea 1.9 Can we have a very well developed conference where educators and engineers facilitate and create a project/projects collaboratively that they then co-teach. Engaging, well developed lessons that inspire.
Idea 1.10 The Montessori method of experiential learning is a great model to emulate in traditional schools. In my high school in Beaverton, OR, kids worked in depth on projects weeks at a time. They had no tests or home work but were self-motivated.
Idea 1.11 Most important indicator of success in math is not computational skills, but spatial thinking.
Idea 2.1 Makers Movement. Experience STEM and there will be more "ah-ha's"
Idea 2.2 Embrace the authentic questions/problems/challenges that students find. (In other words, don't construct the problem set!)
Idea 2.3 The Tech Challenge is extremely successful in getting middle/high school girls to participate in a STEM activity. Someone should figure out why so many girls are attracted. But I think this team approach, specifically small teams, resonates with and attracts girls.
Idea 2.4 As a school leader in a poor community, my students feel alienated by Silicon Valley. How can we demystify these huge companies and make them feel welcomed? Open House Regular tours with POC (people of color) leading and inviting them.
Idea 2.5 Bring the opportunity to the school or community. i.e. much easier to learn CS or genetics if your school offers it.
Idea 2.6 Have kids do projects that they generate and care about.
Idea 2.7 The more women and POC (people of color) who come into our schools and share their story and demystify their journey...model the way...The women and POC need to see it a lot to believe it is possible.
Idea 2.8 Visible, approachable role models. (people like me)
Idea 2.9 More and different interns
Idea 3.1 Value ($) and cultivate soft skills

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Idea 3.2 Have more open conversations. Tell it like it is. "It's structural."
Idea 3.3 Value (i.e. pay for + promote on the basis of) 'soft skills' like good management + building thriving inclusive talent.
Idea 3.4 Keep working with children at the youngest age you can.
Idea 3.5 Identify an individual not from the community they are from, but the community they want to be in.
Idea 3.6 Rooney Rule applied to my team: As a leader, I require HR to present me with gender or ethnically diverse candidates as part of this candidate slate before we fill a req. Leads to a wider funnel.
Idea 3.7 Name the elephants in the room and then talk about them and with them.
Idea 3.8 Transparency - the numbers behind where each organization is today. Clarity - What is our goal and how do we expect to get there. Listen - With transparency and clarity, we'll get feedback Listen, incorporate, iterate.
Idea 3.9 Majority of p.o.c. (people of color) in tech are contractors of service (food, maintenance, custodial). What if they were employees of the tech company with opportunity for extended learning, growing and a living wage?
Idea 3.10 Figure out more "blind" screening & hiring processes. How to evaluate candidates and choose employees without knowing their sex, race, etc. Too much hiring is acquiring more people resembling the existing employees rather than a broader viewpoint.
Idea 3.11 Start: Hiring and promoting more women and people of color as managers.
Stop: Making key decisions in male-only parties.
Benetech is committed to diversity and inclusion in tech. Learn more https://benetech.org/lab/accessible-stem-education/

Get Involved

Join the conversation. Add your ideas and learn more about Benetech's solutions for inclusive STEM.

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