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American Student Assistance Announces Second Annual “Solve Together” Career Exploration Competition for Middle School Classrooms and Students

Digital-first, student-directed contest challenges participants to tackle real-world problems including Climate Change and Colonizing Mars, and present innovative solutions

BOSTON – December 3, 2021 -- American Student Assistance® (ASA), a national nonprofit that helps to foster students’ understanding of postsecondary education and career pathways, announced today the second annual [ASA Solve Together: Tomorrow’s Leaders Tackling Today’s Challenges](#) competition. More than 65 percent of students feel they would have benefited from more career exploration in middle or high school, according to ASA’s white paper, “[How Gen Z Approaches Decision-Making: Education and Career](#).” Organized in partnership with the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), the national contest is an engaging opportunity for grades seven through nine educators to easily embed career exploration and 21st century skill development in their middle school classrooms. In addition, outside of the classroom, students ages 13-16, with the support of an adult, can sign up with a partner or group to participate in a challenge.

Registration is required for contest participation. Submissions will be accepted from January 3 through March 4, 2022 via [Solvably](#), an award-winning digital collaborative, creative problem solving platform operated by [MassiveU](#). Winners will be announced during the early April timeframe. Participants can choose from four challenges, including [Public Health](#), [Climate Change](#), [Colonizing Mars](#), and a [Passion Project](#), based on a problem they care about. Each challenge is multidisciplinary and aligns to state standards, all while providing the chance for teams to engage in authentic career exploration. Overall, the experience helps learners build critical foundational skills, including communication, critical thinking, and collaboration; discover passions and explore different paths; and get credit with participation certificates, boosted college applications, and monetary prizes ranging from \$10,000 to \$500 for schools, educators, and learners.

According to ASA’s nationally-representative survey of middle and high school students, [half of middle school students reported “picking the right career for me” as a source of stress](#). “Today’s young people do not have equitable access to the information they need to make an informed post-secondary education and career plan,” said ASA Vice President of Strategy & Innovation, Alisa Wilke. “ASA ‘Solve Together’ gives learners agency by encouraging them to explore issues they care about, discover their interests and skills, explore education and career pathways, and turn passions into plans. This is also a powerful way to re-engage pandemic era disconnected learners by encouraging them to refocus on the futures and possibilities.”

“AMLE is proud to be a featured partner for the second annual ASA Solve Together contest,” said Stephanie Simpson, CEO, AMLE. “We know that middle school is an ideal time for students to explore and learn about themselves and the world around them, and that students benefit when curriculum is organized around significant problems and issues in society. This meets both of those aims, offering students the opportunity to tackle real-world problems through the lens of potential future careers. We can’t wait to see what our amazingly creative middle grades students come up with this year!”

The first place winners from the [2021 inaugural competition](#), the Plouffe Academy (Brockton, MA) “Galactic Girls,” commented on their experience. “We felt empowered. We felt confident. We felt excited that our knowledge of science could do so much for NASA – and so much for our future.”

"As soon as I announced this opportunity, my students displayed a level of excitement and interest I haven't seen before," said Educator Award recipient and seventh grade math teacher, Hannah Choi, Larchmont Charter School. "Hopefully, this introduced them to a new career field they would've never considered, and I'm confident these creative thinkers will change the world for the better!"

The classroom and student submissions will be reviewed separately by a panel of judges that include representatives from the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) and ASA. To learn more about each challenge and register to participate, please visit <https://asasolvetogether.org>.

About American Student Assistance (ASA)

American Student Assistance® (ASA) is a national nonprofit committed to helping students know themselves, know their options, and make informed decisions to achieve their education and career goals. ASA believes students should have access to career-connected learning, starting in middle school, so they can develop a plan for their future. ASA fulfills its mission by providing digital-first resources directly to students and support for educators and intermediaries. To learn more about ASA, visit www.asa.org/about-us.

About the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE)

The Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) is an international membership organization that helps middle grades educators reach every student, grow professionally, and create great schools. To learn more, visit www.amle.org.