

Tulane MakerSpace an inspiration to New Orleans schools

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Tulane physics professor Timothy Schuler, left, shares MakerSpace ideas with Kim Duhe and Geoffrey Philabaum of Mount Carmel Academy, which has its own MakerSpace.

Tulane University opened its [MakerSpace](#) in 2016, offering students and professors alike access to digital fabrication tools like 3-D printers, laser cutters, milling machines and lathes.

With two years under its belt, Cedric Walker, professor emeritus of biomedical engineering and maker-in-chief, sees an additional role for the cutting-edge facility – outreach. He started the initiative earlier this month, inviting more than a dozen

teachers from local public and private schools to share ways MakerSpace education can improve outcomes in subjects like math, science and history.

But rather than introduce them to the concept of the MakerSpace, Walker helped them learn how to make the most of their own MakerSpaces.

Eleven K-12 schools in the New Orleans area have a MakerSpace, and Walker believes a collaboration among the schools will go a long way in enhancing education for children of all ages. The group plans to visit a different MakerSpace each month.

“We thought, ‘Let’s start out by bringing everyone over here.’ It was great. There was no set agenda, no program. We walked around the MakerSpace and talked for 90 minutes about what we do and why we do it. And it really gelled with them.”

Visitors included Christopher Hatten, a teacher at Mildred Osborne Charter School, where the IDIYA CoLab MakerSpace invites students in grades K-8 to explore physics, basic engineering, simple circuits, 3-D modeling and printing, vectoring and laser cutting, CNC milling and sewing.

“It allows for students to collaborate and use the skills they are developing in core subjects in a new way. When kindergarten was reading a story about characters set in Japan, for example, we 3-D printed a pagoda so they could notice the cultural differences in architecture.”

Hatten described his visit to the Tulane MakerSpace as an “inspirational experience.”

“It helped me to realize that I’m not alone in emphasizing the importance of MakerSpace education in New Orleans,” he said. “There’s a group of excellent teachers that are ready and willing to collaborate to bring a brighter future to our students from ages 5-25 and beyond.”