

On Let's Talk STEM With Dr. Mackie, STEM Learning Expert Ron Ottinger Raises Alarms Over Covid-19 Damage To Education

Dr. Mackie & Ottinger discuss how to get children learning at a high level, what parents can do and the importance of getting kids into after school programs

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- [Let's Talk STEM with Dr. Calvin Mackie Podcast](#)



The COVID-19 pandemic caused “tragic” damage to the education of America’s children on par with the devastating impact of World War II, says Ron Ottinger, a national leader and expert in STEM learning. Ottinger, Executive Director of the [STEM Next Opportunity Fund](#), appeared on the Let’s Talk STEM with Dr. Calvin Mackie podcast.

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“It's a tragedy,” Ottinger tells host, Dr. Calvin Mackie. “We had a lost generation during World War II. And unfortunately, we are on a precipice of having another lost generation.”

Ottinger maintains that organizations on the ground, such as Boys and Girls Clubs and others that provide afterschool and summer programs, are essential in getting kids re-

engaged with learning. He noted, however, that the pandemic and rising prices has left many parents struggling to feed their families and keep a roof over their heads.

“We've got to get folks back into learning, and learning STEM,” he says on the podcast.

Under Ottinger’s leadership, STEM Next launched the Million Girls Moonshot, a national movement to empower one million girls to engage in STEM through afterschool and summer learning by 2025. He was also the founding co-chair of the STEM Funders Network and the National STEM Learning Ecosystem Initiative. As the Executive Editor of STEM Ready America,

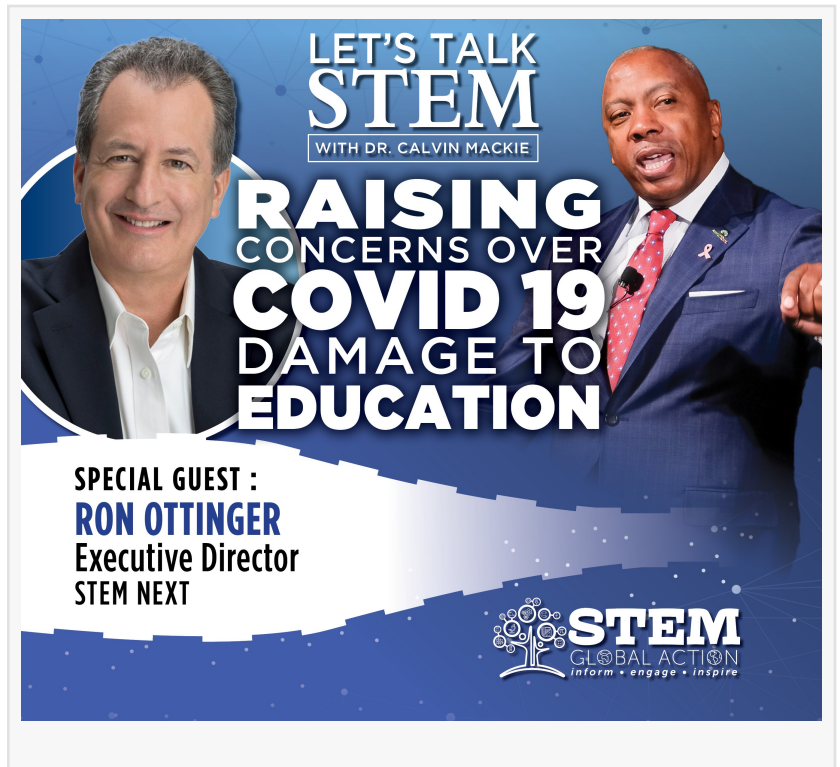
Ottinger convened the nation's leading STEM experts to present bold and persuasive evidence - as well as real-world examples of effective practices, programs, and partnerships - demonstrating that STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) knowledge and skills prepare young people to be successful in school today and the workforce tomorrow.

On the podcast, Ottinger says that STEM is "a great way to get kids engaged in learning...So, you know, the key is [asking] what is it going to take to get a kid engaged? What's it going to take to get a kid excited? Whatever it is - sports, music, STEM - we've got to get kids back into learning. And then we have to have them do the kind of learning that will make a difference to their future. And that's where STEM comes in."

Dr. Mackie, Founder and President of STEM Global Action and its leading affiliate, STEM NOLA, successfully brings STEM education into under-resourced Black and Brown communities in New Orleans and around the country. Dr. Mackie noted that students from low-income families participating in afterschool programs, including STEM-related ones, declined from 4.6 million to 2.7 million from 2014 to early 2020.

"And that was before COVID and its impact on America," Dr. Mackie says. "So, you can imagine the challenges that communities and students are going through as we try to figure out how to make up this learning loss post-COVID." Describing the podcast conversation with Ottinger, Mackie says, "We're going to get into it what needs to be done, what communities need to be doing, what our school programs need to be doing, what policymakers need to be doing to make sure that all kids, regardless of where they are, have access to effective stem out-of-school time programming."

Ottinger says that the pandemic spurred a new relationship between teachers and parents. "I think the country gained a better appreciation of the role of parents during the pandemic," he says. "And certainly, parents gained a much better appreciation of what teachers do. Afterschool programs filled in with assistance. "It changed the game and the equation on really understanding the high value of parents and of education." Further, he says parents must be reminded to encourage their kids to pursue STEM and also encourage all afterschool organizations to include STEM activities as well.



Moreover, Ottinger talks about the value of STEM role models – especially for girls, and Black and Brown students.

“It's essential,” he says. “We know from research, particularly for young girls who question whether science or engineering is for them. If they can't see someone who looks like them, if they can't see someone who has a career that they might consider, it's not going to happen. It's funny, I was talking to the head of Girl Scouts before the pandemic and she said, ‘You know, we spent 100 years keeping fathers out of Girl Scouts. It was only mothers. Well, then we realized when we got into STEM, we need the fathers to be telling their daughters they should stay engaged and really learn about the importance of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.’ The most important strategy of all is encouragement from a family standpoint.”

Enjoy the entire enlightening conversation by clicking [HERE](#).

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For interviews with Dr. Mackie, please contact Michael Frisby at 202-625-4328 or mike@frisbyassociates.com)

ABOUT STEM GLOBAL ACTION

Dr. Calvin Mackie founded STEM NOLA in 2013. The New Orleans non-profit is committed to expanding STEM education, especially in communities of color. In July 2021, Dr. Mackie launched STEM Global Action, a campaign and network pursuing STEM education for children, parents, and communities. His initiatives have impacted more than 100,000 students, 20,000 families and 5,000 schools across the U.S., and in five countries. An archive of Let's Talk STEM with Dr. Calvin Mackie podcast episodes is [HERE](#).

The STEM Global Action website (<https://stemglobalaction.com/>) includes:

STEM Global Action Today(<https://stemglobalaction.com/stem-global-action-today/>), a newsletter with comprehensive articles on some of the most important issues related to STEM, and takes readers into the lives of STEM educators and their extraordinary students, who will be the STEM leaders of tomorrow.

STEM Global Action Data Center(<https://stemglobalaction.com/stem-data-center/>), a one-stop resource library for studies, reports, video presentations and news coverage about STEM.

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