**Einstein School Earns Top Honors at the 2023 NASA HUNCH Competition in Houston**

**PLANO, TX** - May 11, 2023 - The Einstein School, a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation established in 2011, announced that their student team placed in the top 5 in the nation at the NASA HUNCH Competition in Houston, Texas on April 19, 2023. NASA HUNCH encourages students to develop innovative solutions to problems encountered by astronauts working on the International Space Station.

In Houston, Einstein students Evan Kellom, Jeremy McWhorter, Luke Pfaff, and Matan Cohen presented ‘Project Solaris,’ the team’s prototype of a solar tracker solution for a future lunar rover, to a panel of NASA scientists, engineers, and astronauts.

Einstein’s Project Solaris team spent over six months on research, engineering, and design. Their prototype regulates mechanisms on a lunar rover capable of producing bricks; these bricks are used to build structures on the surface of the Moon.

Their design was awarded a top 5 distinction and will be used on NASA’s Artemis III lunar mission.

In recognition of the hard work and accomplishments of the Einstein team, the students were asked to apply for highly competitive NASA summer internships. Evan, Jeremy, Luke, and Matan also signed a locker that will be sent to the International Space Station, where their names will orbit the Earth.

Luke and Aprill Hesse, the Einstein teacher sponsor, muse about their experiences. “NASA HUNCH was not just a competition,” explains Hesse, “but a challenge to inspire us to reach new heights of innovation and collaboration.” Luke concurs, adding: “We’d really like to thank NASA, the teachers, and everyone at the Einstein School who helped make this possible.”

Conducting over six months of research, engineering, and coding to create a prototype, the team of four Einstein students designed and built a thoughtful solution addressing current lunar rovers’ deficit in navigating the surface of the moon while maintaining a power source. “Tracking the sun on the lunar surface is a vital function of a lunar rover, because the sun is the only large source of power. It does come with a variety of challenges though, such as navigating lunar geography like peaks and dips in the moon's surface, and other bright celestial objects that can interfere with our measurements,” said Jeremy McWhorter.

Their solution to these navigational challenges: two rotating solar panels mounted atop the lunar rover to avoid obstructions, rotating from 45 to 135 degrees at 1 degree increments, measuring the voltage about 1000 times per degree. The tracking panels continuously move towards the light source, the sun, allowing the device to absorb maximum power and continue roving the surface of the Moon uninterrupted. “In engineering, it’s usually best to have a simple design. This reduces the chances of mechanical failures, and makes it much easier to repair. Our design does this well, consisting of just a few moving parts,” said Matan Cohen. Software-driven and consisting of lightweight 3D printed parts, their sun-tracking solar panel solution is cost efficient and simple to upgrade.

After submitting their project, The Einstein Pioneers was invited to Houston to present their Project Solaris prototype and data to a panel of NASA engineers and astronauts, including the Artemis 2 crew. The team took home first place with their innovative and simplistic design, achieving recognition as one of the top five teams selected out of over 1000 teams nationwide. The Pioneer’s Project Solaris prototype will even be utilized on an upcoming lunar mission.

Following the competition, the team was invited to apply for a summer internship program with NASA, and they look forward to building on knowledge gained in Einstein STEM classes and real world application opportunities into college and beyond.

For view a demonstration of the award-winning Project Solaris prototype and learn more about the Einstein Pioneers team and their recent competition, please visit<https://bit.ly/3LF8fhX>

**About the Einstein School -**The Einstein School is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation established in 2011. It provides 5th – 12th grade students a college-preparatory, highly individualized curriculum. To learn more, visit[www.theeinsteinschool.com](http://www.theeinsteinschool.com/).

For more news and information on the Einstein School, please visit

<https://theeinsteinschool.com/category/school-news/>.

**About the NASA HUNCH Program -**The HUNCH mission is to empower and inspire students through a Project Based Learning program where high school students learn 21st century skills and have the opportunity to launch their careers through the participation in the design and fabrication of real world valued products for NASA. For more information, please visit

<https://nasahunch.com/>

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Our Einstein students were one of only 43 teams (out of nearly 3,000 entrants) that made it to Houston in the category of Design and Prototype last week.