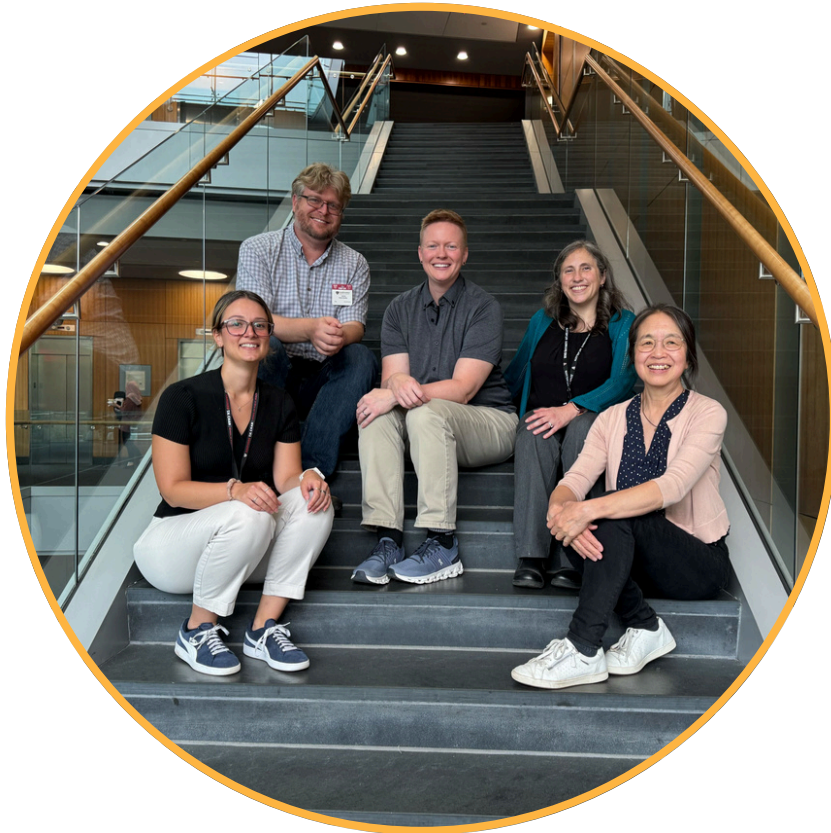


# PGED 6-month Retrospective Report



This report summarizes the accomplishments of the Personal Genetics Education & Dialogue program (Department of Genetics, Harvard Medical School) in the 6-month period from December 2024 - May 2025.

## The PGED Team



**Rob O'Malley, Ph.D.**  
Strategic Engagement Lead

**Marnie Gelbart, Ph.D.**  
Director of Programs

**Robin Bowman, M.Ed.**  
Director of Education & Engagement

**Gill McNeil, M.S.**  
Education Design Lead

**Ting Wu, Ph.D.**  
Director and Co-Founder of PGED  
Professor of Genetics, Harvard Medical School

## Resource Development

**Share Your Stance on Personal Genetics**, PGED's first tabletop conversation game, lowers the activation energy for scientists and educators to engage with students and the public.



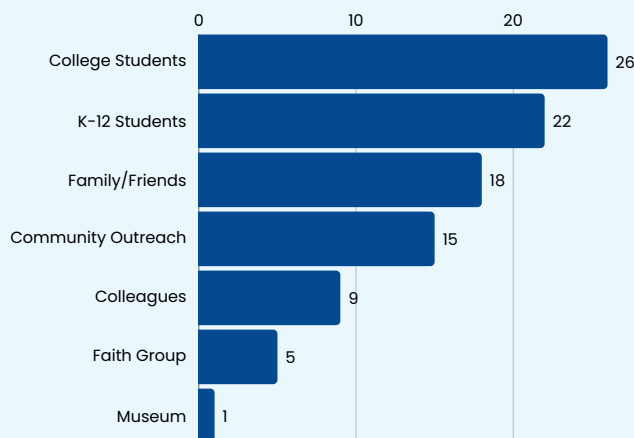
Gill and Robin designed and pilot-tested the game with 132 participants at 10 sites before the official launch on DNA Day 2025. [Available to download for free.](#) The game has received rave reviews from educators, students, and other participants, and the decks are in high demand.

“ I would love to use this resources during **community outreach** events or when working with **high school students!** I believe this is a great way to **engage thoughtful conversation** and start interest in the topic in a high school population. ”  
-Genetic Counseling Student



### Who Would You Like to Play SYS With?

n=69, respondents could give more than one answer



“ Sometimes it's difficult to attract and engage audiences with a wide range of education levels, and this game would be a **perfect way to take the content across a wide range of learners.** ”  
-Education Specialist

“ I would share this game **with my family** because most do not have the information about science that I have and there is clearly a lot of **miscommunication about science** and I would like to **bridge that gap.** ”  
- Graduate student

## Events

1,680 event attendees!

## CLASSROOM VISITS

PGED staff engaged with high school students in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. Each school we visited serves economically disadvantaged communities.

**Horace Furness High School** (Philadelphia, PA). A public high school with students from 60 different nations, 93% of students are racial/ethnic minorities, and all qualify for free lunch. (Ting)

**Options Employment and Educational Services** (Hartford, CT). A private school that specializes in special education, transition planning, and vocational training, focused on preparing students for meaningful employment and community engagement. - five visits (Gill)

**Boston Day & Evening Academy** (Boston, MA). A non-traditional high school for students who have been failed by other school environments. 98% racial/ethnic minority enrollment. Invited Speaker. (Ting & Marnie)



“ [PGED’s visit] sparked in my students in ways I hadn’t seen before. They were **communicating with scientists**, and their opinions were important and valued. **They realized that their voice matters** and people want to hear it. ”

-Boston Public School Teacher

## FAITH

PGED's work with faith communities aims to break down perceived barriers and foster dialogue between people of faith and the scientific community.

**Academy of Jewish Religion** course on "Scientific Literacy for Future Clergy", Invited speaker (online - Marnie)

## ENTERTAINMENT

Stories move us, challenge us, and provide us with new perspectives. PGED partners with creative voices in TV and film and engages with enthusiastic fans of science-fiction and fantasy to raise awareness, spark dialogue, and encourage deep thinking about genetic advances and their effects on our lives.

**Sundance Film Festival**, Invited Panelist, "The Big Conversation: Breaking Barriers", presented by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation (Park City, UT - Ting)

**Awesome Con: Washington D.C.'s Comic Con**, Exhibitor (Washington, DC - Rob)

**BaltiCon: Baltimore's Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention**, Invited Panelist - five panels (Baltimore, MD - Rob)

**Social Impact Entertainment (SIE) Society Impact + Profit Annual Conference** - Pitch for a Cause participants. Robin and Gill's pitch for a dramatic series was one of two selected to workshop with screenwriters and filmmakers. The proposed series follows a first-generation Nigerian-American genetic counselor in Boston and her experiences helping diverse patients navigate ethical dilemmas and personal decisions about genetics. PGED's pitch caught the attention of a screenwriter, who is interested to explore this idea further. (Los Angeles, CA - Robin & Gill)



## COMMUNITY EVENTS

Our recent events have focused on libraries and science centers, where community members have access to free resources and programming.

**Fairfield Branch Library**, Invited speaker, Ancestry Testing (Fairfield, CT - Gill)

**North Haven Memorial Library**, Invited speaker, DNA & Law Enforcement (North Haven, CT - Gill)

**MIT Museum**, Invited presenter, "Intro to Personal Genetics" & Share Your Stance (Cambridge, MA - Gill)

**Rockville Science Day**, Exhibitor on "Gene Editing Our World" (Rockville, MD - Rob)

**Wellesley Books**, Book launch for "Where Biology Ends and Bias Begins", Discussant on genetics, human difference, and discrimination (Wellesley, MA - Marnie)



## SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS

Many scientists are interested in engaging with the public in discussions about science and it's impacts on society, but lack the skills. We have done several events aimed at providing tools and strategies to help them be successful.

**Science Communication and Outreach for Public Engagement** , Panelist (online - Gill)

**Harvard Medical School "Social Issues in Biology"**, course faculty (Boston, MA - Marnie)

**Warren Alpert Alliance for Genetic Counseling retreat**, invited presenter (Boston, MA - Marnie & Gill)

**Genetics Society of America** (online forums)

- "Culture Change in Genetics: A Community Forum", co-host and co-presenter (Rob)
- "Genetics in Your Community: An interactive workshop to explore impactful public engagement", co-host and presenter (Robin & Gill)

## CONFERENCES

### **2025 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Annual Meeting** Boston, MA

Co-organized and presented two invited sessions:

- “Science Communication and Education at the Intersection of Genetics and Justice” (Marnie)
- “Science Engagement With Faith Perspectives in Informal Science Learning” (Rob)

### **American Association of Biological Anthropologists (AABA) 94th Annual Meeting** Baltimore, MD (Rob)

- Exhibitor, “AABA Art, Culture & SciComm Expo”

### **Genetics Society of America (GSA) 66th Annual Drosophila Research Conference** San Diego, CA (Marnie)

- Invited Plenary Speaker
- Host for two networking hotspots: “Share Your Stance” card game & Culture Change

### **NHGRI Outreach Meeting**, Philadelphia, PA (Rob & Ting)

## Podcast Interviews

PGED staff were interviewed for four podcasts, on topics related to science/tech and religion, science and society, and the human experience.

### **Science and Spirituality for the Curious** “Genetics, CRISPR, and Ethics” (Marnie)

### **Twinning Strategy: Leadership and Scaling for Small Businesses** “Science Meets Society: Closing the Genetics Knowledge Gap” (Marnie)

### **Human Origins - The Story of Us** “Why Science Communication Matters: Dr. Rob O'Malley on Bridging Research and Society” (Rob)

### **Belief in the Future** (in post-production) (Ting)

## Grant-Funded Projects

### Teaching the Genome Generation: An 11-Year Collaboration

The next generation of scientists, decision-makers, and consumers are in high school. This has inspired our collaboration with **The Jackson Laboratory** to serve **Maine and Connecticut high school teachers** through an annual summer course on molecular biology, bioinformatics, and bioethics. For 10 years, this work has been supported by Science Education Partnership Awards from the **National Institutes of Health**.

### Expanding Our Curricula & Reach with HHMI BioInteractive

With support from **Howard Hughes Medical Institute**, PGED is collaborating with HHMI BioInteractive to infuse exploration of social issues into curricula that reach **tens of thousands of high school and undergraduate life science classrooms**. Informed by iterative feedback from educators, Rob and Robin are putting the finishing touches on a module that explores the use of **screening for Sickle Cell** in college athletics.

### Interfaith America: Faith-Health Fellowship

For years, PGED has enjoyed fruitful partnerships with faith community leaders, who bring vital insights and deep community relationships. Most recently, this work was supported by an 18-month fellowship from Interfaith America. Marnie's project included collaborations with **Pastor Richard Randolph (Science & Spirituality Institute)** on a first-conference, **two podcast episodes**, and an event with **Boston's Museum of Science**.

### Growing a 5-year Collaboration with the Genetics Society of America (GSA)

Core to PGED's work bridging science and society is a culture grounded in relationship. With support from the **National Science Foundation (NSF)**, we continued our project, Culture Change-Building a Relational and Inclusive Discipline through Genetics Engagement, a capacity-building initiative to explore programming to shift the mindset in genetics **from "science and society" to "science in society"**.

### Accelerating Engagement and Dialogue on Genetics

A breadth of expertise is needed to cultivate an equitable genetics future. This year, PGED launched a pilot project to draw on the wisdom of our network thanks to a grant from the Responsible Design, Development, and Deployment of Technologies program, supported by the **NSF** in collaboration with philanthropic partners including the **Ford Foundation**, **the Patrick J. McGovern Foundation**, and **Siegel Family Endowment**.

## Spotlights

PGED shared the stories and work of seven people from our community who inspire us.



**Dale & Alison Batie**  
Eureka School District  
(South Dakota)



**Trey Lawrence**  
Tufts University  
(Massachusetts)



**Fabienne Mondesir**  
Boston Public Schools  
(Massachusetts)



**Madelene Loftin**  
HudsonAlpha Institute  
(Alabama)



**Vida Mingo**  
Columbia College  
(South Carolina)



**Christina Vallianatos**  
The Jackson Laboratory  
(Connecticut)

## HELP US GROW!

**PGED's work is needed more than ever**, and yet federal funding terminations are impacting our ability to stay afloat. You can make a difference and help PGED continue to provide free resources and programs when you choose to make a donation.

**Support Our Work**

