

Beyond the Lemonade Stand – Youth Entrepreneurship

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Situation

Nurturing young entrepreneurial leaders is necessary to build a strong economic future for our nation and our world. “Futurists predict that by as early as 2010... an amazing 50% (of workers) will be self employed or home based.” (As presented at 2002 National Association of Workforce Boards in Washington DC) Michigan’s 2005 State of the State survey found that 80% of the Michigan respondents identified youth job training as a high priority for Michigan. According to the 2005 Cherry Commission Report; many students are not prepared for life and are without the skills to adapt to Michigan’s changing workforce. The report stresses “the need for learning environments with high expectations for youth that provide them with opportunities to strengthen skills in creativity, risk taking, responsibility, and adaptability skills that will allow them to compete in an economy that values entrepreneurship.” As Michigan transitions its workforce, the state’s young people will require entrepreneurial and employment skills to allow them to excel in this new economic reality.

MSUE 4-H Response

Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) identified developing entrepreneurs as one of its five strategic priorities based on a state issues identification process. In response, in 2006, MSUE 4-H Youth Development received a \$23,000 two year grant to pilot the 4-H Future Entrepreneur Clubs program in eight Michigan communities. Held in mostly after school settings in both rural and urban counties, this opportunity has enabled MSUE 4-H to attract new middle and/or high school aged youth and adult volunteers to Michigan 4-H. Participating MSUE county offices self selected themselves to be a part of this initial pilot project.

County MSUE 4-H pilot sites received: \$750 mini-grants to assist with program implementation; ongoing communication with coordinators via monthly conference calls; free curricula and resources; and access to training and resources. Initially, a three day weekend was held in January 2007 for all county pilot sites. Potential youth and volunteers interested in being involved in the 4-H Future Entrepreneur program locally were invited to attend. This training provided an overview of the 4-H Future Entrepreneur program model. Training participants attended as county teams and gained resources to help jumpstart local programming. County teams were able to network with other program sites and practice activities from the curriculum used in the program. In addition, a successful youth entrepreneur from Michigan spoke to the youth and adult participants and led an activity around his business venture.

Curriculum

The 4-H Future Entrepreneur program has utilized two main curriculums: the “Be the E” Entrepreneurship curriculum and the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) High School Financial Planning Program (HSFPP). The “Be the E”

Entrepreneurship curriculum is a research based entrepreneurship curriculum developed by the 4-H Curriculum System. The curriculum utilizes three main phases: Love It, Plan It, and Do It. Youth create a business plan and learn fun ways to approach entrepreneurial ventures.

<http://www.4-hcurriculum.org/catalog.aspx?cid=178&c=Entrepreneurship>

The NEFE High School Financial Planning program is a free, seven chapter financial education curriculum that covers such topics as goal setting; budgeting; credit; insurance; investing; to name a few. It is our belief that by financial education with entrepreneurship makes our grant unique. By adding a strong financial education component, youth will be even more successful as entrepreneurs. <http://hsfpp.nefe.org>

To help county sites begin to develop their clubs in their local communities, campus coordinators created blended (suggested) lesson plans for integrating the "Be the E" and "NEFE HSFP" curriculums with their clubs. In addition, several additional websites, resources for educating youth about the topic areas, and handouts have been collected and placed in a Financial Education and Entrepreneurship Resource List which has been shared with county teams and potential future entrepreneurship sites.

4-H Business and Entrepreneurship Expo

On June 18-20, 2008 - a 4-H Business and Entrepreneurship Expo will be held on the campus of Michigan State University as part of 4-H Exploration Days as a finale to the grant. This three day, nine classroom hours expo will educate and involve approximately 65 youth and 25 adults about the world of entrepreneurship. Youth will have the option to sell their products during the event and will leave with the knowledge of developing a business plan. The 4-H Business and Entrepreneurship Expo will feature three tracks: Raising, Marketing, and Profiting from your Market Livestock Project; Growing your Youth Farm Stand Business; and General Business: Be Your Own Boss. In addition, the 4-H Business and Entrepreneurship Expo will feature a local Michigan Entrepreneur and world renowned chef, Timothy Young, who will speak to the youth about niche marketing and incorporating technology into your business.

Program Evaluation

To evaluate the 4-H Future Entrepreneurs Club project, an additional \$40,000 grant was awarded by FACT (Families and Communities Together Coalition at Michigan State University) to hire a graduate student half time and assess the success of the project. The evaluation project has included a post test assessment of the youth and volunteer participants, a control group assessment of similar youth, and focus group assessments of youth and volunteers in four community sites. The evaluation is targeted to be released in September 2008.

For More Information

For more information on the Michigan 4-H Future Entrepreneurs Program, please contact Erica Tobe, MSW, Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) Children, Youth Families, and Communities (CYFC) Program Leader for Youth Financial Education, tobee@msu.edu (517-355-9655) or Laura Allen, Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) Children, Youth Families, and Communities (CYFC) Career Education Coordinator, lacourse@msu.edu (517-432-7632).