

Starting an after-school/Pre-employment program

The program provides an interdisciplinary project based learning for students... high schools, home schools and drop outs These are the Essential skills not generally taught in schools... *problem solving, thinking skills, collaboration, process methods, communication with others, study skills, continuous improvement, quality processing, financial literacy, risk taking, learning from failure, values, character development*

Elevator speech:

Present education leaves most students bored, not engaged in learning and finding it difficult to manage the complexities of life relating to the interface of society, schools and business. Our program will provide a fun environment around project based learning for charter, public high school, home school and drop outs.

We will demonstrate to the students that learning can be fun by solving real world problems and provide the missing skills (LIFE SKILLS) like problem solving, thinking skills, growth mindset, character development, financial literacy and societal values needed to succeed in today's environment.

Assessments of skills and learning will be analyzed by how the student used innovative approaches in problem solving and involvement of the community, businesses and educational organizations.

Mission:

The mission of The Project Academy is to advance the development in spirit and mind of students drawn from diverse cultural and social backgrounds and to inspire in them a commitment to the best self in the community, education and business world.

Goal:

The goal of the school's program is the formation of skilled and discerning minds in preparation for higher education, careers and lifelong learning. They will understand that problems are opportunities. "The bigger the problem, the bigger the opportunity" (*Vinod Khosla*). Through its learning and collaboration, Project Academy also educates its students for service in the community and in today's global civilization.

Values:

The school will foster a community-based culture of a learning environment, use of visual thinking process with all treated as adults and with respect. A school vest will be worn to signify connection to each other. **Key words are:** Empathy, Trust, Listening, Curiosity, Kindness, Persisting, Flexibility, Innovation, Entrepreneurship Continuous learning, Humor and Taking responsible risk.

Needs:

- The skills needed in our vastly complicated world, whether to earn a decent living or to be an active and informed citizen, are radically different from those required historically. Quite



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- simply, the world has changed, and our schools remain stuck in time. “Knowledge workers” have become obsolete. What the world demands today are “smart creatives,” the term that Eric Schmidt and Jonathan Rosenberg use to describe the kind of people Google needs to hire in their book *How Google Works*... Wagner, Tony; Dintersmith, Ted (2015-08-18). *Most Likely to Succeed: Preparing Our Kids for the Innovation Era* .

We are still using the same method we did 100 years ago

We need to provide an education that interests our students and gets them deeply engaged in their own learning, and that teaches all of our students what they need to be successful in their 21st-century lives.

To change, that is, both **how we teach** and **what we teach**, in ways that reflect our current and future realities. Changing the “how” means creating a pedagogy that works for today’s students. Changing the “what” means creating a curriculum that is future-oriented and engaging to today’s students, while remaining useful and rigorous.

How to Teach – **Changing Our Pedagogy to “Partnering”**

We need to move from the teacher talking and the students taking notes. (“My teachers just talk and talk and talk” is by far the students’ biggest complaint about school.) ***In partnering, the students do what they do – or can do – best, which is finding information, using technology and other resources, and creating. The teachers do what they do best, which is asking the right questions, ensuring quality and rigor, vetting, and adding context and appropriate scaffolding.***

- Use project base learning where students have ownership of their learning

What we teach

Knowing our students ... education plan for the student

In the current system – or at least the public portion, which is most of it – there is an almost total lack of **curricular emphasis on character**, i.e., becoming a good person in addition to a good student

- Children need to feel successful and do it with community
- Communication and Problem Solving
- Character and Passion
 - *Empathy*
 - *Ethics*
 - *Values*

Organizational support:

Community and state organizations are fostering after-school programs to supplement competency-based schools with learning for college and career readiness. Young people need a range of knowledge skills, abilities and disposition in order to be successful. Schools cannot do the work



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along. This provides opportunity for Project academy to provide an after-school program that makes students successful at the intersection of society, education, and business. In Massachusetts, the following is happening:

- The bill (H4033) endorses summer learning and studies
- <http://www.summerlearning.org/page/2016FundingGuide>
- <http://www.massafterschool.org/>

The school will focus on the following skills with learning happening using project-based activities in a collaborate environment:

- Problems solving
- Collaboration
- Innovation & Entrepreneurship
- Thinking skills (critical and creative thinking, questioning, reflection)
- Character skill development
- Study skills
- Financial literacy and business skills
- Quality processing and measurements
- Learning using assessment and feedback
- Brain plasticity, Growth mindset
- Web tools for blogging, portfolio management and presentations

Customers ...various market segments

The age of the potential students is those that are between High School and their career or college. The School will service the following potential customer base:

- After school parents
- Home school parents to supplement their content based learning
- On-line learning organizations that need a face-face learning facility
- High school drop outs
- Career changing adults who are re-entering the work force
- Existing after school programs
- Industrial work force programs

Uniqueness:

Provide supplementary soft-skills, collaboration skills, Problem solving to students that are an afterthought in present schools. These skills are not subject matter skills but life skills to support the student in work, dealing and interface with society, businesses and citizenship. The school will have a learning culture where projects are owned by the students and set their own project learning targets. Students will be provide with a group of mentors who they can choose for support as needed.

- On-line community support for continuous education after school ends
- Building on the strengths of the students

Products:



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The school will offer the following courses brought on line gradually based on community support and needs:

- Present proposed plan
- Year-long college preparation
- Individual half year courses focused on Work, Society, Financial literacy and Thinking skills.
- Focus on senior citizen's needs.

Partnerships:

The school will establish partnerships with commercial (business) organizations and non-profits that have tools that can be used for learning. This will be an integrated part of the learning curriculum.

Process & Operations:

A set of meeting will be held with the community to determine perceived needs. The school will focus on providing learning around developing character skills; business processes, financial understanding and doing collaborative project based learning exercises. The school will have a learning culture where projects are owned by the students and set their own project learning targets. The school will use commercial tools that are used in industry for support of their projects as well as connection to companies and community organizations. Students will have ownership of the planning and managing the relationships.

Students will be initially assessed on their strengths and learning plans will be developed for the calendar year that build on those strengths. They will work in collaborative teams doing project-based learning in the 3 disciplines of society (community), education and business.

Much of the learning occurs thru group conversations among the team members and working on the project. The results will be presented to the community at the mid-point and end of the project. What happens when things don't follow a script? You do three things

- Notice the anomaly
- Ask a question
- Find an explanation

Understanding something means either determining that what we have witnessed is consistent with our expectations, in which case the cycle simply finishes, or else determine that an event has failed your expectations. If your expectations have not been satisfied, you must wonder why and demand an explanation from others or create one on your own. An important question is, what becomes of your new explanation?

There is a critical step in the normal understanding cycle: Alter the failed expectation, Students will be taught the importance of measurements for assessment, Feedback and using them to track their progress. They will set and use their own learning targets. They will learn the importance of having conversations with themselves when things are not quite right and changes needed. The basic learning will be using problem solving and building a community that adds value.

Integrated within their projects will be the use of soft-skills (problem solving, executive functions, character development, communication, organization, etc.) between students and the school community.



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What are the learning outcomes:

By the end of this course, the students will be able to:

- Clearly articulate the nature of the design process
- See the World as a place of excitement and inspiration
- Use assessment strategy and feedback as learning tools
- Use of relevant soft-skills in their life and interface with society
- Begin the steps to become a lifelong learner
- Understand the processes within a business and personnel finance
- Understand that problems are opportunities in life

Listed below are areas of team discussion and actions regarding the project:

How are we going to organize ourselves?

Setting the environment for the students:

- Imagination
- Have doubt and wonderment
- Testing / failure
- Quality processing
- Consultation / collaboration
- Extensions, refinements and elaboration
- Synthesis
- Thinking skills development (creative, critical, questions and meta-cognitive reflection)
- Guidelines for working together
- Students are viewed as **active authors** of their own development

Which problem will we work on?

What is the problem we are going to solve?

Frame the problem and write it down

Your frame is how you narrow and pinpoint what you choose to solve. Better framing leads to better solutions.

What facts do we know?

- What are the constraints / requirements?
- Areas of discussion and inclusion
- How do we integrate social skills, emotional skills and thinking skills into this project?

What do we need to know more of?

Finding lots of options

Reflection. Creative thinking, Iteration of tasks

Narrowing the choices(Shaping)

- Critical thinking



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mundane • Innovative • Magical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are we going to test our approach? • What requirements do we have to achieve?
Decision making	Using the requirements and weights pick the best choice
How do we know we are successful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop rubrics (learning targets) and review requirements
Incorporate in the learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking skills • Character/Strength's • Social skills
Sketch and Map the best fits	Test
Update the possible solution	Review other approaches, Test and Reflect
Report and defend work, using verbal, art and written media	Reflection

Uniqueness of the program:

- Teachers do development/ assessment and research on learning
- Organization structure is non-silo based
- Students do their own assessment on how to judge projects and their learning
- Focus on students strengths
- Learning by developing solutions to real issues verses a scripted approach
- Focus on stretched goals/objectives
- A culture of support for the students
- Availability of mentor support

Mentor support option:

A team of mentors from different business and social organizations will be available to support the student. A mentor fair will occur where mentors present themselves to the students. The student will have to opportunity to pick someone they would like to get support from. These mentors will be trained in our program and how they can support a student.

The teachers as the facilitator:

We need to focus on modeling for the students the way to ask questions based on the desired outcomes to demonstrate that learning is achieved by getting the students to understand how they gathered the data & use skillful thinking to make a conclusion.

In addition, we need to model the meta-cognition aspects on how we arrived at a learning point. By providing examples & engaging students in role playing, we can demonstrate how we arrived at a particular point.

The teacher will be able to identify the expected outcome and question the students on how they achieved this outcome. In addition, the students will assess themselves on their compliance with the ground rules that were established in the beginning of the project.



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The goal for the teacher is to create an environment that supports learning and construction of knowledge by the student. **It is not about teaching but student learning.** There is too much data to know it all.

Students will be part assessment strategy in participating in setting the learning targets with the teacher. Learning targets will be by skill level with students and community giving the feedback. **Badges as translators of competency**

Create skills targets (**badges**) like:

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