

Program Identity: Promoting Entrepreneurship for Older Youth

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Intentionality in the design and planning of out-of-school time (OST) programming is a key component of out-of-school time success (DC Children & Youth Investment Trust Corporation, 2009). One of the most essential and promising practices of quality OST programs is the development of a specific program identity. That is, OST programs should develop a core strategy that serves as the underpinning of their program philosophy while incorporating age-appropriate activities that align with youth outcomes. This is especially important in programs that serve older youth, because older youth need relevant experiences that expose them to prospective college and career plans and build 21st-century skills.

The Village of Arts and Humanities and the Philadelphia Center for Arts and Technology (PCAT), two OST programs in the Department of Human Services-funded network, have shaped much of their program identities using an entrepreneurship approach. Following this approach, the programs promote and engage youth in varying degrees of entrepreneurship by developing businesses that are driven and maintained by the youth.

The Village of Arts and Humanities is an arts-based program that engages youth with visual and mural arts, fashion design and creation and community sustainability. The program infuses these art-based activities with entrepreneurship, and calls this collection of youth-run businesses Village Industries. Village Industries is designed to expose youth to advanced arts courses while promoting entrepreneurship through workshops that focus on small-business planning, marketing and financial management. Youth employ these skills by marketing their services, conducting client briefings, booking and performing services and managing business revenue.

Village Industries includes One Shot (photography), ReVamp (fashion design) and VIP (music production). Under these ventures, youth are commissioned to photograph events, design and manufacture clothing and produce music. Youth also market their businesses through social media, manage the online shops and coordinate gallery events.

While Village Industries operates under the supervision of Village staff and expert teaching artists, youth are the primary executives and drivers of the organization. Giving youth the responsibility of driving and maintaining the success of the company allows them to develop a sense of ownership and purpose. Ownership and purpose are essential components of leadership, which results in increased participation and retention in an OST program. By incorporating entrepreneurship as a core strategy, the

Village continues to provide meaningful, high quality experiences to youth.

PCAT is another DHS-Public Health Management Corporation-funded program that promotes entrepreneurship as part of their program identity.

DesigningU provides high school youth with guidance from practicing professionals in the areas of Architectural and interior design, music production and sound engineering, fashion design and media design.

DesigningU challenges youth to employ important business practices such as brand and logo development, trademarking, production, ethical marketing and creating successful business plans.

To help youth gain experience, PCAT exposes youth to real-life practices in their respective fields. This year, youth in the architecture program created scale models of homes and presented their work to architectural design professionals at Indy Hall, an organization of media and visual arts professionals. As part of a competitive bid process, youth were charged to explain the design elements and principles of their models to a panel of industry professionals. The panel scored the models and provided feedback to the youth on best practices in architectural design.

In the fashion design program of DesigningU, youth are currently developing a T-shirt business to display their understanding of brand and logo development. In this

program, youth learn various techniques such as screen printing, direct-to-garment printing and heat transferring printing. In their recent STEAM Showcase, youth from this program displayed their work and explained the ideas behind their brand to stakeholders. Youth explained how they used the process of introspection to produce a logo and brand that symbolized themselves but had strong marketing potential. Youth are currently working to trademark their logos. The program intends to begin manufacturing these T-shirts for purchase through their online stores.

Similarly, youth in the media arts program film and edit their own original short films. Youth use the grounds of the PCAT facility as well as other Philadelphia neighborhoods to film short films and documentaries. Youth are currently planning a film festival similar to the Cannes festival. Youth will debut their work to media arts professionals and receive awards in various film categories. By giving youth this experience, the program familiarizes them with the filmmaking process and exposes them to possible career paths.

Both the Village and PCAT offer youth opportunities to develop and apply important skills through real-world experience. The application of these skills increases the relevance and appeal of entrepreneurship to youth while also providing an active career map. Instead of subscribing to the traditional "When I grow up" approach, youth are able to actualize their potential in the present.

Thus, they gain a sense of purpose and are able to view themselves as entrepreneurs. Additionally, through Village Industries, youth make and manage money, which enables them to view the experience as a viable career path.

While the identity of an OST program will vary depending on its core values and mission, it is important that programs be designed with intentionality. The identity of a program should be reflected in its culture, activities, appearance and outcomes. When a program has a clear identity, youth are able to understand the benefits of participating. This results in increased youth engagement, thereby increasing the overall success of the program. As youth development professionals continue to make the case for the importance of OST, programs must develop identities that will drive their directions while intentionally providing positive and meaningful experiences for youth.

DC Children & Youth Investment Trust Corporation (2009). A field guide to best practices and indicators for OST programs in the District of Columbia.

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