

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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Boston students learn “commerce in the classroom” during first Entrepreneurship Week USA

*Programs throughout the city engage students
in entrepreneurial ventures*

BOSTON – Students across the country will engage in activities next week to celebrate the first-ever Entrepreneurship Week USA, February 26 through March 3, designed to help inspire young people everywhere to explore their potential as self-starters and entrepreneurs.

In the Boston Public Schools, however, entrepreneurship is not confined to a single week. Instead, students across the district at all age levels and in all educational programs are involved in ongoing learning activities that combine commerce and the classroom in innovative—and often profitable—ways.

At **Charlestown High School**, seniors in the Entrepreneurship II class are running their own non-profit organization, C-town Spirit™, to support school spirit activities at the school. Founded three years ago by the class of 2004 as C-town Gear™, a clothing and promotional products company, the business has been resurrected and expanded into C-town Spirit™ by the class of 2007, with C-town Gear™ remaining as the organization’s fundraising division. The students plan to use revenue from the sale of C-town Gear™ products this year to sponsor a school event in the spring, distribute a calendar and t-shirt at graduation, and award a scholarship to a graduating senior.

The students recently registered C-town Spirit™ as a non-profit with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and are pursuing federal nonprofit status under the IRS 501 (c)(3) tax code. Several local companies, including Vitale, Caturano & Company, Bain & Company, and Henderson Associates, have provided business training and resources to support the project, and local business professionals sit on the company’s Board of Directors, advising and supervising the students.

“These students are learning to operate a real business as a team and under the same pressures that any other business might encounter,” said their teacher Lama Jarudi. To ensure that C-town Spirit™ continues, the class of 2007 is working on a transition plan to train the class of 2008, which will take over management next year.

This month at the **Mattahunt Elementary School** in **Mattapan**, students in Ellen McColgan’s special education class opened the Mattahunt Trading Post—a store complete with an Old West style counter. Ms. McColgan’s students invite other classes to the Trading Post, where they can purchase small items such as using “Mattahunt dollars” – currency that kids earn through academic achievement and good behavior. The Trading Post allows students with disabilities to practice their academic and social skills. Money management, math, reading, and vocabulary are all built into the activity, along with social interaction with the “customers” from other classes.

“Students in regular education classes have an opportunity to interact with students from special education classes in a setting where the students from the ‘special’ classes are in charge and imparting information to them,” said Ms. McColgan. “Hopefully this will allow them to look at ‘special’ students in a new light.”

At the **English High School in Jamaica Plain**, students in the Finance & Technology small learning community manage and operate the school store as part of their marketing class. The store carries a variety of school supplies, school spirit items and seasonal giftware that students can purchase before school and during lunch. Students in Marketing classes are responsible for stocking inventory, staffing, and planning special promotions like the recent Valentine’s Day bake sale. Managing the school store allows the students to put the concepts learned in class to practical use and gain hands-on business experience.

Brook Farm Business and Service Career Academy in West Roxbury recently celebrated the grand opening of its new student-run school store, a free-standing structure in the school’s lobby, which was created to a large extent by the students at this business-themed small high school. Brook Farm students developed the business plan for the store, conducted market research among their peers to determine what inventory to carry and at what price, and oversee the day-to-day staffing and management of the store. Under student leadership, the store is operating “in the black” and continues to expand. The students have planned trips to New York wholesale markets to purchase inventory, have organized special holiday promotions such as Valentine’s Day flower orders, and, in an act of corporate philanthropy, are pledging one week’s revenue from the store to support Brook Farm students participating in the Avon Breast Cancer Walk this spring.

Students in the Hyde Square Task Force After-School Program at the **Mary E. Curley Middle School in Jamaica Plain** also have become small business owners. The students recently held a grand opening celebration to launch three new business ventures created as part of the after-school entrepreneurship club. The students, in grades six through eight, have been working in groups since September on developing business plans, designing logos and marketing strategies, and forging partnerships with local businesses in order to turn \$200 investments into viable business models. Each group created its own unique business: *Dynamic Arts* designs and sells handmade arts and crafts; *Cookie Monsterz* has partnered with Sweet Finish Bakery to bake and sell cookies; and the *Money Makers* offers event planning services, with their first job being the launch of the grand opening event itself.

According to Yi-Chin Chen, Director of Lifelong Learning and Economic Development at the Hyde Square Task Force, “The grand opening event was a huge success, with the youth selling out of their products and turning a profit.” Each business plans to debut a new product or service each month for the remainder of the school year.

“Student-run businesses are a hands-on way for students to put into practice the math, literacy and business concepts they are learning in class,” said Superintendent Michael G. Contompasis. “From the small elementary school trading post to the more sophisticated high school ventures, these businesses also draw on students’ creativity and innovation, helping students to develop critical leadership, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills that will serve them well in the future no matter where their career paths may lead.”

Entrepreneurs, educators, community leaders and young people across the country will celebrate the importance of entrepreneurship during inaugural Entrepreneurship Week USA from February 24 – March 3, 2007. For more information on Entrepreneurship Week USA, visit www.entrepreneurshipweekusa.com/noflash.asp.

The Boston Public Schools serves nearly 57,000 pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students in 145 schools, and recently won the Broad Prize for Urban Education as the top city school district in the country. For more information, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org.

Photographs, interviews, and school visits are available upon request.

Contact BPS Communications: 617-635-9265.