

5 Steps to Creating a Middle School E-Club

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Why do you need an e-club? Communities are beginning to realize the value of growing their own entrepreneurs to secure their future economic viability. One way to achieve this goal is to offer an experiential e-club for middle school students. In an e-club, students participate in starting group businesses and learn about entrepreneurship with fun, hands-on activities and by visiting with local entrepreneurs.

What does an e-club look like? Middle school age students can benefit greatly from this kind of club. E-clubs usually meet for 60 – 90 minutes. Meetings should always include activities, which are designed to help the students understand entrepreneurial thinking and basic business concepts related to starting a business. Middle school students have short attention spans, so multiple activities are planned each week to keep the students engaged. An afterschool e-club schedule usually includes the following components: snack, entrepreneurial speaker or video, physical activity for teambuilding or leadership development, class business discussion, and creation of the product or service. E-club membership should be limited to no more than 30 members; 15-25 members are ideal. If your community has more than 30 students interested, consider having multiple clubs. If there are more than 30 students, it becomes difficult for all students to be heard, for students to feel they belong or to get consensus on any issue.

When does it meet? E-clubs can meet before, during or after school, on the weekends, or in the evening. After school clubs can be more convenient because of transportation issues.

Where does it meet? The location of e-clubs varies greatly. Meetings can be scheduled in a school, library, church, recreation center or other places that host afterschool programs.

Who usually starts an E-club? People who are interested in kids, the future, the community, economic development and education are the ones who champion this club. They could be educators, business owners and community leaders. They could be people just like you!

How do I get a club started in my town or county? Although there are many similarities in the process, each club formation varies. Look for collaboration opportunities with other clubs or afterschool programs that may be willing to add an entrepreneurship component to their program. For example, the Girl Scouts have an entrepreneurship badge and might appreciate e-club curriculum to help earn that badge. Community recreation department afterschool programs are always looking for unique programming, and they have a built-in group of students who might be interested in entrepreneurship.



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1. Determine What Kind of Club Your Community Needs

Survey the students and ask their preferences on the following questions:

- Would you be interested in joining an entrepreneurship club if offered in your town?
- What activities are you interested in?
 1. Spending time with successful entrepreneurs?
 2. Playing video games related to entrepreneurship?
 3. Playing games and competitions?
 4. Getting help in starting a business venture?
 5. Networking time with other students who want to start a venture?
 6. Visiting entrepreneurial businesses?
 7. Participating in a regional business plan competition?
 8. Adopting a nonprofit organization and raising funds for it by starting a business?
- When is the best time for an entrepreneurship club to meet?
 1. Before school?
 2. Lunchtime?
 3. After school?
 4. Saturday morning?
 5. In the evening?
- How often would you like the club to meet?
 1. Once per week?
 2. Once every two weeks?
 3. Once a month?
 4. Other?
- Where should the entrepreneurship club meet?
 1. In school?
 2. At the public library?
 3. In an area business?
 4. At a community gathering place?
 5. Other?
- Would you be willing to travel to another town to attend an entrepreneurship club?

Use this information to make the best decision for your town. Consider collaborating with other programs that may love to use your curriculum as one segment of their yearlong program. For example, some school districts have club time built into their homeroom schedule.

Clubs may meet weekly, or twice a month. Less often makes it difficult to have any continuity to the experience as skills are developed through activities and should build upon one another.



2. Build a Team to Support the E-Club

E-Clubs should have a broad base of adult team members as well as students:

- The team should include area entrepreneurs, as they will be resources and local experts.
- Other team members could include community organization representatives, such as Rotary and Chambers of Commerce.

Clubs that meet in a school building:

- The principal and a sponsoring teacher need to be part of your team. The school partner must be someone who can be relied on to attend regularly. They will be familiar with rules and regulations governing school activities.
- The school sponsorship allows the district insurance to be accessed in case of accidents or equipment damage. This is unlikely but needs to be a consideration.

Clubs that meet in a community facility:

- The sponsoring agency will provide leadership.
- Insurance should be a consideration when selecting a place to meet.

3. Develop a Program of Activities

All activities should relate to the concepts of entrepreneurship and business etiquette:

- Define entrepreneurship in a broad sense – creating something of value from nothing.
- Discuss social entrepreneurship, intra-preneurship, etc.
- Identify students' interests, talents and abilities as a place to generate business ideas.
- Discuss the methods of deciding if the ideas are feasible.
- Assess the students' communication style for group work.
- Teach students how to ask probing questions before guest speakers visit the club.
- Model business etiquette and how to make a favorable first impression.
- Develop "One Day Businesses".
- Explain target markets for a product or service.
- Teach them the 4P's of Marketing - Product, Price, Place and Promotion .
- Discuss the importance of building a management team.
- Pitch their business idea to potential investors.
- Discuss breaking a world's record and the value of out-of-the-box thinking.

Consider the Best Method of Delivery:

- Meetings need to include multiple learning activities, which are fun while reinforcing the concepts. Consider each activity to last approximately 15-20 minutes to keep the students attention.
- Creating a business allows for opportunities to teach the basic fundamentals of business, like accounting, finance, marketing, management, etc., in a way that is tangible and applicable to the students' way of thinking.



- Students should hear about a concept and then apply it through an activity or game. Consider scavenger hunts, entrepreneurship jeopardy, creating commercials, and designing new products or new packaging for a specific target market.
- Students love team competitions at this age. A small prize will focus them on the task at hand.
- Meetings may include speakers who share their entrepreneurial journey and/or share a particular expertise with the students.

4. Let the Students Set the Direction of the Club

- Ask the students what they want to get out of the club experience. Within reason, try to work towards that goal.
 1. If students choose to start a group business, set clear goals on how much money you want to make and how you will spend the money as a group. If the club is associated with a school, be aware that there may be restrictions on how the money is used. Field trips or end of the year parties are typically acceptable uses of funds. Have the students' budget and plan these activities with guidance from the adults.

5. Utilize Adult Mentors to work with the Students

- Mentors should meet with the students at least once a month at the club so that students are familiar with them.
- Mentors can mentor a team of students; for example as they create one day businesses.
- The mentors should be given preparation information in advance of meetings
- Mentors may not be part of the core team but be an expanded group of adults involved with the group.
- Mentors should only meet with students at the club unless appropriate background checks are done in advance of outside meetings and then the mentor should include at least one parent in any outside meeting.

