Cultivating Entrepreneurial Youth Leaders

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At the Babson Youth Impact Lab, we help youth, teachers, and youth development professionals build the skills and entrepreneurial mindset needed to create economic and social value—empowering them to solve real problems in their lives and communities and advance the UN Global Goals.

These abilities are even more important when considering the effect of COVID-19 on a generation whose educational opportunities were disrupted:

- 94% of youth out of school during some part of the pandemic
- One-third without access to online learning
- Widening gap in equal access to quality education for youth from underserved and economically disadvantaged communities

Source: UNICEF, 2021

To help our youth build a more equitable post-pandemic world, equal access to quality education is key, as outlined by the United Nations Sustainable Development Global Goals (Global Goals). The world needs more entrepreneurial leaders who see obstacles as opportunities, are strong and collaborative communicators, and have the agency to be changemakers. To support this, we designed a playbook with seven rules to educate entrepreneurial leaders.

Visit our website to download a sample EPIC lesson plan »

Rule #1: Incorporate Experiential Learning

Ensure that youth and educator programs focus on learning by doing—not on lectures. Engagement and action are critical teaching elements to create genuine behavioral and attitudinal changes.

Example: In addition to teaching topics like understanding your customers' needs through market research, ask students to complete an empathy journey where they observe and communicate with their customers. This makes the learning process real and sticky.

Rule #2: Create Scaffolded Entrepreneurship Programs

» Create multiweek entrepreneurship programs for real learning. A one-day training does not create critical transformations in student learning or educator teaching practices.

Example: Cover topics that teach youth how to be entrepreneurial leaders as they embark on an entrepreneurial journey to address a real-world social problem. Each week, you can build their business skills while strengthening their confidence to act on opportunities and not fear failure.

Rule #3: Integrate Social Justice Concepts Framed by the UN Global Goals

» Show students what it means to create economic AND social value by framing business ideas within the UN Global Goals.

Example: It's important to show students that social injustice is not something that simply happens in "other" places. Integrate and reinforce equity concepts throughout your courses—not as a separate module. A holistic teaching approach shows your students how to create sustainable solutions to global problems, starting in their local communities.

Rule #4: Align Entrepreneurship Content with Appropriate Pedagogy

» While K-12 teachers have significant experience in teaching youth, they might not have experience teaching entrepreneurship. Similarly, youth development professionals may be confident in their entrepreneurial skills but unfamiliar with the most appropriate teaching methods and tools to support student learning.

Example: Ensure your programs strengthen both social-emotional (power) skills and business knowledge. This combination supports your long-term goal of empowering youth with the tools and mindset to become changemakers. To be successful, youth need to understand entrepreneurship as more than building a business, but as a methodology for approaching and solving real-world problems.

Rule #5: Integrate Team-Based Learning Activities

» Provide ongoing team-based learning experiences where students can practice their new knowledge and skills. Learning is a social process. It requires numerous exchanges to increase student comfort in sharing diverse concepts and experiences, helping students learn from each other.

Example: Example: Include individual and team projects in entrepreneurship programs. These projects should require experimentation and application. Pushing students out of their comfort zones and allowing them to make mistakes without negative consequences helps them get more comfortable testing new concepts and learning from failure.

Rule #6: Require Deep Reflection to Optimize Learning

» Ensure that significant time is dedicated to reflection, both in and outside of the classroom. Reflection is a critical aspect of the learning cycle, allowing students to pause and analyze what they have or have not learned, contributing to their confidence, critical thinking skills, and growth mindset.

Example: Require a weekly reflection journal, where students can explore and evaluate what they learned each week, noting what surprised them, what sparked passion, and what they can do to improve themselves and their learning. Check that these are completed and remember to explain why reflection is a valuable tool in our lifelong learning journeys.

Rule #7: Measure Your Impact

» In addition to measuring the output of your programs, such as student satisfaction levels, measure genuine changes in learning, demonstrated by students' attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs.

Example: The EPIC program focuses on pre- and post-program evaluations that include measures such as students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy, grit, growth mindset, and critical thinking skills. In our educator Certificate programs, we measure participants' teacher self-efficacy (general and in the entrepreneurship domain), grit, and entrepreneurial identity. This helps us understand what is working to create agency and improve skills.

Resources from the Youth Impact Lab

1. FOR YOUTH: Enable youth to strengthen their entrepreneurial leadership and social-emotional skills to create economic and social value via the Summer Study program.

2. FOR EDUCATORS: Empower teachers and youth development professionals to lead the next generation of changemakers through entrepreneurship via our Certificate in Youth Entrepreneurship Education program, which provides the tools to teach EPIC and entrepreneurship in general

> There is a reason why Babson is tops for entrepreneurship for decades! EPIC gives a glimpse into that secret sauce.
>
> – **Dr. Charles Chao Ron Phua,** CEO, Solaris Strategies, Singapore

> The Certificate program was really helpful in expanding my teaching repertoire related to entrepreneurship. It was thoughtful and deliberate in the way each module built on the previous one. The lessons were outstanding!
>
> – **Tim McDonald,**
> Chair of Entrepreneurship & Innovation,
> St. Xavier High School, U.S.

> The EPIC Certificate course has opened my mind to view problems and people from a different perspective. I also learned to understand my personality and to value others1 ideas and the power of teamwork.
>
> – **Iris Diaz,**
> Lincoln School educator, Costa Rica

Visit our website to get a sample lesson plan, register for free webinars, and learn about our programs:

babson.edu/youthimpact

Babson Youth Impact Lab: Empowering educators to lead the next generation of changemakers through entrepreneurship

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