

School-Based Enterprises

A school-based enterprise is a small business managed by students within the school. This business provides goods or services to meet the needs of the school community. School-based enterprises are like real workplaces, giving students a hands-on approach to practice and develop important work skills and behaviors that are crucial for a successful career. Students run the business and also learn skills like leadership, customer service, supervision, and management. These experiences also offer students insights into different careers and provide relevant work experiences.

Benefits of School-Based Enterprises

A school-based enterprise brings benefits to students, schools, and communities. Review the list below for some of the many benefits.

- Helps students develop workplace readiness and employability skills.
- Provides leadership opportunities in an authentic setting.
- Allows schools to broaden their range of work-based learning opportunities.
- Contributes services or goods to the school community.
- Better prepares the future workforce for employment in the community.
- Provides teachers with settings to teach and assess academic and workplace readiness skills.
- Actively involves students in the career exploration process.
- Encourages student input and choice when creating the enterprise.
- Creates opportunities for individualized skill development.

Tips for Starting a School-Based Enterprise

Developing a school-based enterprise requires building a collaborative team of school staff, students, parents, and community partners. It is crucial to be purposeful and thoughtful in developing the enterprise. Here are a few tips to consider in the development of the enterprise.

Develop a Business Plan. Create a structured business plan with key objectives and strategies for the enterprise.

Establish Clear Outcomes. Clearly state what you want to achieve for both the business and the students.

Secure Funding and Resources. Determine the supplies and resources you'll need to get the business started and create a budget. Brainstorm ideas on how to secure the start-up monies (fundraising, donations, grants, and/or sponsorships from local businesses).

Collaborate with Administrative Staff. Work closely with the school's administrative staff. They are knowledgeable about school and division-wide policies and resources.

Consult with Career and Technical Education Teachers. Engage with teachers on effective practices and paperwork requirements. Collaborate on creating an inclusive school-based enterprise.

Create a Manual. Develop a manual that includes procedures, job descriptions, training schedules, and policies.

Identify Student Interests and Skills. Start by identifying the interests, strengths, and skills of the students with disabilities who will be involved in the enterprise. Consider conducting assessments or surveys to gather this information.

Conclusion

School-based enterprises provide students with invaluable opportunities for growth. They serve as platforms where students can develop and practice workplace readiness skills and contribute to their school community. Additionally, these enterprises provide the opportunity to develop leadership abilities and explore entrepreneurial pursuits. By carefully planning, schools can create high-quality, school-based enterprises that empower students and enhance their readiness for the future.