



Centre for Innovative &
Entrepreneurial Leadership

From 'Take a Job' to 'Make a Job'

A Review of Entrepreneurship Education for Youth
in the Columbia Basin and Beyond

FINAL REPORT

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. WHAT IS ENTREPRENEURSHIP?	2
3. WHY ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR YOUTH?	3
a) Local rural economies need innovative ideas and fresh thinking	3
b) The global economy needs innovative ideas and fresh thinking	4
c) Entrepreneurship programs tackle youth unemployment	5
d) Entrepreneurship programs give young people skills for “the real world”	6
e) Young people want entrepreneurship training.....	6
f) One-third of business owners in Canada are about to retire	7
g) Youth entrepreneurship programs are motivating for “marginal” students	7
h) Other advantages.....	8
4. WHAT TO TEACH	8
a) Entrepreneurial Behaviours and Skills	8
b) Entrepreneurial Attributes.....	9
5. HOW TO TEACH	9
a) Entrepreneurship education vs. business management education	9
b) Catching the Wave: Entrepreneurial Competency Guidelines	11
c) Effective teaching methods	13
6. SELECTED U.S. SOURCES OF PROGRAMS AND CURRICULA	14
7. SELECTED CANADIAN AND B.C. PROGRAMS AND CURRICULA.....	15
8. THE STATE OF YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA & THE COLUMBIA BASIN	16
9. POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENTS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.....	18
10. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CBT YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP.....	19
REFERENCES	22

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education for youth is the subject of a worldwide movement that is so far largely unrealized. From rural communities to international conferences there are discussions about the urgent need for it, and many interesting youth entrepreneurship education projects exist throughout the world. But so far there has been little response from governments or their educational authorities, because implementing entrepreneurial education would mean educational systems would have to be transformed, as will be discussed in this report. In the meantime, there is much opportunity for small organizations to take the lead.

The Columbia Basin Trust (CBT), in its spending goals and objectives (*Columbia Basin Management Plan – Strategic Priorities 2007-10*), has identified that it will support initiatives that will increase entrepreneurial skills, especially important for young people. To this end, it has engaged the Centre for Innovative & Entrepreneurial Leadership (CIEL) to conduct this research and make recommendations. CIEL is an organization dedicated to inspiring entrepreneurship and vitality in rural communities.

This report provides an introduction youth entrepreneurship education by:

- Exploring what is meant by entrepreneurship education
- Outlining the reasons entrepreneurship education is beneficial to youth and to local and global economies
- Reviewing best practices in teaching entrepreneurship
- Reviewing best practices in curriculum development
- Discussing the policy changes that could be needed to implement entrepreneurship education on a broad scale
- Surveying on a very general level the state of youth entrepreneurship education in Canada
- Surveying in more detail the state of youth entrepreneurship education in B.C.
- Recommending actions the CBT might take to enhance youth entrepreneurship in the Columbia basin.

The reviews of educational programs and literature contained in this report are not exhaustive; rather they consist of overviews with examples. It is not the intent of this report to provide a complete literature review or a full compendium of programs across the U.S. and Canada.

Most of the resource material for this report comes from the U.S. and Canada, but most of it is from the U.S., where there is far more activity, funding, research,

and motivation related to youth entrepreneurship education than in Canada (even though most of the American educators contacted for this paper say there is woefully little in the U.S.).

The word *entrepreneurship* has a number of popular connotations. It is often associated with a free enterprise, anti-government ideology. For the purposes of this paper, that interpretation is off the mark: entrepreneurship education is neither left nor right and will appeal to both. To others it simply means either self-employed or business-like, but entrepreneurship as it is presented here goes well beyond business management.

2. WHAT IS ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action and is therefore a key competence for all, helping young people to be more creative and self-confident whatever they undertake.¹

That definition was offered by the Global Education Initiative, which reported to the 2009 World Economic Forum in Geneva, Switzerland. The group also gave us another interesting definition:...“the pursuit of opportunities beyond the resources you currently control.”

The Kauffman Foundation, a leading supporter of entrepreneurship education in the U.S., provides two further definitions:

Entrepreneurs take risks to develop a novel, sustainable enterprise—a new or improved product, service, or mode of organization that can exist independent of its originator—that benefits the economy and society.

and:

Though entrepreneurship can involve—and thus often is mistaken for— invention, creativity, management, starting a small business, or becoming self-employed, it is neither identical with nor reducible to any of them. The defining trait of entrepreneurship is the creation of a novel enterprise that the market is willing to adopt....²

The British academic Allan Gibb defines entrepreneurship as:

Behaviours, skills and attributes applied individually and/or collectively to help individuals and organizations of all kinds to create, cope with *and*

enjoy change and innovation involving higher levels of uncertainty and complexity as a means of achieving personal fulfillment.³ (italics added)

And the Kauffman Foundation's website offers a comment on entrepreneurship and youth.

What do kids know about being entrepreneurs? Turns out their curiosity about the world around them, natural creativity, willingness to take risks, and unbridled enthusiasm add up to the characteristics of our greatest entrepreneurs.⁴

3. WHY ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR YOUTH?

a) Local rural economies need innovative ideas and fresh thinking

Entrepreneurship education is a logical response to economic downturns and job losses, especially in rural areas. Many rural community leaders are struggling with the question of how to create opportunities which will retain or attract young people.

The economies of many rural communities need a jump-start, but many older citizens are mired in a habitual mindset, expecting that their local economy will be saved by a new factory, a new resource industry, or the government. Younger people don't have that mental baggage, but at the same time most youth have not considered the possibility that if they cannot find a job they could create their own.

Entrepreneurship training offers young people the skills and attitudes to start their own businesses and to employ themselves and perhaps others locally. The lack of a local market is no longer a problem—many rural entrepreneurs' products or services are marketed and sold globally using the internet.

Youth entrepreneurship can be a local catalyst for change. The Aspen Institute, after conducting extensive multi-year entrepreneurship programs in a variety of situations across the U.S., discovered that youth entrepreneurship can be a rallying point.

At the community level, it resonated with leaders concerned with youth flight.... It resonated with youth who found entrepreneurship training, youth business, and business plan competitions intriguing doors to a world they knew little about. And it resonated with state policy makers, who were looking for ways to incorporate "new economy" skills into the

education curriculum. Youth entrepreneurship became a motivating factor to get people to work together...⁵

The authors of the Aspen Institute document describe eager involvement on the part of parents.

Educators are amazed by the level of parental participation in enterprise-related events such as camps and award ceremonies, and comment that it is much higher than for other school activities.⁶

b) The global economy needs innovative ideas and fresh thinking

The world needs young entrepreneurs to spark a global economic and ecological recovery. The global economy and various global crises including climate change and poverty cry out for innovative ideas and fresh approaches.

The 2009 World Economic Forum report stated that, "...the most fundamental reason for thinking about entrepreneurship at the grass roots is to find sustainable solutions to overcoming the injustices of poverty..."⁷

The relatively new phenomenon of *social entrepreneurship* is exemplified by Mohammed Yunus, who won the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize. Yunus is the founder of the Grameen Bank, which began offering microloans to impoverished people in Bangladesh in 1976, thereby empowering them to become economically self-sufficient and establishing the microcredit model that has now been replicated around the world. Yunus encourages young people to get involved as social entrepreneurs:

Poverty is absolutely meaningless and unnecessary in the world. It was just indifference to poverty that created and sustained it. It's not created by the poor. It's created by the system. Once we fix the system in the right way, poverty will disappear. I'm encouraging young people to become social business entrepreneurs and contribute to the world rather than just making money. Making money is no fun. Contributing to and changing the world is a lot more fun.⁸

The concept of social entrepreneurship awakens the interest of many young people who might not otherwise respond to traditional definitions. Many teenagers are very concerned about the state of the world-- pollution, poverty, global warming, human rights—and would welcome a concept of education that would help them learn to do something about it. Teenagers admire adults who give their lives to improving the world, but they also notice how few of them there

are. Young people don't have many social entrepreneurship role models and in school they are not encouraged to reflect on their potential role in improving the state of the world beyond recycling their drink containers. Education in social entrepreneurship could expose young people to a different kind of role model, counteract the tide of consumerism that overwhelms many of them, open new avenues to their own creativity, introduce systems thinking, and show that their education is relevant to the 'real world.'

One definition of social entrepreneurship is offered by one of the leaders in social entrepreneurship, the Ashoka Foundation based in Washington, D.C. The Ashoka Foundation identifies the most effective social entrepreneurs world-wide and assists them with funding, marketing, and networking.

Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social problems. They are ambitious and persistent, tackling major social issues and offering new ideas for wide-scale change. Rather than leaving societal needs to the government or business sectors, social entrepreneurs find what is not working and solve the problem by changing the system, spreading the solution, and persuading entire societies to take new leaps.⁹

Michelle Obama commented on this in a speech at the White House recently.

We push our young people to strive for things, an advanced degree, a job title, a big salary. Rarely do we urge them to stop and think about what their passion is, what kind of life they want to live, what kind of neighbors and colleagues and parents they want to be. In doing so, we, as a society, often miss out on their creativity, their inventiveness, their resourcefulness— and some really good ideas! We also miss out on the opportunity to inspire a new generation of innovators and entrepreneurs who will direct their energy and talent toward solving their community's – and our nation's – most serious social problems.¹⁰

All of the principles of entrepreneurial education, all of the lists of attributes of entrepreneurs, and all conclusions about entrepreneurial education included in this paper apply to social entrepreneurship as well.

c) Entrepreneurship programs tackle youth unemployment

It is projected that by 2015, there will be 3 billion people under the age of 25 worldwide, a group that is three times more likely to be unemployed than any other. Youth entrepreneurship presents one solution to youth unemployment, and

addresses the need for wider economic opportunities in communities and countries.¹¹

d) Entrepreneurship programs give young people skills for “the real world”

The concepts of innovation and resilience are not often addressed in the public schools, whose culture is more bureaucratic than innovative, and more geared to helping students become employees or college/university students than to becoming the owners of innovative businesses or social enterprises. In other words, students (and probably most often their teachers) are conditioned with a “take-a-job” rather than a “make-a-job” mentality.¹²

Microsoft’s Bill Gates, when asked to comment on the state of American high schools in an address to the National Summit on High Schools in 2005 said:

Training the workforce of tomorrow with the high schools of today is like trying to teach kids about today’s computers on a 50-year-old mainframe. It’s the wrong tool for the times. . . . When I compare our high schools to what I see when I’m traveling abroad, I am terrified for our workforce of tomorrow.¹³

e) Young people want entrepreneurship training

A 1994 Gallup Poll in the U.S. found that:

- 69% of respondents (and 75% of black respondents) said they want to start their own business
- 73% said independence rather than money would be their primary motivation
- 68% (and 80% of black students) said it is important for business to give something back to the community.

But it appears those students were not getting what they wanted, because

- 90% said their knowledge of entrepreneurship was poor
- 85% said they had never been taught anything about it in school
- 84% said entrepreneurship should be a more prominent course of study.¹⁴

A more recent study of 2400 young Americans age 8-21 conducted by the Kauffman Foundation found that:

- More than 70 percent of high school students consider owning and operating a business as one of their top three career choices
- A large majority of youth want to be their own boss and make their ideas a reality

- 63 percent said they have the ability and desire to successfully launch their own business.¹⁵

Interest in entrepreneurship, or at least in self-employment, is growing among Canada's youth according to statistics from the Toronto-based Canadian Youth Business Foundation which funds business start-ups by young people. It has recorded a 42 percent surge in applications and a 20% increase in funded start-ups in the past year.¹⁶

There are several reasons why, says Elspeth Murray, Director of the Queen's Centre for Business Venturing in a Globe and Mail interview this year: "No paying jobs, more requirement to be socially responsible and - the hallmark of this generation - they're more aware and widely travelled, and they believe they can control things at a very young age."¹⁷

f) One-third of business owners in Canada are about to retire

In 2006 the Canadian Federation of Independent business polled 9000 members and discovered that 34% of independent business owners plan to retire in the next five years, and 70% in the next ten.¹⁸

Locally, a survey of business owners in Nelson, B.C. undertaken by the Nelson Economic Development Partnership in 2008 indicated that 33% intend to close their businesses in the next five years and 55% in the next ten, most of them because of retirement. In other words, about 300 Nelson businesses could close in the next few years—a significant number for a community of 10,000.¹⁹

g) Youth entrepreneurship programs are motivating for “marginal” students

Entrepreneurship education has been shown to spark high levels of student and parent support and involvement—often much higher than for other youth or school activities. If it is taught in a hands-on, experiential way, it tends to ‘wake up’ students who are socially, academically, or culturally marginal.²⁰ It can create the desire among those students to stay in school because, perhaps for the first time, they see value in their education. In other words, entrepreneurship training may help disadvantaged youth succeed despite their background.²¹

Steve Mariotti, the founder of the U.S. National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), has discovered that his “disadvantaged” students responded to math and reading when they were embedded in the “real-life”

scenarios of business. When low-income youth were given the opportunity to learn about entrepreneurship, their innate “street smarts” could easily develop into business and academic smarts.²²

h) Other advantages

According to Mariotti, entrepreneurship education has been shown to bring about the following increases or improvements in the lives of participants:²³

- academic performance in other subjects
- desire to remain in their community after they have completed high school
- interest in furthering education and career aspirations
- feeling of control over their lives
- leadership behaviors
- engagement in school
- sense of connection with adults in business and the community
- independent reading

4. WHAT TO TEACH

The following is a list of list of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills, and attributes gleaned from many of the resources cited in this report.

a) Entrepreneurial Behaviours and Skills

- opportunity seeking and identification
- taking initiatives to make things happen
- solving problems creatively
- managing autonomously
- seeing things through
- synthesizing disparate ideas creatively
- using judgment to take calculated risks
- marshalling of resources
- researching markets
- assessing and managing risk
- creative problem solving
- negotiating
- strategic thinking
- intuitive decision making under uncertainty

- networking
- financial management
- leadership
- business planning
- building relationships, networks, and social capital

It is generally understood that the skills and behaviours listed above can be taught to anyone with the motivation to learn them.

b) Entrepreneurial Attributes

- achievement orientation
- self confidence and self belief
- perseverance
- autonomy
- action orientation
- preference for learning by doing
- hardworking
- creativity
- social responsibility

There has been some academic debate about whether such entrepreneurial attributes can be developed or are the product of genetics. Allan Gibb states that “the weight of opinion supports the notion that they can be influenced considerably.”²⁴

Gibb also insists on an important distinction regarding such things as communication skills:

Another common mistake is to assume that entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes are synonymous with interpersonal or transferable skills. They are not. Problem solving is very different from creative problem solving. Communication, presentation skills, numeracy and literacy underpin entrepreneurial skills but are not at all identical with them. It is perfectly possible to fully utilize conventional interpersonal skills in bureaucratic occupations and organizations.²⁵

5. HOW TO TEACH

a) Entrepreneurship education vs. business management education

In her very useful analysis of teaching strategies for entrepreneurship, the American author Marilyn Kourilsky writes that entrepreneurship has three components:

1. The identification or recognition of a market opportunity and the generation of a business idea;
2. The marshaling and commitment of resources in the face of risk to pursue the opportunity; and
3. The creation of an operating business to implement the idea.²⁶

Kourilsky believes that most activities billed as entrepreneurship education are not actually entrepreneurship education at all, but business management education, which she says is a small component of item three above.

Kourilsky describes the typical youth entrepreneurship program:

The class is presented with a business idea or votes as a group to pursue one of a list of ideas; the class decides as a group how to allocate the various business management functions; any money earned is shared by the class or turned over to the school for redistribution; and any money lost is absorbed by an outside sponsor or by the school. Classic examples are turning over the day-to-day management of the student store to a group of students - or outside sponsorship of a class running a pre-defined, failure-proof micro-business for a semester.

In programs such as those, Kourilsky writes, students completely miss any personal experience of the three essential components: opportunity recognition, marshalling of resources in the face of risk, and the creation of an actual business.

In particular Kourilsky notes the absence of attention to what she calls the Initiator function. The Initiator is the person who first recognizes the market opportunity and builds a business idea from it:

In the rare instances where an attempt is made to give the Initiator some curricular attention, the treatment is usually in terms of collections of desirable attributes such as tenacity and flexibility - sometimes combined with short discussions of business startup mechanics. Education and personal experience in core Initiator areas such as opportunity recognition, marshalling of resources, and business venture initiation in the presence of risk are almost completely ignored.²⁷

Allan Gibb echoes these concerns:

Overall, a greater focus upon entrepreneurship in the education system will demand a re-examination and questioning of many existing education/industry models which claim to be entrepreneurial and are not. It is, for example, perfectly possible to have substantial work experience programmes in education that are not in the least entrepreneurial in nature. There are many 'new venture' programmes that are not organized in a particularly entrepreneurial manner. Individual projects may be undertaken by students, and business knowledge accumulated by this means, without any notion of the experience being entrepreneurial.²⁸

b) Catching the Wave: Entrepreneurial Competency Guidelines

In 1996, the Youth Entrepreneurship Working Group funded by Human Resources Canada produced *Catching the Wave*, a detailed set of competency guidelines for youth entrepreneurship education.

The report, which was aimed at policy-makers and educators but does not appear to have been followed up, contains a curriculum proposal that is very much in line with Kourilsky's comments above. The following is a summary of the *Catching The Wave's* guidelines about learning environment, resources, curriculum, and teachers.²⁹

Features of the Learning Environment

- Participants can influence
- Trust
- Sense of unpredictability
- Changes in venue
- Sense of innovation versus conformity
- Group interaction and divergent thinking
- Humour and spontaneity
- Some room for chaos and confusion

Features of the Resources and Strategies

- Team-based
- Project-based
- Minimize focus on 'right answers'
- Community integration
- Mix the methodologies
- The "unexpected"
- Frequent feedback
- Learning from failure

Features of the Content/Curriculum

- Appropriate for target audience
- Selecting the blend
- Right and left brain
- Non-linear opportunities
- Creative in design
- Relevant
- Continuous application
- Challenging
- Adaptable to needs

Features of the Instructor/Trainer

- Role models in the classroom
- Self-selected
- Mentors in the classroom
- Risk taker
- Committed
- Networker
- Able to relinquish control
- Able to handle divergence and creativity

Catching the Wave incorporates very well an important concept described by Kourilsky, namely that entrepreneurship education needs to be entrepreneurial in its methods. In their discussion of the teacher as risk-taker, the authors of *Catch the Wave* write:

Although an instructor may demonstrate many of the abilities of the entrepreneur, there may be no more important one than the willingness to take risks in the classroom. This is related to the need to change the learning environment from past traditions, to use new resources and methods, to challenge systems and bureaucracies, to challenge participants continually, to use methods they have never used before, to take on challenges they have never taken on before, and so forth.³⁰

Catching the Wave contains a detailed compendium of competency guidelines for entrepreneurship education, and they are very consistent with the ideas put forward by Kourilsky in her discussion of the Initiator function, above. For example, here is the list of competencies listed under the heading *Opportunity Orientation*:

Successful entrepreneurs are opportunity oriented. They are able to identify needs, wants, problems, and challenges in terms of potential

markets. All of the following abilities are important, with the most important listed first. An opportunity-oriented entrepreneur is able to (in order of priority):

- identify needs, wants, and problems as they are evolving and changing
- identify smaller niche markets within larger markets
- identify changes in tastes, preferences, and trends as they are evolving
- recognize trends
- describe problems as opportunities
- apply newly created technology to new, innovative, productive uses
- analyze the consequences of societal or technological change
- analyze the failure of others as R & D for a possible new venture
- recognize that the window of opportunity is relative to the skills and knowledge of the specific entrepreneur.³¹

c) Effective teaching methods

The following list is a synthesis of best practices from various sources cited in this report other than *Catching the Wave*. It does not distinguish between specific techniques and general attitudes.

- Teach “for” entrepreneurship, not “about” it
- Use methods that are hands-on, interactive, and experiential
- Use multiple approaches in and out of school-- there is no “one size fits all” for youth—give them multiple opportunities for exposure to entrepreneurship education
- Use multi-disciplinary methods and projects: case studies, games, simulations competitions, etc.
- Use digital tools and multimedia extensively
- Create high profile events to create enthusiasm and raise the image of the program
- Connect to local culture, by rooting it in local traditions and by engaging local families and community
- Use mentoring, coaching and other sustained interactions with experienced entrepreneurs
- Organize student buying and selling events using real money
- Start with weekend and summer camps
- Teachers should be entrepreneurial

6. SELECTED U.S. SOURCES OF PROGRAMS AND CURRICULA

There are many programs in the U.S. at all levels and to document them would be far beyond the scope of this report. There are several organizations worthy of mention here, partly because they serve as clearinghouses of ideas and links.

One of the most important references for this report is **The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education** which includes in its membership the education departments of many U.S. states and many boards of education.

The Consortium has developed national standards for entrepreneurship education organized into three skill sets: entrepreneurial skills, ready skills, and business functions. Included are standards of practice for teachers, a compendium of 403 performance standards (learning outcomes) for classrooms at all grade levels, an array of classroom learning aids and reference materials, and curriculum samples. All of this is available on the Consortium's website.³²

In a paper published in 2007, the Consortium listed, for elementary, middle, and high school levels, several effective youth entrepreneurship education programs it considers to be useful "thought-starters" to challenge educators. For example, they describe *Marketplace for Kids* in North Dakota and *TREPS* in New Jersey. Both programs, aimed at the elementary school level, combine classes in entrepreneurial skills with an actual market where kids display and sell products they've developed.

The Consortium outlines the kinds of activities that are best for elementary schools. Here is an excerpt:

At early grade levels the goal is for all children to understand the components of business, society, and government that are in their home towns. Experiences in how a business works and practice in creating a business idea that solves a customer problem are introduced at this level. Designing a product and trying to sell it can teach the laws of supply and demand. You may not know it, but we guarantee there are entrepreneurs in your neighborhood that will help if you will just ask. At the same time these children can be developing life skills and practicing basic academic math and communications skills.³³

The paper provides a similar set of recommended examples and learning guidelines for middle school and high school levels.

In another very good compendium of examples of effective programs and curricula, the **Appalachian Regional Council** describes a number of entrepreneurially-oriented programs throughout the eastern U.S.³⁴

The **National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE)**,³⁵ is also a good source of ideas, materials, and research although some of it is not available online and much of it is quite textbook-oriented. NFTE specializes in programs for young people in low-income communities. It has a teacher certification program with licensed partners in many states and about a dozen countries not including Canada. NFTE's efforts in low-income communities are largely a response to the high U.S. high school dropout rate, which is significantly higher than Canada's.

The Kauffman Foundation is an important funder and researcher in the area of entrepreneurship, but its involvement in youth programs is limited. Its website is nevertheless an invaluable resource.³⁶

7. SELECTED CANADIAN AND B.C. PROGRAMS AND CURRICULA

The organizations and initiatives listed below are much smaller in scope than the American initiatives discussed above.

The Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development (CEED), based in Halifax has well-established connections with the provincial Department of Education. CEED is involved in curriculum and resource development, professional development and training, and networking and events aimed at making the case for entrepreneurship education.

CEED's *Second Chance* program uses an entrepreneurship model as a tool to assist youth in conflict with the law, and they base this work on the idea that people in trouble with the law or otherwise marginalized have a unique relationship to entrepreneurship: "Second Chance is based on the assumption that many young people who break the law possess misdirected entrepreneurial characteristics."³⁷

The Ontario government has recently developed the **Future Entrepreneurs**³⁸ curriculum resource for high schools. It is classroom-based and aside from a very basic simple video game and an activity in which students develop questions for a guest entrepreneur, it contains no experiential component.

Through its **Young Entrepreneurs Program** the Ontario government will spend \$1-million this year to fund non-profit organizations for projects that promote the

entrepreneurial spirit in youth aged 12-29. An active example is the Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre.³⁹

The **Canadian Youth Business Foundation (CYBF)** provides pre-launch coaching, business resources, start-up financing, and mentoring to young people through local organizations across the country. In B.C. they are represented by Small Business B.C. in Vancouver.⁴⁰

CYBF has partnered with Industry Canada to plan a national youth entrepreneurship summit for November, 2009, to identify the gaps and opportunities in entrepreneurship education in Canada. The result will be a White Paper with recommendations to the government. The CYBF is also spearheading an international summit with 2000 youth to be held as a precursor to the G8 Summit in Ontario in 2010, the goal being to get youth entrepreneurship education on the G8 agenda.

There is a number of small entrepreneurship education initiatives across the country consisting mostly of business plan competitions and entrepreneurship camps.

Junior Achievement (JA) is a national non-profit organization which delivers programs to youth through local mentors or online. The only program JA offers to school students that is not an online simulation and which consists of more than four hours of contact with students is *The Company Program* for Grades 11 and 12, consisting of one-to-two hour weekly sessions over a period of 10 or 16 weeks in which students learn the basics of setting up and running a business.

8. THE STATE OF YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA & THE COLUMBIA BASIN

In 1998 the B.C. Youth Entrepreneurship Development Committee produced a report and handbook on youth entrepreneurship in B.C. based on workshops across the province and funded by a variety of government and business agencies. It recommended, among other things, that more links be established between business people and youth, that entrepreneurship training be started in elementary school, and that the provincial government should generally get active in this area. That report has taken a permanent place on the shelf, the committee that produced it no longer exists, and the recommendations have gone unheeded.

Junior Achievement is active in B.C., teaching business skills mainly in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island, and to a lesser extent in the Okanagan. It has no programs in the Kootenays.

Junior Achievement BC received \$3-million from the B.C. government this year. The organization reports that the numbers of student contacts has gone from 25,000 in 2004 to 29,000 in 2008, and that in 2008 they delivered more than 1000 programs across 43 B.C. school districts out of 60. ‘Student contacts’ includes contacts between students and JA’s online simulations and games.

Junior Achievement describes itself as “dedicated to educating young people about business, economics, and free enterprise,” with no emphasis on entrepreneurship as it is defined in this report.

The BC Ministry of Education curriculum includes a group of secondary school business courses including Entrepreneurship 12, which was last revised in 1996. In the 2008-09 school year, 1082 students in B.C. took this course—this is 0.7% of all students enrolled in Grades 11 and 12. Twelve percent of secondary schools across the province had students enrolled in Entrepreneurship 12.⁴¹

In the East and West Kootenay regions, L.V. Rogers Secondary in Nelson was the only school which offered Entrepreneurship 12 in the 2008-09 school year. The reason for its appearance on the LVR timetable was the initiative of an interested teacher.⁴²

Contacts with the B.C. Chamber of Commerce and Community Futures B.C. have revealed that neither their provincial organizations nor their regional affiliates are significantly involved in youth entrepreneurship programs. A spokesperson for Community Futures B.C. referred to youth entrepreneurship programs as “an unfilled niche.”

There are a number of schools in the province which hold business plan competitions. One of them stands out. In the North Okanagan, a partnership between School Districts 22 and 23, Okanagan College, and Community Futures has produced a program that appears to create a lot of excitement in all three organizations in Kelowna and Vernon. Teams in a high school class are given three tasks: come up with an innovative product, figure out how to market it, and decide how you are going to finance it. For each task, teams have to present before a team of local business people in a style borrowed from the TV show *Dragon’s Den*. The four teams chosen as winners by the “dragons” may go on to work on the next task and eventually go before the panel again for that further task, while teams not chosen still continue their project as part of their class work. Students in a business class at Okanagan University College mentor the high school participants and raise money in the community for the prizes (a total of \$4500).⁴³

The significance of this project is two-fold: the students actually do the work required to start a business rather than just learning theory, and the project is an effective community builder between the school, the business community, and the college. The organizers report that each year at least two of the projects continue to become ‘real’ businesses, and the local Community Futures is committed to assisting them with funding.

9. POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENTS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Especially in Canada, and to a large extent in the U.S., entrepreneurship education consists of term projects (competitions, camps) often driven by local individuals or organizations, but rarely are they connected to a larger support network with a long-range plan for youth entrepreneurship. Most of the literature cited in this report stresses the importance of multi-sector partnerships and a program consisting of a variety of learning activities. Such a comprehensive approach requires policy decisions by governments in partnership with educational and financial institutions.

A number of American and international studies see entrepreneurship education as a solution to unemployment and business vitality on a global level. For example, the World Economic Forum Global Education Initiative states that:

“Entrepreneurship education can be a societal change agent, a great enabler in all sectors...Change must occur primarily in the public systems of education and youth development. Senior policy-makers must foster the growth of an entrepreneurship ecosystem that is itself entrepreneurial, that liberates the innate creative abilities of youth and that gives everyone access to ownership.”⁴⁴

In its recommendations, the World Economic Forum document directly advocates the transformation of education systems.

That document and others cited in this report advocate the following policy-level changes aimed at building an “entrepreneurial ecosystem” and fostering a policy and cultural environment that is supportive of entrepreneurship.^{45, 46, 47}

- Introduce entrepreneurship training in all schools, with special emphasis on those with large populations of youth from low-income communities.
- Increase funding to support teacher training and professional development for entrepreneurship.

- Increase funding to support curriculum development and evaluation, and deeply imbed entrepreneurial skills throughout the curriculum in other subjects.
- Develop strong partnerships between schools, businesses, and other community organizations so that business leaders can serve as mentors and coaches and provide support to local programs.
- Implement a system of financial support for young entrepreneurs, including loans, grants, or incentives for new entrepreneurs that is dependable and long-term, not restricted to one short-term project.
- Implement a system of technical support including mentoring in business skills.
- Provide the appropriate regulatory framework for financial and technical support.
- Promote a more broad acceptance of entrepreneurship in academia.
- Adopt province-wide standards for entrepreneurship education.
- Create formal entrepreneurship education partnerships between primary and secondary schools, community colleges, and universities.
- Revise education statutes and policies to include entrepreneurship skills as a desired competency in educational standards.

Several important questions underlie the policy issues discussed here. If the success of entrepreneurship education relies on having a system of delivery that is entrepreneurial, why would we want governments or large organizations of any kind to take over entrepreneurship education? Is this consistent with entrepreneurial thinking? How could the development of national standards, curricula, policies and infrastructure be implemented without destroying the entrepreneurial spirit which thrives on spontaneity and needs room for unexpected invention and change?

10. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CBT YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

There is a large gap in B.C. in the area of entrepreneurship education for youth. There are promising initiatives across the continent which are potential sources of guidance and collaboration. Therefore, there is a significant opportunity for an organization or individual to make a difference in this area and in fact take a leadership role, starting with high-quality small local projects and applying the principles outlined in this report.

CBT might consider some or all of the following recommendations in building an effective entrepreneurial ecosystem. Regional partners and allies should be identified to better harness existing capacities in the region.

Short-term

- Build a coalition of organizations throughout the Basin that understand the issue and are keen to partner and/or collaborate on further initiatives. This would involve:
 - Presenting of the main findings of this report
 - Discussing possibilities
 - Surveying needs, interest and alignment of goals
 - Gauging commitment

The presentations and consultations could be done throughout communities in the Basin. Stakeholders would include school districts, schools, Chambers, Community Futures organizations, colleges, science councils, youth centres, community and economic development organizations, municipal councils, and key businesses. This step could be accomplished in a 3-6 month period.

Short to Long-term

- **Business succession loan forgiveness program.** More than 70% of small business owners hope to sell or retire from their businesses in the next decade (Canadian Federation of Independent Business - 2005). This may create huge holes in the communities if buyers are not found. A program could be set up that matches young aspiring entrepreneurs to existing businesses. A business loan program where a component of the loan is forgivable could assist young business people successfully take over these businesses.
- **Opportunity identification sessions for youth in communities.** Hold sessions that involve a youth-facilitated interactive component. These forums could be held in communities to introduce youth to the idea of entrepreneurship and to brainstorm untapped community and business opportunities.
- **'Dragon's Den' type of business plan competition** where CBT could provide some equity (e.g. \$100,000 for 2-4 aspiring entrepreneurs). Through some preliminary competitions, business ideas & business plans could go before a Dragon panel made up of senior CBT staff (VP Investment, CEO) and other notable Basin business experts, specialists, business programs in colleges, etc. Dragon's Den is a popular television show in Canada and internationally.

- **Informal or formal mentoring program** to assist youth starting or already in business. Such a program would connect youth deep into their communities. Some of the mentoring could be as informal as linking interested youth with a community-oriented business. The youth would follow the entrepreneur and learn about the business and his/her own skills and attributes.
- **Provide teacher support and training** for youth entrepreneurship & entrepreneurialism.
- **Support curriculum development** for a variety of entrepreneurial attitudes, skills and competencies.
- **Awards to recognize youth entrepreneurs and community entrepreneurs** (those that contribute to a community's bottom line). This begins to build and reinforce a culture of entrepreneurship, innovation and community commitment.
- **Summer Enterprise youth business grant.** Offer basin-based young business people up to \$1,500 to start a summer business. At the successful completion of their summer business, a further \$1,500 grant is available (modeled after an Ontario Program that has run for more than 25 years).
- **Summer or Boot Camp for young entrepreneurs.** This could be done over a few weekends or in a camp-like setting in the summer.
- **Enterprise program that stimulates youth entrepreneurial programming from non-profits.** Build on a Government of Ontario program that award up to \$75,000 to non-profits that are building youth enterprise programs. The program allows for great flexibility and innovation in design.
- **Incorporate youth entrepreneurship as an explicit goal** in both the CBT's youth and economic development strategy.

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