

Our Schools: Innovation in the classroom: entrepreneurship 12 meets YELL

Chloe Scott / Whistler Question

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Founded by three Canadian entrepreneurs, the Young Entrepreneur Leadership Launchpad (YELL) was developed with high school students in mind.

Hands-on, experiential, and unique in its offerings, YELL has proposed a partnership with School District No. 48 (Sea to Sky) to present an innovative program that has been adapted and blended with Entrepreneurship 12 learning outcomes.

The district plans for this course to be offered outside of the timetable, likely in a weekly format, dependent on enrolment. The program would run out of Howe Sound Secondary, with the opportunity for Whistler and Pemberton students to participate through a combination of commuting and video conferencing.

“This program is particularly interesting for two reasons: one is that entrepreneurship has been underrepresented in the school system and this course presents an opportunity for us to change that by giving students exposure to the business mindset and helping them make connections in the business world,” said Peter Jory, director of instruction, technology and innovation. “The second reason is that, as soon as it was presented to us, it was clear that it was going to help our students develop the competencies integral to our Pathways to Education Strategic Plan. I was especially interested in how YELL focuses on contribution and the relationship between that and entrepreneurship.”

“It’s a real opportunity to learn experientially, not just theoretically,” Karen Elliott said.

She is one of YELL’s passionate volunteers. Owner of Karen Elliott Consulting and Coaching, she also sits on the Squamish council. Elliott is enthusiastic about how the Sea to Sky corridor is creating young and vibrant communities full of new ideas and perspectives, and for her, getting involved with YELL has been about wanting to introduce entrepreneurship to students as they begin to consider how their own careers might take shape.

“Entrepreneurship is really about empowering oneself,” she said.

Students enrolled will spend the school year working towards completion of the program, which is divided into three distinct terms. “Up until winter break, students will be learning lots about themselves.”

According to the course design, self-expression and creativity are the emphasis of term one, referred to as the “business accelerator.” The term will kick off with an entrepreneurship panel where students will be inspired by the personal stories and dynamic experiences of local, accomplished entrepreneurs. Following the panel, students will meet for weekly sessions covering a variety of business topics, including solutions and design thinking, mindfulness in business, and developing the “story.” Each weekly session will include a guest lecturer, ensuring students’ exposure to a variety of ideas and best practices in business.

Term two, “the idea incubator,” will see students shift their focus to creating solutions for real-world problems. Students will collaborate with their peers to brainstorm, strategize, discuss and create a business concept as a team. Throughout term two, students will be encouraged to discover opportunities in business that resonate with them, whether that means creating a tool that might help reduce waste in their community, or develop a program specifically created with underprivileged youth in mind.

“YELL is about getting to think about the big questions, such as food security and the environment,” Elliot said.

Once they have their concept created, teams will be matched with a lead mentor from the business community who will aid the team with the development of a viable business plan.

For the course’s final term, YELL teams will compete in a district-wide “venture challenge.” Teams will pitch their business ideas to a panel of investors and business leaders. The Venture Challenge champions, as determined by the judging panel, then have an opportunity to compete in a Provincial Business Plan Competition.

Students at Pemberton Secondary, Whistler Secondary and Howe Sound Secondary all have the opportunity to enrol in the course, which will begin September 2016 dependent on sufficient enrolment. To learn more about the course, please contact your school principal.

Chloe Scott is the communications and administrative assistant with the Sea to Sky School District.

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