

# ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING



## Using Entrepreneurship To Develop Student-Centered Learning Methods

As the modern work place changes, so does the demand for schools to create classes and learning opportunities that develop skills for the 21st century. Tony Wagner, author and Harvard professor of education has identified 7 important skills for students to master for future success, which include:

- Collaboration
- Agility & Adaptability
- Initiative & Entrepreneurship
- Effective oral & written communication
- Accessing & analyzing information and
- Curiosity & imagination

Providing students learning opportunities to practice these skills will require teachers and schools to reinvent the classroom. An Entrepreneurial Learning Internship (ELI) is a multi-discipline and multi-level approach to teaching that's designed to provide students an opportunity to guide their learning while developing these skills. An ELI can be implemented in various classes as a form of project-based learning, but can also work as a stand alone course, club, or model for school-wide community outreach.

Unlike some project-based learning programs, an ELI

allows students of multiple levels to work together on the same project. Furthermore, an ELI can be designed for completely democratic and open-ended collaboration or harnessed to fit a school's mission and vision.

Composed of 5 phases, each phase is designed to involve the surrounding community to create an identified and needed outcome. Although an ELI is rooted in various teaching and leadership practices, it's focus on collaborative improvement is connected to Appreciative Inquiry, which is a form of positive psychology.

## Phase 0 Inform Communicating to Stakeholders

Communicating with students, teachers, parents and the greater community is a crucial component in creating a successful ELI for your class or school. Beyond simply explaining details and schedules, a clear communication plan and effective marketing and branding scheme will help generate excitement and buy-in by the greater community.

A successful ELI is dependent on the participation of volunteer content specialists and other experts. These content coaches provide valuable expertise for student-groups as they grapple with how to move the ELI through the different phases. Therefore making the community aware of the upcoming ELI as well as ways they might be needed is helpful.

Some schools may want to approach local businesses to sponsor the ELI, which is mutually beneficial because it helps promote the local

**“The goal is to develop a set of skills...by solving a problem, creating a product, or generating a new understanding. Knowledge is important, but it is acquired on an “as needed” basis.”**

Tony Wagner



business as well as provide opportunities for the business to provide content specialists and expertise.

Although there are many benefits from allowing outside sponsors and content coaches to participate in an ELI, it's primary benefit is that it helps create stronger bonds between the school and community, while also creating opportunities for students to learn from qualified experts, which could lead to ongoing connections in the future for the students.

## Phase 1 Discover What Can We Do?

Phase 1 starts with discovering what the group, class, or school does best, so we can use those strengths to benefit the community. Depending on the size of the ELI, Phase 1 can be completed within a few hours, or explored by a group over a few meetings. The power of Phase 1 comes from giving all participants a voice to share and celebrate the communities perceived strengths. Furthermore, a truly democratic process, in a multi-level ELI observations from any student holds the same value.

Following *Discovery* the next step in Phase 1 is for the ELI participants to dream about how the community's strengths could be used to benefit the surrounding community or provide for a need. Obviously, not all dreams are realistic, but what's plausible can be determined later. Dreaming is the beginning of creating a great design.

## Phase 2 Design How Can We Do It?

With an emphasis on student leadership the *Design* phase empowers students to identify a dream and plan for its creation. After selecting

**THINK.  
ACT.  
INNOVATE.**

and overall student leadership structure, students will break into smaller specialized groups that's responsible for certain aspect of the ELI. Students who wish to be the overall project director will have an opportunity to apply and interview with the admin council, and if chosen will be coached through the process of leading the smaller committees and groups.

This phase is the longest and where amazing learning opportunities open for students. Phase 2 sees the handoff of teacher-guided instruction to true student-centered learning by allowing the students to choose their learning priorities and avenues for acquiring information.

Groups will work together to accomplish the overall goals, and when a group identifies a content gap they will work with the leadership council to find a content coach to

**“Today the real added value is what you can do with what you know. And it is really in the *doing*--in the probing of the universe, the pursuit of a query--that the real learning takes place.**

**Paul Bottino in *Creating Innovators* by Tony Wagner**

provide support for learning. Content coaches will undoubtedly include teachers from the school, but will also include parents, community members and other connections within the school network. In instances where outside sponsors have partnered with the ELI, specialists in marketing, design, sales, or any area could be relied on to provide technical expertise to the students.

In many ways Phase 2 is designed to model the modern day collaborative work experience, which gives students the opportunity to discuss the needs and tasks of the day while also learning and working towards a common goal together.

## Phase 3 Deliver Do It.

The *Deliver* phase is the main product or outcome of an ELI and will likely be the most noticeable phase to the community. Depending on the ELI, Phase 3 might be a one day event or a new school-wide initiative that will work with and serve the local community.

Although Phase 3 is not likely the phase that produces the most learning, for most participants it is their final product and what the community can enjoy together. However since Phase 3 will likely represent an outside image to the surrounding community it's

important to work closely through the ELI process to make sure what's produced aligns with the overall value of the school and community.

## Phase 4 Sustain What's Our Commitment?

For many teachers and administrators the fear of creating a school and community-wide project is problematic because of the nature of schools. Few educators want to be left operating a project that was created by passionate students who have long left the school. Therefore like any major project an element of time must be planned into an ELI.

For ELIs that create a single day Phase 3 event, sustainability might be as simple as discussing whether the school will make the day an annual event. For large initiatives, like the creation of an after school tutoring program for students in the local community, a timeline for the organization with agreed upon end dates will give the school a natural and painless completion date.

Furthermore, if it's believed that the product should continue beyond the ELI timeline, protocols can be setup to determine how oversight and leadership can be transferred to a new group of passionate students who might never have been involved with the original ELI.



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## EQ Development

### Learning must go beyond content and into the realm of skill and emotional development

With different outcomes and visions for every ELI, no two ELIs are the same. However, even though the learned content maybe different a common similarity in an ELI is the need to develop emotional intelligence (EQ) in all participants. Any great salesperson, entrepreneur, or inventor knows that it's not just a great idea or product that leads to success, it's the ability to persevere and overcome obstacles as they appear. Therefore in addition to facilitating the first two phases, teachers who oversee an ELI can use the process to coach students through different emotional skills.

For example as students struggle with various challenges presented throughout an ELI, a discussion or lesson about the different stages of the *emotional transition curve* would help counter self-doubt some students might be facing. Furthermore an ELI is great opportunity to develop empathy as students face previous unknown realities about others in their communities. Although these are just two small examples an ELI provides schools an intentional opportunity to teach shared values already articulated



in the school mission as well as the flexibility to observe and deliver tailored EQ lessons based on the needs of the group.

## Reflective Doing

### Harnessing the power of reflective reading and journaling

Successful ELIs incorporate reflection and journaling as a part of their daily sessions. Encouraging students to reflect on their learning and challenges for the day provides

**“Leaders must learn to become change savvy by reflective doing. It's messy at first, but you eventually get somewhere, and get good at doing it.”**

**Michael Fullen *Change Leader: Learning to Do What Matters Most* (p. 82).**

an opportunity to solidify learning gains as well as highlight specific topics.

Coupling reflections with strategic reading assignments will encourage both reading and writing, while also allowing a structure for some content delivery by the teacher.

**An ELI provides schools an opportunity to teach shared values articulated in the school mission**



#### Entrepreneurial Learning Developer

Andrew Aldrich is both an experienced international teacher and aspiring administrator, but most importantly a father and husband.

**Entrepreneurial-Learning.com**  
Share your ideas, challenges, and results with the world.

Trying to decide if an ELI is a good fit for your school, or have questions about how to approach Phase 2? Visit [entrepreneurial-learning.com](http://entrepreneurial-learning.com) to learn more about what others are doing and have done to incorporate ELI teaching in their schools.

Although still in it's development, the ELI website's goal is to connect students, teachers, schools, and communities around the world and provide a central location for ideas

and resources to be shared for your school's upcoming ELI.

## LEARN[ED] LEADERSHIP

For more resources on topics and ideas in international education and to learn more about Andrew Aldrich the developer of Entrepreneurial Learning, visit [learnedleadership.org](http://learnedleadership.org). There you can join the conversation and find interviews, articles and other thoughts about the challenges and opportunities in international education.