



# Student Entrepreneurship

## Standards and Principles Addressed

The content of this chapter aligns with the following standards, indicators, and principles:

### ISTE Student Standards

Empowered Learner (1.1.a, 1.1.b, 1.1.c)

Knowledge Constructor (1.3.d)

Innovative Designer (1.4.a, 1.4.b, 1.4.c, 1.4.d)

Computational Thinker (1.5.a, 1.5.b, 1.5.c)

### ISTE Educator Standards

Learner (2.1.c)

Citizen (2.3.a, 2.3.b)

Designer (2.5.b)

Facilitator (2.6.a, 2.6.c, 2.6.d)

### Transformational Learning Principles

Nurture: Cultivate Belonging, Connect Learning to Learner, Ensure Equity

Guide: Spark Curiosity, Develop Expertise, Evaluate Reflection

Empower: Prioritize Authentic Experiences, Ignite Agency

# Where Teachers Lead, Students Follow

As future leaders, students desperately need the space to think through and discuss the skills they believe they need to confidently navigate, shape, and enhance their thinking process to prepare for an increasingly complex and fast-paced work environment. You may ask, “How can I possibly grow entrepreneurs in my classroom if I am not an entrepreneur myself?” We assure you that you do not need to be a business owner to instill students with this mindset or skill set. In the simplest terms, an entrepreneur is one who undertakes a project or “one who organizes.” Teachers are the greatest project managers! Often, teachers manage hundreds of thoughts while also executing half of them into learning projects, communications, or team-building experiences; reviewing and understanding large data sets; and making their visions of student success a reality.

Think of your classroom as an organization that you are leading. When you begin seeing your classroom in this way, you can then start incorporating the skills we discuss in this chapter. To help you better understand what this concept might look like in your classroom, we developed “The Entrepreneur-Driven Classroom Handbook” (**FIGURE 4.1**). This guide is based on the same handbook Tisha used to create a pitch deck proposing the concept of the unconventional classroom she envisioned. She started with this guide to illustrate the why, what, and *how* to school leaders to get their backing and then continued to adapt and improve it to clearly communicate to students and their parents the purpose of the classroom structure, activities, roles, and responsibilities. Take a close look at Figure 4.1: You will notice the similarities between traditional, entrepreneurial, and business settings and procedures, but a simple change in vocabulary can help students make easier connections between classroom to career. The idea here is that traditional classrooms gradually begin using the vocabulary from an entrepreneur-driven classroom, which would then prepare students for the vocabulary and procedures they will use in the future. (To download this template, scan the QR code at the end of this chapter.)

Creating an entrepreneurial learning environment within the structure of a “typical” classroom environment simply isn’t possible. The learning environments we have written about in previous chapters and the environments that still exist today based on the Prussian Model do not serve to create student entrepreneurs. What’s your mindset toward incorporating entrepreneurship skills into your learning spaces and classrooms? Using Figure 4.1, take time to think through a few reflection questions to get a better sense of it and what areas you may want to focus on:

TYPICAL CLASSROOM	ENTREPRENEUR DRIVEN CLASSROOM	BUSINESS
Syllabus Class Rules Learning Objectives	Class Handbook Class Core Values Class Vision and Goals	Employee Handbook Company Values Company Vision
Sequence of Courses Class Behavior/Management Student Information Form	Recommended or Related Courses Class and Group Norms Personality or Behavioral Results	Professional Development/Learning Code of Conduct Employee Info & Personality Assessment
Assignments, Exams Academic Track Grades and Policies	Roles and Responsibilities Departments Performance (rubrics, student-led conferences, grading)	Job Description Departments Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) Classroom Culture	AUP/Suggested Productivity Tools Team Building Events	Device, Tech Policy Employee Perks
Parent Signature	Student and Parent Signature	Employee Signature

**FIGURE 4.1**

This table illustrates the transformation from a typical classroom to an entrepreneurial classroom that sets students up for real-world skills development.

- How do you balance traditional instructional goals with opportunities to think and act like entrepreneurs?
- How do you currently empower students to identify and explore their passions within your subject area?
- How do you encourage students to embrace failure and to accept the idea of failure as a positive step toward success?
- What type of feedback do you give students to help them improve on their ideas and innovative thinking?
- How do you integrate mentorship, guest speakers, or community involvement to inspire entrepreneurial thinking in your classroom?
- How often are students exposed to leaders in your community or real people using your subject area skills for their current jobs?

The first step, therefore, toward growing entrepreneurs is to reflect on your mindset about incorporating entrepreneurship into your own space. After all, where the teacher goes, the student will follow. Embracing entrepreneurial skills in the classroom and interlacing them with learning standards (e.g., Common Core), supplemental standards (e.g., ISTE Standards, Transformational Learning Principles [TLPs]), and the AIM Framework (Academic Excellence, Interpersonal Skills, and Master of Self) will not only raise the level of learning but also will mold students into leaders who begin thinking of great ideas and solutions to the problems around them. Along the way, they will naturally learn their purpose and begin shaping their personal brand. Each student is unique, bringing different passions, characteristics, and ideas to the table. By leveraging their uniqueness, they can begin to build out their talents and creative solutions.

When thinking of implementing a new idea or strategy in a school district or classroom, it is important to keep in mind that all stakeholders play a key role in the success of the idea. School administrators, like teachers, must reflect on the end goal of student success once again. Buy-in from administrators has the power to fuel students' real-world learning connections to their talents, passions, and purpose. Unwavering support, priority for resources, and trust for teachers play a very important role in closing the gap between the classroom environment and real-world application.

Again, where educators go in their classroom habits, practices, and approaches, students are sure to follow. According to the Waterfall Effect, originated by Paul H. Burton, the benefits and successes (and struggles and weaknesses) of a leader will cascade down into an organization like a waterfall (Graydin, 2022). This leadership principle is applicable to business entities, schools, and school districts across the globe. Whatever discourse or harmony at the top of an organization is sure to trickle down all the way to the students, impacting mindset, learning, confidence, and sense of security. If students are impacted in a negative way, this will directly affect learning, the implementation of AIM, and any additional profiles of success.

As educators, we often boldly tell students, "This is not how the real world will operate." Why, then, are we not creating classroom environments that reflect the modern-day workplace experience? Facilitating an environment for students who can collaborate freely, with varied scheduling to learn adaptability, celebrate success, and embrace imperfections and failures, offers an approach that motivates students and constructs a foundation for strong essential skills such as problem-solving, creativity, communication, and resilience to support a diverse career path.

## ESSENTIAL ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS FOR STUDENTS

Educators will always play a pivotal role in guiding, inspiring, and supporting students toward developing essential skills for learning *and* for entrepreneurship. But which skills are essential?

We wondered the same thing. Leaning mainly on Rick’s experience as an entrepreneur and Tisha’s experience implementing entrepreneurship skills with students while meeting career and technology learning standards in her classroom, we listed the most important skills for an entrepreneurial mindset. We reflected on our notes, consulted *The Lean Startup* by Eric Ries and *Entrepreneurship: Theory, Process, Practice* by Donald F. Kuratko, and then reviewed our notes on the AIM Framework. A common thread became clear. These vital entrepreneurial skills align with the same student success goals that are important to *all* stakeholders:

- Vision, Strategy
- Networking, Opportunities
- Financial Literacy
- Operations (productivity, efficiency of process, proper ratio of individuals to responsibilities)
- Leadership, Team Building
- Marketing and Sales Strategies
- Risk Identification (“if, then” rules)
- Innovation and Adaptation
- Legal Compliance and Ethics (Industry Standards, Integrity, Accountability)
- Personal Development

To elevate students to succeed beyond K–12, these skills should be part of students’ *everyday* learning and intertwined with district goals for success, the AIM Framework, and additional principles or standards, such as the ISTE Standards and TLPs.

# Supporting an Entrepreneurial Mindset in Classrooms

Students begin their learning journey as kindergarteners full of curiosity, imagination, and creativity with little fear of imperfection. By the time they finish middle school and enter high school, they are often filled with fear of their own voice, worry about thinking differently, and have lost the curiosity for being creative in any capacity. It is as if students have been served all their knowledge and thinking on a silver platter by teachers. To guard against this happening in your classroom or school, watch for warning signs by considering:

- Who is doing all the talking in your classroom?
- Who is doing most of the thinking and problem-solving?
- Is the teacher or are the students the most engaged in the learning environment?
- Are students expected to wait for permission to be inquisitive and ask questions?
- Are questions even allowed without control and compliance?
- What norms are being established in your classroom, your school, and your school district?

If students do not feel safe enough to ask questions, they absolutely will not open themselves up to being creative enough to mold their talents and skills into something bigger than the four walls of a classroom. Creativity, leadership, critical thinking, and ideation must be fostered repeatedly and will require room for patience and grace from all stakeholders.

There is an unconscious ideology that students go to school to learn skills they do not have, but once they have entered the heart of the curriculum, the expectations of immediate success and perfect scores become overwhelming, and students then shift their focus from learning to satisfying the expectations of parents, teachers, and school leaders. We cannot expect students to just *know* we are confident in their leadership and ability to succeed. Instead, we need to consciously and intentionally share words and affirm messages to students that encourage growth and unstructured curiosity, and show our belief that they are problem-solvers and have the power to use their voice in ways that create solutions. Behavior is a language, and so it is up to us as educators to foster the belief that students are more than the labels others place upon them and to remind them that we believe in them and their abilities. Over time students will gain confidence in themselves and will step into situations, experiences, and roles they previously avoided. You may see students who previously stayed quiet and never volunteered take

the lead on a group project or flourish in building community within your classroom or a school organization. Students who always seemed to be the “sidekicks” or picked last may become the go-to expert for troubleshooting technology. Students who never believed they had anything valuable to contribute may become creators or leaders of school-wide or community-wide projects. Students need help and guidance with personal image and self-development, and when you implement a few small changes to support this you will see a shift in their acceptance of themselves and others. For example, Tisha’s former students shared a few messages they received in her classroom that had a lasting impact:

“Own your shine.”

“You are more than a perfect score or assignment.”

“Your skills and talents are different because they are meant to help others in a different way than your peers.”

“Your voice is powerful, and what you say is what you will see.”

“There is a way, not *the* way.”

“It is okay to take brain breaks. Not every second of your school day must be taken up by thinking.”

Equally essential is the encouragement to embrace failure (the lack of an expected outcome from an action) and reframe it as an opportunity for deep understanding and growth. An entrepreneurial mindset knows perfection cannot be achieved the first time around; the path for growth and success is *through* failure. The most crucial step to embracing failure is acceptance (Hreha, 2023), which many students struggle with. As often as possible, remind students (and yourself) that failure is only an event, not a characteristic that defines you. On the flip side, students also must be reminded that perfection does not exist, so it is a waste of time trying to fit the profile of a “perfect student.” Together profiles of success, learning goals, the TLPs, the ISTE Standards, and the AIM Framework can give students a target to aim for, but like a game of darts, hitting the bull’s-eye every single time is impossible. Success and failure together create a balanced experience that provides the chance for growth in areas of struggle and empowerment in areas of achievement. In turn, this process creates resilient and adaptable students who become efficient and productive leaders.

Entrepreneurs who build products or offer a service will confirm that a team working together toward a common goal helps to accelerate production and scalable growth.

For a team to work as efficiently as possible, communication and collaboration become vital assets and are critical to the team's success. Communication and collaboration are often two points brought up when assessing improvements in both large and small organizations. These two skills should be introduced and practiced as early as possible. An entrepreneur-driven classroom looks for opportunities where students can practice and refine these skills. Consider your classroom dynamic, and ask yourself:

- Are students engaging in group discussions (in person or online)?
- Do students have a balanced number of individual assignments and group projects? Do the gradebook and year-at-a-glance lesson plans show an imbalance?
- How can lessons and activities better incorporate the practice of speaking, listening, and contributing to a group discussion or topic?
- Are there opportunities for students to illustrate what they have learned?
- Is there a choice available for *how* to show the learning? Are there alternative ways to share and discuss learning in a means that best accommodates student needs?

Asking yourself reflective questions about your teaching practices or classroom set-ups, especially those that have been in place for years, helps you reconsider if you are keeping to a structure just because “it has always been done this way.” Adjusting your classrooms to better reflect the future students will enter after graduation can enhance interpersonal skills, cultivate leadership qualities, and leverage the strengths of everyone, including the teacher. To help stimulate entrepreneurial skills, design activities that require students to work together or present to a group, such as to their peers, educators, or the community. Articulating a new idea to someone who has not been involved in its evolution can be difficult, so provide clear and concise explanations to your students and encourage them to do the same in their presentations.

Many students learn by doing, an approach that Rick has always found to be the most impactful for his growth, especially when accommodating his dyslexia in a work environment. Engaging and working with local businesses or community projects gives students a chance at practical experiences and insights into real-world problem-solving, making their learning more meaningful and applicable to real-life scenarios. When students can view and do in a classroom instead of sit and get, the age-old student/teacher script is completely flipped and creates a synergy in the classroom that has students thinking in a different way and teachers facilitating curiosity and communication.



# Connecting Learning Standards to Future Jobs

The skills for an entrepreneur cover multiple content areas and can thus be instilled into every single class and subject area. Instead of focusing only on learning standards, think instead about how the standards can fit into the skills your students will take with them after graduation. Consider this process as not a one-and-done solution, but a mindset that should be an expectation for everyone from the superintendent to all support staff. If your shoes are touching the floor of a building where students spend their entire day, your mindset must shift and support their future.

Entrepreneurs wear multiple hats and develop so many skills they are often called a jack-of-all-trades. Students need to understand that they do not have to be “the best” at everything but instead can learn skills that match up with their interests. This might take students on the same journey as an entrepreneur, learning many skills through authentic learning experiences rather than only academics and theory. It is important to note that the number of college enrollments has been declining gradually over the past decade (Fry, 2023) for a few reasons, including avoidance of hefty college bills and of the workplace vulnerability tied to emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (Johnson, 2024). So, in a time when more jobs (excluding STEM-specific careers) are no longer requiring college degrees, experience and skill sets are becoming the greater requirement. Students are now exploring white-collar alternatives, and vocational schools create a straight path to well-paying jobs (Johnson, 2024).

If schools and stakeholders focus only on academic excellence and employers receiving new graduates are more focused on self-mastery and interpersonal skills, how can we support students to find their way into nontraditional career paths? We each need to review which classes, subjects, and projects in our schools and classes already support entrepreneurial skill building and then identify gaps where an entrepreneur mindset could be implemented. This process will be gradual and may start with only a handful of teachers with you leading the focus on future-ready students, but all great change starts with a few people paving the way for a few more.

One way to make the necessary connections to the existing curriculum is to match up the list of essential entrepreneurial skills for students (see the sidebar of the same name) to classes within your school that you believe support similar, if not the same, skills. We brainstormed the shortlist shown in **FIGURE 4.2** to get you started but recommend

that you plan a roundtable as a collective group with administrators, teachers, and even students to think through how to best pair up courses with the skills in this and previous chapters.

ENTREPRENEUR SKILL	CLASSES/SUBJECTS
Financial Literacy	Math, Economics, Career and Technology, STEM, STEAM, Robotics
Vision, and Strategy	ELA, History, Career and Technology
Risk Assessment Identification	Science (hypothesis), Coding/Programming
Legal Compliance and Ethics	Government, ELA
Innovation and Adaptation	Career and Technology, STEM, STEAM, Robotics
Operations, Sales and Marketing, and Sales	Graphic Design, Art, Publishing, Extra Curricular
Leadership, Teambuilding	Extra Curricular, eSports, Student Organizations, Cross-Curricular
Personal Development	Cross-Curricular with learning standards, supplemental standards, and entrepreneurship skills

**FIGURE 4.2**  
Connect classes with entrepreneurial skills.

## Personal Branding: The Foundation Development

As students recognize their individual talents and personal skill sets, they begin to build out a story of themselves. Through projects, reflections, and personal development, teachers may be surprised to see students taking their stories and unknowingly building their personal brands. They have grown up watching and relating to influencers on social media who have built their own brands, and in doing so are engaging in a form of microlearning. Brand building is a skill that needs to be addressed with our students, at the very least informally. The discussions we have with students in the hallways, during whole group learning, and in one-to-one interactions, for instance, are equally important as direct instruction. Take advantage of these moments to see how students see themselves and their stories.

To better connect learning in the classroom to students' visions of their future, help students learn to share their story, their brand, which will in turn create confidence within them to keep improving and evolving their story and brand. "Personal branding is the overlap between how you see yourself and how others see you" (BerkleyExecEd, n.d.). Just like a company creates a brand to serve as an identity for its products, an individual crafts a personal brand to highlight their unique qualities, skills, and values. The individual (in this case, students) learns how to market themselves and build their learning and career around their story and brand. Students in middle and high school are immersed in social media connections and have learned to be consumers *and* creators while curating their own personal memories (a brand). Their digital footprint becomes their public persona or a living resume that reflects who they are, what they stand for, what they know, and how they can support others. In a sense, a student's brand is created the moment they begin any social profile (with or without adult supervision or permission).

The classroom is a great place to start guiding students' thinking about themselves and their stories. Their online presence (or brand) tells a story as well, including reposts, likes, comments, and original content. Personal branding activities are a great way to combine storytelling with digital literacy and digital citizenship skills. Integrating available technology into students' daily activities will allow students to learn how to effectively use digital tools and devices to leverage a positive online presence (personal brand). Additionally, it will help them better understand how to responsibly use all technology for productivity, creativity, boundary setting, and usage habits. Focusing efforts on what *to* do, instead of what *not* to do, supports students as leaders inside and outside the classroom. Activities such as coding projects, digital presentations, and online collaboration help to build technical skills that students can use to share their stories.

In addition, you might do a brainstorming activity with students and guide them through a brief exercise to begin shaping their personal story. Have them think through the following characteristics in relation to themselves, the energy they bring online and offline, and what makes them uniquely different (Hauwiller, 2019):

- purpose
- authenticity
- energy
- values
- strengths
- legacy
- clarity

You most likely are already addressing these values in your classroom. For example, you share *purpose* with your students daily—the day's learning objectives, schedules, and

expected outcomes—so they understand the meaning of the word. Next, you lead them to explore *their* purpose based on their passions and interests. If they are naturally talented with graphic design, for instance, how might that lead them to their purpose in the future? How can they use graphic design to tell their story and create a personal brand? If a student is a gifted public speaker who flourishes in a broadcast class, how can they use that in a positive way to shape their story or digital presence?

*Clarity* and *authenticity* are usually addressed when teaching students the class norms for speaking in class; asking questions; and locating resources, guidelines, and procedures. Thinking through your course design, projects, and activities, how can they be enhanced or adjusted to allow students to practice using an authentic voice to share aspects of their stories?

Student *strengths* should naturally and organically be identified by the teacher and in turn shared with the student(s), but also, students can utilize the Student Entrepreneur Toolkit (linked in “The Entrepreneur-Driven Classroom Handbook” and discussed later in Chapter 5) to explore this on their own. Doing so will create a culture of discussion and feedback among teachers, students, and peers.

In the book *Unreasonable Hospitality*, author Will Guidara states, “Every person should hear what they did well instead of only what they could do better” (2022, p. 20). In a system where assessments take center stage, mistakes and incorrect answers are the first thing we tend to highlight and discuss with students. What if we were to change the order and instead find ways to show students what they are doing *right*? The identification of students’ strengths happens over the course of time and with developed trust between student and teacher or peer to peer.

The energy a student brings to a classroom environment, project, assignment, or assessment is most likely identified early on by teacher and peers. It is hard to dismiss a student loudly acting out upon entering the classroom or constantly complaining about a specific procedure or activity. If a student’s energy is off or negative the moment they are seated at their desk or they seem very resistant to an assignment, you need to dive deeper into the cause. You cannot assume students know how to communicate the reason their energy may be off, but you can guide them to articulate a bit of what is going on and help them to become emotionally intelligent over time despite any external circumstances that are causing personal or academic difficulties. Part of a student’s growth, and a large portion of the AIM Framework, is personal development, and that includes regulating emotions and the energy they bring to relationships, situations, or environments. You can enlist the help of school counselors or administrators, and once you can get to the

heart of an issue (if one is present), you can better help students move into an energy of personal success, one assignment and one day at a time.

Reflecting on “The Entrepreneur-Driven Classroom Handbook,” you’ll see one of the sections is called “Class Core Values.” Giving students time to contribute ideas to a list of class values is a great way to illustrate in real-time what branding and the branding process includes. This is a powerful way to give ownership of the classroom culture and set a foundational mindset for students to take a personal inventory on what values and legacy they want to include as part of their brand. Brainstorming individually or as a whole class might work with a digital mind-mapping tool or with a learning management system’s commenting features. Using anonymity and private comments to the teacher only, students are more apt to give their opinions and reasoning on their contributions. Our recommendation is to ask for a maximum of four or five classroom core values. Limiting the aim for students makes it easier to understand and achieve. Tisha’s advice is to place the final list of values in places that students look often: next to the learning standards on a whiteboard, on their desks, on their computers, in the class handbook, or as the header of a digital classroom space. Incorporating these values as part of a daily habit will guide students to rewire mindsets about limiting beliefs with learning and their challenges.

In Chapter 7, we will take a more detailed look at some ways students can create a brand around their story with digital portfolios, brand statements, and a social media presence.

## Celebrating Success

Often, stopping to celebrate success is something educators neglect to do, but despite what some may believe, it is critical to our classrooms. Celebrating students individually or collectively impacts our students far deeper than we educators might anticipate. As university student Annora Elias explained:

When my achievements are recognized, I feel motivated to continue what I am doing and work harder. When teachers or managers verbally praise me, it feels much more genuine than a printed certificate or being called out publicly in front of peers.

—ANNORA

We may think we simply do not have time for acknowledgment of small victories in our classrooms. We may expect students to just be intrinsically motivated about learning because we are. Some may say, “When I was a student, I did not have anyone celebrating

me or my wins. I turned out okay without it, and so will they.” Fair point. Some entrepreneurs are ambivalent and skeptical of awards and recognition, but this reveals an internal struggle with self-worth and validation (Clarke, 2023). Educators and school leaders may also have similar feelings surrounding recognition, but just because we struggle with or did not receive celebration of our strengths and triumphs does not mean we should keep those moments from the people we are surrounded by now.

Recognition is not just about external validation, but also about teaching our students and future leaders to take a moment to appreciate the hard work and time spent that led to their accomplishments. As Annora has pointed out, recognition for reaching goals and mastering skills does not cost a thing. Incorporate verbal affirmations throughout your day; model behavior for others to follow with each other and themselves. Successful entrepreneurs know that taking a time-out to recognize themselves, their business, *and* their team fosters a mindset that encourages renewed confidence and self-assurance (Clarke, 2023). In an organizational environment, celebrating achievements might include practices like naming an Employee of the Month or awarding bonuses, gifts, pay raises, or additional paid time off, depending on which fits the receiver best. The motive of recognition should be a morale booster, for the person being celebrated and the entire group, but celebrating achievements may look a bit different depending on the individual or context. For instance:

I honestly do not think that celebrating success in a typical gen-ed class is very important. I would personally value personal connections with the teacher and students over academic validation. However, in an elective class or class that pertains to a college major, I think it is very important because those classes were chosen because of passion.

**—ANNORA**

This is a great reminder: Instead of *assuming* we know the best approach for celebration in our classrooms, we all need to take the time upfront to *ask* students what they prefer. Giving them a voice on this topic empowers them and gets us in the habit of giving them a voice to share what works best for them and helps them learn more about themselves and the confidence to share preferences in the future. If you encourage your students, future leaders, to stop for a moment to enjoy the journey of learning as much as the destination, you will teach them the habit of taking time and space to reflect on what went right, what needs improving, and where their goals will take them next.

So, how can you celebrate success in your class? The first thing you need to remember is that celebrating does not need to take up a lot of time or be expensive. What matters the most is *intentional attention*.



Tisha uses several methods for celebrating students; here are a few of her favorite strategies:

- **Video or note encouragement:** Set up an online space for parents or caregivers to record video messages, digital notes, or audio clips to send words of encouragement to their learner. From a fun family lip sync to a heartfelt written list of reasons why they are proud, they can post whatever they feel will resonate with them. You can then share these messages periodically when you spot a student having a bad day or an unforeseen struggle whether personal or academic. After setting up the digital space, mail parents a small blurb about how hard students are working and how much energy they are putting into each of their days with work, extracurricular activities, and the day-to-day, class-to-class workload. Reassure families that even though creating posts of encouragement may be a bit out of their comfort zone, their efforts will provide motivators and reminders to the students that they are seen and valued.
- **Birthday celebrations:** Sometimes a school birthday celebration is the only celebration a student will receive. During your first week of school “get to know you” activities, note how each student likes to be recognized, then apply what you learn to their celebration. For instance, you could put together candy or school supply treats, award certificates, lead a class sing-along, put on a playlist of the class’s favorite music, or bestow special privileges during the day or class period. The idea here is not to overthink the celebration. The smallest efforts sometimes make the greatest impact on the student.
- **Newsletter or school announcement shoutouts:** If your school or class has a newsletter, you could recognize a student by running their name and photo (with permission) and even a short paragraph describing the student’s achievement! School announcements are a great way to recognize students or student groups across the school community. Both options include recognition from larger groups, such as central administrative teams and family members.
- **Celebration poster:** This group activity costs nothing except about ten minutes of time and a bit of planning. Save it until at least a few months into the school year, however, because it will be more successful once teachers and students have gotten to know each other. Give each student (and yourself) a sheet of paper or cardstock. Have everyone write their name at the top of their sheet and then decorate it as they like. Once everyone finishes decorating, instruct students to each pass their paper to the person to their right, and then to write at least one positive aspect celebrating the student whose name is at the top of the paper they received. Continue passing the posters and writing positive sentiments until everyone has their own paper in front of them again. At the end of the activity, collect the posters, laminate them, and then return

them to the owners. This process teaches students to look deeper than just the surface of themselves and their peers and learn to appreciate and give specific feedback to those around them.

- **Shine a light:** When working with students in a whole-class setting, calling on individuals, encouraging students, and encountering struggles with classroom management, you must model to students that there is always something to celebrate about everyone. It's important for you to recognize the greatness in each learner and to vocalize it aloud so the class will embrace each other not just for their similarities but also for their differences. This is mostly a modeling activity because students will mimic your behavior during their interactions with their peers.

## A Journey, Not a Destination

Student entrepreneurship skills are not necessarily a single unit of learning, but rather multiple instances, interactions, and conversations over the course of the year(s) you have with students. Create a culture that empowers students to think of learning as a continuous journey rather than a one-and-done destination that ends abruptly at the end of a school day, week, semester, or school year. Celebrate success, connect learning to future jobs, take time to understand and teach personal brand awareness, and lead with an entrepreneurial mindset to create a sense of *belonging*. When people feel they do not belong, their overall performance and well-being will suffer (Cornell, n.d.). We each have an opportunity as leaders of our classrooms to instill a sense of security, support, and inclusion in our student groups. When looking to create a classroom that meets students' needs, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs gives great perspective. Without a sense of belonging, self-actualization and self-esteem cannot be fully developed or explored (McLeod, 2024). Mastery of Self (AIM), which includes students' sense of belonging and open-mindedness, is a key factor to begin the shift from a traditional classroom to an entrepreneurial-driven classroom. When you shift your mindset to include the skills discussed in this chapter, your students' mindsets will follow, and they will find themselves thinking more innovatively and creatively when faced with solving problems not obvious to them before.

Scan the QR code to access resources associated with this chapter.



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