



## Our Mission

Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) is a global nonprofit that activates the entrepreneurial mindset and builds startup skills in youth from under-resourced communities. Reaching more than 100,000 middle and high school students annually, NFTE works with schools and community-based organizations in 25 states across the U.S. and 10 countries. Since 1987, NFTE has educated 1.2 million young entrepreneurs, helping them launch businesses of all sizes.

## What is the Entrepreneurial Mindset?

Research shows the entrepreneurial mindset—a skillset including adaptability, self-reliance, critical thinking and problem solving—prepares young people for lifelong success. Equipped with the mindset and the vital business and academic skills NFTE teaches, young people are ready to thrive in the 21st century innovation economy. The NFTE experience empowers young people to think and act like entrepreneurs, developing competencies in eight mindset domains that are key drivers of success:



## Why NFTE? Because the future of work is entrepreneurial.

- 90% of employers say entrepreneurial skills are important or very important
- 50% of the U.S. workforce, experts predict, will be freelancers by the year 2027
- 1 in 3 U.S. employers seek to hire people with entrepreneurial experience

### 2020-2021 U.S. School Year (Projected)

<b>450</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>1,230</b>	<b>31,230</b>
Schools and Community Partners	Teacher Corps Members	Programs in Schools and Communities	Students in Classrooms, Immersive Camps, and Afterschool Programs

\*Projections for core U.S. programs only, excluding online awareness programs and licensed global partner programs.

## The entrepreneurial mindset helps NFTE students further their education, launch their own businesses, and succeed in the workplace.

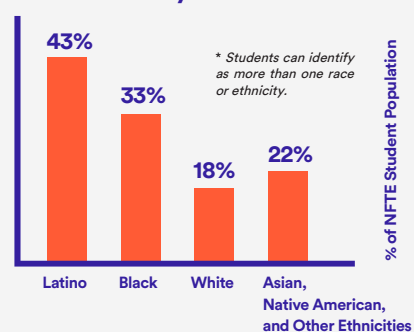
**90%** of program alumni believe what they learned from NFTE helps them in business—and in life

**74%** of NFTE alumni enroll in college, compared to 65% of low income students overall

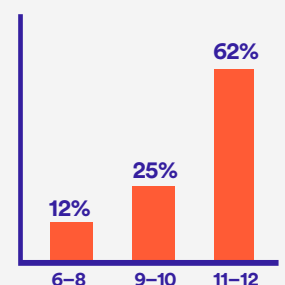
**25%** of NFTE alumni have started at least one business, compared to 2% of young adults in the general population

**50%** On average, 50% of NFTE alumni report earning more than the median salary in the U.S.

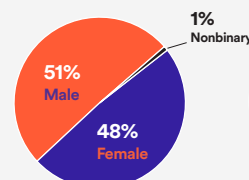
### Race/Ethnicity\*



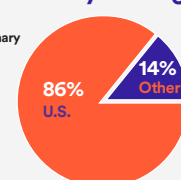
### Grade Level



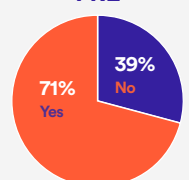
### Gender



### Country of Origin

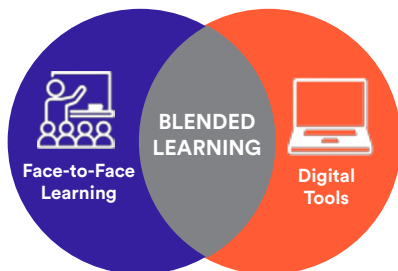


### FRL

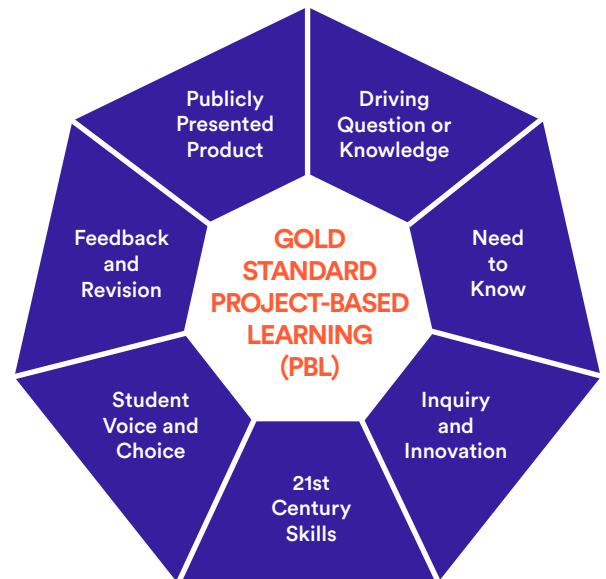
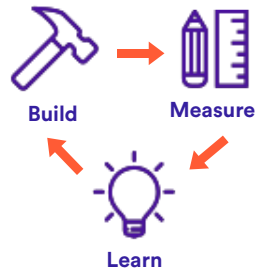


## NFTE Entrepreneurship Pathway and Certification

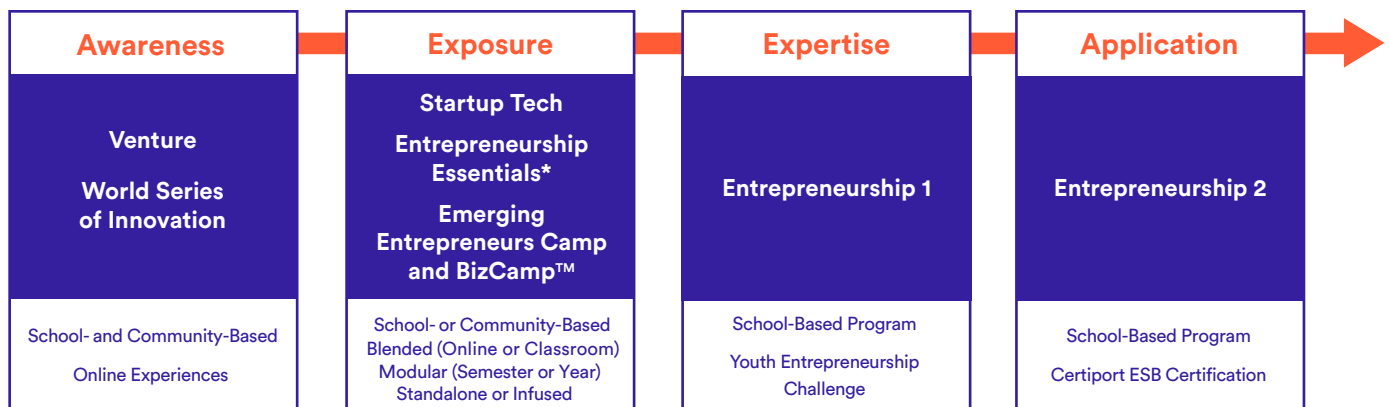
NFTE's innovative programs engage and challenge young people. Our Entrepreneurial Teacher Corps is trained to guide students as they develop their entrepreneurial mindset through experiential, project-based learning that integrated lean startup practices and digital tools. Advanced NFTE students are able to earn the **Entrepreneurship and Small Business (ESB)** certification from Certiport, a PearsonVUE business.



### LEAN STARTUP PRACTICES



## NFTE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PATHWAY



NFTE enlists business leaders and entrepreneurs from the local community to bring real world experience into the classroom as business coaches and advisors. A dedicated volunteer corps helps NFTE students as they develop their own business ideas, explore sustainable business models, refine their business plans, and learn how to pitch their ideas to experts in a series of judged business plan and pitch competitions as well as real investor panels.

**“NFTE allowed me to realize my potential. I know I have the skills and the drive to forge my own path.”**

*Juan Daniel Ramos Fuentes, NFTE Alum*



To learn more about partnering with NFTE, supporting our Entrepreneurship in Every Classroom annual campaign, or bringing a NFTE program to your school or community-based organization, email [programinquiry@nfte.com](mailto:programinquiry@nfte.com)



## BIO

### Dr. J.D. LaRock, President & CEO, NFTE

J.D. LaRock comes to NFTE from the Commonwealth Corporation, Massachusetts' public-private state authority focused on workforce and youth development. Each year, Commonwealth Corporation educates and trains more than 20,000 young people, employees, and job seekers through internship, entrepreneurship, summer job, and workforce skills programs, with a special focus on providing opportunities to disadvantaged young people and adults.

As Commonwealth Corporation's president and CEO, J.D. dramatically expanded the organization's external fundraising and significantly enhanced its visibility in the media, thought leader, government, and philanthropic communities. During his tenure, J.D. also chaired Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker's Commission on Digital Innovation and Lifelong Learning, producing a blueprint for innovative work-based learning models that garnered significant investment from several major foundations.

J.D. grew up in Queens, New York in a family of public school educators, and is a proud graduate of the city's public schools. He began his career as a spokesperson for the New York City school system under former Chancellor Rudy Crew, and then became the education reporter for NY1, the city's all-news cable channel.

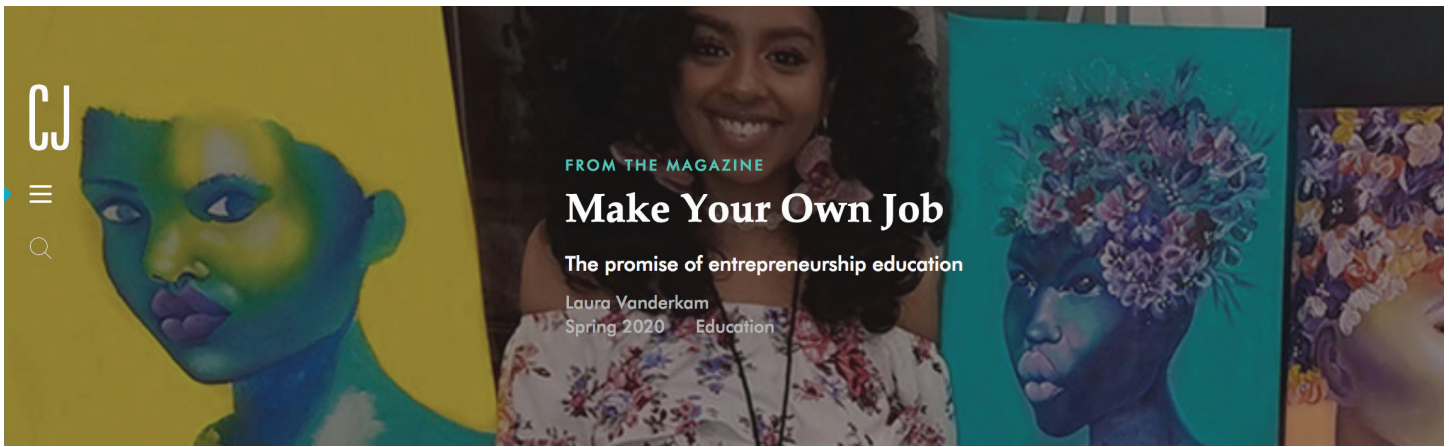
Following graduate school, J.D. became an education policymaker, where he focused on writing laws to strengthen public schools and help students from low-income backgrounds. As senior education advisor to the late U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy, he led the passage of a higher education law that provided \$20 billion in new Pell Grants to the nation's college students. As education policy director for former Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick, he authored a K-12 education law that fostered the turnaround of several low-performing school districts, and helped the state win a quarter-billion dollars through the Obama administration's "Race to the Top" grant competition.

For much of the past decade, J.D. has worked as a teacher, scholar, and university administrator focused on experiential learning, entrepreneurship, and the future of work. As chief of staff to the president of Northeastern University in Boston, he served on the leadership team that completed the institution's transformation from a commuter college to a top-ranked global research university. He has also served as Professor of the Practice of law and policy at Northeastern, teaching doctoral students from the U.S. and around the world.

J.D. has authored, edited, and contributed to several books, including *Special Education for a New Century* (Harvard Education Press, 2005), *Education at a Glance* (OECD, 2012) and *Robot Proof: Higher Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence* (MIT Press, 2017). He has served on a variety of public and non-profit boards, including the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education and the board of North Shore Community College, the latter of which he chaired.

J.D. earned his bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees at Harvard University, and a law degree at Georgetown University. He lives in Beverly Farms, Massachusetts with his wife Christina, a sign language interpreter, and their daughter Callie, a third-grader.





**C**heyenne Sookoo came to Brooklyn from Trinidad and Tobago as a child, shortly after 9/11. Her parents, needing to support the family and facing barriers in the traditional job market, began cleaning office buildings. Over time, they formed partnerships with major commercial real-estate players in New York. They built their work into a thriving business.

Sookoo grew up wanting to be an artist, a career choice that sounds as impractical as her parents were practical. As a student at Brooklyn High School of the Arts, she took a class using a curriculum designed by a New York-based nonprofit called the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE). Assigned to come up with a business idea, she learned that “just thinking I can sell paintings is probably not enough.” Her teacher nudged her to “do more research and figure out what will make your art stand out a little more.”

Sookoo had attended weddings and noticed that “some weddings were super-boring during the cocktail hour.” Many corporate events, she learned, struggled in the same way. She concocted a solution to the problem of boring events, one that involved her passion: art. Now, Sookoo’s Events on Canvas specializes in live painting, with Sookoo creating art “capturing the spirit and essence” of events, while guests watch and interact with her. She won several business-plan competitions with the idea. She also runs a sideline, Paints & Sips, where she brings canvases, paints, and instructional know-how to parties or corporate bonding events so that everyone can create art together.

Thanks to her entrepreneurial skills, Sookoo has achieved a level of success that few artists can claim. “I live off this,” she says, with her businesses supporting her and giving her the financial space to do fine art as well. Thanks to her parents’ example, she says, “I was always leaning toward an entrepreneurial spirit,” but she also realized, through her high school class, that “these are skills you can learn.”

Though still a relatively small phenomenon, entrepreneurial education holds rare promise. NFTE, which inspired Sookoo’s business, has served approximately half a million young people since the 1980s. A handful of other entrepreneurship-education programs aim to inculcate similar skills in young people as well as those already in the labor market. The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, for instance, funds the free 1 Million Cups program, which hosts gatherings in more than 100 communities for potential entrepreneurs to learn how to start businesses, and online FastTrac courses as well.



“Some young learners are more inclined to have an entrepreneurial spirit than others,” says J. D. LaRock, president of NFTE, “but we’d also say entrepreneurship is something that can be developed in every learner.” Increasingly, people in the entrepreneurial community are advancing the idea that such a mind-set should be taught as broadly as possible—even to those whose first-choice career plans don’t include starting their own businesses. Companies want employees who know how to spot and solve problems, and communities thrive when people have the skills to support themselves, regardless of local job-market conditions.

As such, entrepreneurship education presents a reasonable alternative to publicly funded job-training programs, which have delivered limited results. The premise: rather than waste money training people for jobs that don’t exist, or that they can’t easily obtain, why not give them the skills to create their own jobs, as Sookoo has done? It’s an approach that could help prepare students—regardless of whether they pursue traditional college past high school, or fit well into the traditional job market—for whatever the future brings, especially in a now highly uncertain economic climate.

**L**isten to political stump speeches, and you’ll hear nostalgia for an older American economy. Once upon a time, the story goes, a young person could land a family-supporting job at a large organization, keep it for 40 years, and then receive his pension checks.

This world may have existed—briefly. “Twenty Minutes to a Career,” a story by Herrymon Maurer, appeared in *Fortune* in 1956, a year the author believed would be the biggest ever for college-senior hiring by businesses. Students should understand, he wrote, that “for a great many of them, a brief interview will settle their careers for life.” While some large companies “will hire men two or three years out of school, and a few will take them even after five years,” Maurer observed, most “hold to the policy of promotion from within.” That meant that “for the bulk of the men who aspire to a big-business career—and for the bulk of the companies hiring them—the year of college graduation is the year of decision.”

But the Organization Man premise quickly fell apart. Many companies mentioned in Maurer’s *Fortune* article no longer existed in their 1956 form by the 1990s, when those once-young graduates were getting ready to retire. Nowadays, few young people go into the job market expecting to stay in one place for life, and many shift in and out of independent work or take on side work as a hedge against job and income uncertainty. A 2016 McKinsey Global Institute study found that 20 percent to 30 percent of the U.S. and European workforce had engaged in independent work over the last year.

Some blame nefarious forces for this shift, but it’s equally likely that Maurer’s world was an anomaly. “This idea of corporate security was only a tiny blip in history,” says Emma Johnson, the Queens-based owner of the Wealthy Single Mommy business, an online community that helps women figure out ways to support themselves and their children financially. “We keep forgetting that. Once upon a time, everyone was an independent farmer. Everybody was self-employed. Entrepreneurship is in our DNA.”

And modern technology makes it easy to start a business. Anyone can hawk services through a website or through established portals such as Amazon or Etsy. “Technology is the great equalizer,” says Johnson. This accessibility turned out to be fortunate for Johnson when her marriage ended while she was pregnant with her second child. By partnering with companies looking to target a growing but underserved market (single mothers), she was soon earning a six-figure income. She’s not the only one; from her message boards, she learns that “women are finding great ways to make very substantial sums of money on their own terms.”

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“A 2016 study found that up to 30 percent of the U.S. workforce had engaged in independent work in the last year.”



**A**s entrepreneurship becomes more of an option, entrepreneurial skills—recognizing opportunities, taking reasonable risks, and being flexible and adaptive—are increasingly in demand from traditional employers, too. According to NFTE, 90 percent of employers rate entrepreneurial skills as “very important.” These broad skills are likely to be more helpful than the job-specific skills that people speculate the future labor market will require.

No one can predict the future, of course, and that’s a fundamental flaw of even the most well-intentioned workforce-development programs. Faced with the misery of un- and underemployment—even before the Covid-19 crisis, when the U.S. economy’s unemployment rate stood at an enviable 3.5 percent—policymakers want to do something. Job-training programs have been perennially popular. President Reagan’s Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 spent billions trying to retrain workers caught up in a recessionary wave of economic disruption. President Obama’s Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 tried to streamline the patchwork of training programs—47 on the federal level alone, according to the Office of Management and Budget, spread across 15 different agencies—to make them more accessible. Nonetheless, according to a 2019 report from the Council of Economic Advisers, “evidence shows that most government training programs are not effective at securing higher paying jobs for participants.”

One potential reason: a mismatch between training and actual opportunities. While almost 80 percent of federal apprenticeship programs train Americans to work in industries such as construction, manufacturing, and mining, the lion’s share of job creation is happening in the service industry. Another problem: “A lot of the focus in these programs is on the very hardest-to-employ individuals,” says NFTE’s LaRock, who previously did workforce development in Massachusetts and also worked for Senator Edward Kennedy on such issues. Someone with a history of substance abuse, or with limited education, will not land a great job tomorrow after taking a two-hour online course. Nonetheless, LaRock found that “many pieces of the federal job-training ecosystem were overly bureaucratic and sclerotic and too oriented toward a traditional Great Society antipoverty mentality, as opposed to something more nimble and flexible.”

**I**t's hard to anticipate the exact skills that local employers will someday want, and in a world of job churn—and now, a global economy upended by the coronavirus—stalwart local employers may not be the ones creating future jobs, anyway. Furthermore, some people, such as the 8 percent of Americans with felony records, won't be immediately attractive to local employers—but they still need to support themselves. The upside of entrepreneurial skills—particularly learning how to spot problems and how they might be profitably solved—is that they can be helpful to anyone, including those difficult to employ, and regardless of the local labor market.

The good news is that it appears that such skills can be taught—and since they relate to making money, they often interest students more than many other school subjects. At least that's what NFTE's founder, Steve Mariotti, found. Mariotti was running an import/export business in New York in the early 1980s when he got mugged. Processing this event (and trying to conquer his subsequent wariness of teenagers), he decided to switch careers, becoming a teacher in the South Bronx. It was a noble idea, though often challenging in practice. He finally broke through to the kids by talking about his own wholesaling experiences. "Even the kids that were horrible to me, that I was scared of, got into this concept of what something is worth," he says. Teaching children how they could make money turned out to be a sneaky way to teach other skills: math, as they calculated the potential profit on each unit of their products or services; and persuasive writing, as they drew up business plans and figured out how to market themselves.

The NFTE curriculum has evolved over the years, becoming more formalized as students learn how to develop business ideas that match their skills and interests with real-world needs. They learn how to price for profitability and market their businesses. They create business plans with the opportunity to present these in Shark Tank-style competitions.

Alexis Greer teaches a design-thinking class that incorporates the NFTE curriculum at North Rowan High School, about an hour northeast of Charlotte, North Carolina. Throughout the year, her students face various design challenges, such as brainstorming the next hot toy, constructing schools out of shipping containers for developing countries, designing a new candy—"hands-down their favorite" activity, Greer says of her students, though she had to be "brave" to sample the results—and concocting a marketing plan for North Rowan High School. She has seen highfliers as well as low-performers thrive—though, curiously, traditionally successful students often have the toughest time. "They know how to do school very well," she says. "You come into a classroom like ours, where the answer is never 'C': at first, they asked, 'Can you tell me what the answer is?' And I said, 'I don't have an answer sheet. I don't know what the answer is. I don't know what you're going to come up with!'"

This focus on self-agency is a key part of entrepreneurial education. Debra Titus, who teaches entrepreneurship to seventh- and eighth-graders at the Penn Hills Charter School of Entrepreneurship in Pittsburgh, notes that most of her students aren't old enough to get real jobs, but they learn as they formulate new business concepts that jobs aren't the only option: "You never need permission to make money," she says.



The point, says Greer, is that “we really are preparing them for jobs that don’t currently exist. We need to train them to see the need and then fill the need. This may mean that they work for someone else or go into business for themselves.” Or do both, as Greer is doing: teaching for her school system while pitching Trace, an app she’s been designing that helps students map the quickest route between classes on a campus.

Salam Woldekidan, who teaches business and entrepreneurship at Frederick Douglass High School in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, identifies two kinds of students in her classes: those who really start businesses; and those who dream them up, mostly as an assignment. However, she tells parents that “no matter which child you have, one thing I can guarantee is that before they leave my classroom they will understand themselves as a brand.” A key part of entrepreneurship is making yourself, or your idea, more marketable. What unique skills can you bring to the table? Understanding this can help young people stand out on job and college applications.

Of course, successful entrepreneurs don’t actually need to apply for jobs—or to college, for that matter. NFTE promotes itself to donors with the message that entrepreneurship education keeps children engaged in school. “We celebrate the fact that our learners have a higher college-going rate and a higher college-completion rate than the norm,” says LaRock. But there’s a certain contradiction here. Many of the world’s most high-profile entrepreneurs—such as Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg—dropped out of college. Their businesses looked like a better life plan than a degree. As college costs skyrocket, with many people going to college in the hopes of getting the sorts of jobs that may no longer exist, it raises the question of whether it’s a smarter move, sometimes, to make your own job. “Our work right now plays into the conversation we’re having as a country about the value proposition of postsecondary education and the potential value of alternatives,” says LaRock. “In this country, we’re coming to a position—a really healthy position—of recognizing that college for everybody is not the only path.”

Woldekidan notes that she has several former students who are married, with mortgages and children, and “still operating the businesses that they started in my classroom. That is what they do for a living.” Among the ideas she has seen work: a landscaping business that partners with real-estate agents looking to stage homes; and a travel agency focusing on adventure travel for executive groups. These ideas don’t necessarily require a college education, and it’s unclear that taking out loans to enroll in business classes is always wiser than learning business skills by running a business.

Carlos Feitosa, for instance, has been learning on the job. He attended Bronx Aerospace High School after moving with his family from Brazil to New York. He thought he’d become a pilot. Then he took an NFTE class and decided that “entrepreneurship was my passion.” As he learned to spot opportunities, he noticed that he and his classmates suffered from typical teenage skin problems. He decided to try making soaps with the natural ingredients he knew from his family’s farm in Brazil. Modern technology helped him launch his business. “There’s a big community of soap makers on YouTube, and they explain the

process,” he says. Feitosa set up a website to market what became Shine Soaps. Having sold out product lines and scaled up as he won business-plan competitions, he is now devoted full-time to his business. He acknowledges that “not going to college is a big risk for me—what if my business doesn’t work out?” Yet he has learned useful skills for whatever he does. “The most important skill I learned was public speaking,” he says. As an English language learner, he struggled with communication after coming to the United States. But pitching his business forced him to be in front of people. “I was able to grow in my English and in expressing myself, and now I feel comfortable presenting in front of 200 people,” he says.

Megan Grassell, a competitive skier in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, learned by doing, too. She had always appreciated that her small-business-owner parents had the flexibility to attend her races. So during high school, when she discovered something that she wanted to change—bras marketed to preteen and teen girls are often more racy than she felt necessary—she launched Yellowberry, which makes more modest undergarments. “I’ve never done anything more challenging than starting a company,” she says. “I wish that there was a book I could have checked out from the library, like a step-by-step guide.” Her fabric samples for early prototypes were too rough. First attempts at e-mail marketing didn’t produce customers. Finally, a video about her product and story juiced up sales. The business has expanded into retail stores and grown enough that Grassell, now 24, decided to defer college indefinitely, rather than hire someone to take over. “I’m not going to give up this company,” she says.

**A**s the economy shifts, a variety of programs have sprung up to make the entrepreneurial process more straightforward—for people who aren’t going the college route, as well as for people who are.

David Lefer teaches an innovation class for engineers at New York University. Students learn how to spot problems and prototype solutions, just as students in NFTE programs do. “Engineers who want to be told what to do, to do their code, and build their things as hired guns will not thrive,” he says. “You’re letting them down in terms of their development unless they can go out and be great problem finders.” Because the innovation class is required, he gets a certain number of engineers complaining that they do not intend to become startup founders. “I don’t expect you to be a startup founder,” Lefer tells them. “I expect you to learn these skills because they’re valuable no matter what you do.” Everybody must anticipate needs, whether for clients or employers, and think about how they can solve these needs in a profitable way. In his department, “This is something they want everyone to think about from the very first moment they’re at the university.”

Such innovation may be the future, but any policy work around entrepreneurship education must be handled carefully—or it will hit similar obstacles to policy work around job training. Job-training programs can become wasteful when governments wind up giving grants to contractors better at maintaining their funding than at placing workers. While nonprofit organizations such as NFTE and the Kauffman Foundation do good work in entrepreneurship education, a whole industry of less reputable players looks to

train would-be entrepreneurs—and not in particularly beneficial ways. Social media is full of gurus posing with flashy cars or homes, selling courses that promise to coach other would-be entrepreneurs into similar success. Few people purchasing these courses wind up running healthy businesses.

That said, if much money currently spent on job training is wasted, it would be hard to do worse. As economic policy, entrepreneurship education also has the intriguing benefit of not fitting neatly into left or right political categories. Mary Mazzio, a documentary filmmaker whose 2009 movie *Ten9Eight* tracked participants in a NFTE business competition, says: “I really believe it’s a nonpartisan, bipartisan issue.” The National Small Business Association has found that small-business owners are more likely to lean Republican, though most avoid party-line voting. Since much entrepreneurship education has been aimed at groups not traditionally

Republican (36 percent of NFTE students are black, and 41 percent are Hispanic), this suggests intriguing political realignments. Says Mazzio, “All the kids I’ve been in touch with have embraced the idea of entrepreneurship with almost a conservative mentality. You have to pull yourself up by your bootstraps. This is about how to become self-sufficient.”

This promise of self-sufficiency is key. When entrepreneurship education is done well, it gives people the confidence that traditional job training often cannot: no matter what the local job conditions are, or what the broader economy looks like, you can always figure something out. NFTE’s LaRock has worked with entrepreneurship programs for young people in the criminal-justice system and reports that by being trained in self-agency, “a lot of young people who come from disadvantaged situations, even criminal backgrounds, can still see in their limited worlds some way to turn a passion they have into something more.” For instance, one young man “behind the wall” built a business refurbishing old high-top sneakers and selling them to enthusiasts.

Young people with more options take their ideas and figure out how to thrive in a world where having multiple sources of income is smart. Destiny Davis, a soon-to-be-graduate of Southeast Missouri State University, began producing custom T-shirts as a middle school student. She took a NFTE class at her high school in Ferguson, Missouri, and learned how to make her wares stand out. This has been helpful as she’s continued to run DestinTees as a side job through college. She’ll start a traditional internship after school, but she’s got all sorts of plans to supplement her income. “I can’t see myself owning just one business,” she says. “I’d say two or three, at least.” She’s been doing freelance advertising work and plans to grow it into a brand-development service.

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**“When entrepreneurship education is done well, it gives people the confidence that traditional job training often cannot.”**





Thanks to her entrepreneurship education, she is constantly looking for problems to solve. So, she says, are classmates who'd never tried to sell anything before their entrepreneurship classes taught them that they could. "People have the foundation for it," she observes. "They just need the skills and the knowledge to enhance what they already have in place."

As for Davis, she knows that she can always make her own money. Now, "when I have an idea, I can implement it," she says, "as opposed to just saying, 'Hey, this would be a good idea.' "

*This article was made possible by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the author.*

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**Laura Vanderkam** is the author of several time-management and productivity books, including **168 Hours**.

Photo: Using her entrepreneurial training, Cheyenne Sookoo created Events on Canvas, which specializes in live painting. (COURTESY OF CHEYENNE SOOKOO)





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## Entrepreneurship as an economic pathway for the laid-off workforce

*Nonprofit pivot: Teaching entrepreneurial skills to anyone ready to relaunch a career*

By Laura Aka - May 1, 2020

The deep job cuts due to COVID-19 have resulted in more than 30 million Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits over the past six weeks.

"The tidal wave of unemployment has revealed the precariousness of most people's livelihoods. People are learning that they don't own their futures in the way they thought," says [J.D. LaRock](#), President and CEO of [Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship](#).



Founded in 1987, the nonprofit traditionally provides entrepreneurship curriculum to students in middle and high school. Now, NFTE is adapting its programming to help adults who are dealing with financial hardship brought on by job loss.

"We decided, in the midst of the unemployment crisis brought on by COVID-19 to enter the postsecondary/adult learner space. This is a big move for us and, hopefully, a positive move that can help a lot of people," says LaRock.

"The spark to make the curriculum available to adults occurred about two weeks into the period where all of us were under stay-at home-orders. As an entrepreneurship education organization, we not only knew that we could adapt our high school curriculum to serve adults who are facing unemployment, but felt that we should from a mission standpoint," he tells WorkingNation.



J.D. LaRock, NFTE President & CEO  
(Photo: NFTE)



## Learn the Skills of Entrepreneurship in Two Weeks

[NFTE Career Relaunch](#) is a free, short-term online course that teaches unemployed or underemployed adults the essentials of entrepreneurship. The course—which includes 14 lessons—encourages participants to think how their skills and talents can help them build a new career. LaRock adds that the course can be done at one's own pace, but is designed to be completed in two weeks. "At the end of the course, learners will have a well-developed business idea and a basic business plan."

Included in the curriculum are interactive digital lessons, assessments and video content. Among the topics covered are evaluating a business opportunity, conducting market research, targeting customers, and financing a new business.



The lessons included in NFTE Career Relaunch were culled from the yearlong curriculum offered to middle and high school learners. Says LaRock, "The big difference between our secondary school curriculum and the Relaunch program is we put a greater emphasis on the resources to help a budding business owner find capital to launch a business and connect to various government agencies, as well as other resources that can help get the business set up."

Through a companion speaker series, learners will also be able to access expert advice from some NFTE alumni—who have become entrepreneurs and business leaders. Executives from Google, Microsoft, and other corporate partners are also among those sharing advice.

## Soft Skills are Essential to the Entrepreneurial Mindset

NFTE was lauding entrepreneurship long before the world was hit by the current global health crisis. "We strongly believe that the entrepreneurial mindset is broadly helpful for younger learners and adults no matter what they are doing in life," according to LaRock. When we talk about entrepreneurial mindset, we mean skills like communication, collaboration, problem solving, the ability to assess risk, the ability to think, to think strategically about the future, the ability to spot opportunities, the ability to be creative and flexible."



## Entrepreneurship Can Be a Choice Post-COVID-19

NFTE Career Relaunch is the response to a workforce in crisis, but the program may remain available after the worst of the pandemic passes. LaRock says, "There's no timetable. We're excited to find out whether this catches on with an adult population. Clearly, we're trying to help serve a pressing need. But if we find that this is making a difference in people's lives and is providing a helpful resource, there's no reason why we wouldn't want to continue it."

NFTE offers its secondary school programming in 25 U.S. states and ten countries around the world. Since 1987, NFTE has educated 1.2 million young people globally, helping thousands launch businesses and companies of all sizes.



### MISSION

We tell stories about solutions to the jobs skills gap that is threatening to disrupt our economy. We are raising this critical issue to the level of a national discussion to reach people and entities that can effect change, to connect the dots for companies and communities looking for solutions to their own workforce issues, and to identify for workers and job seekers where the jobs of the future will be.

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