

*Make Your Job Summer Program
Executive Summary*

**A Report to the
Network for
Teaching Entrepreneurship**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Teaching entrepreneurship—how to create, grow and run a business or organization—is one potential means to increase college and career readiness skills. Learning how to start a business can improve critical thinking, communication and collaboration (Gallagher, Stepien, & Rosenthal, 1992; Hmelo, 1998), which are key qualities for academic as well as business success. In this study, we examine the implementation of The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship’s (NFTE) *Make Your Job Summer Program*, a summer program designed to introduce students to the concepts of entrepreneurship while developing students’ academic and life skills. Specifically, we analyze the impact of this youth entrepreneurship program as it expanded to sites across the country and examine the program design, theoretical underpinnings, implementation, adaptations and challenges.

Developed in the spring and rolled-out in the summer of 2014 as a result of Citi Foundation’s “Pathways to Progress Initiative,” NFTE organized the *Make Your Job Summer Program* at 18 sites in 10 cities across the country where they have local offices. *Make Your Job Summer Program* is designed to provide youth with a real-world learning experience in which students develop a business idea and present a business plan for a chance to win seed capital to build their own business. Through classroom instruction, field trips to local businesses, guest speakers and a business plan competition for seed-funding, students develop skills, knowledge and attitudes essential for successful entrepreneurship.

Make Your Job Summer Program condenses the material in NFTE’s year-long high school curriculum into an intensive two-week course. Over the course of these two weeks, from 9-5 pm each day, students learn about businesses and entrepreneurship while simultaneously designing their business plans. At the end of the program, students present their business plans to a panel of judges to compete for seed money. At two of the 18 sites, NFTE also offered an 8-10 week version of the program called *Startup Summer*. *Startup Summer* is for students who already participated in NFTE during the school year and takes the program a step further by helping them execute their business plans. Students in *Startup Summer* continue to receive support in launching their businesses into the school year. 378 students participated in the *BizCamps* and 77 participated in *Startup Summer* (at the Los Angeles and New York City sites). Although some sites had run NFTE-related summer programs in prior years, other sites were running the summer program for the first time. Two of these *BizCamps* (Girl Empower *BizCamps*) served female students exclusively.

Our research examines both the impact and implementation of the program and considers:

- the types of students who enrolled in the program and why;
- how the students experienced the program;
- the perceived match between program design and student backgrounds and abilities;

- how staff understood the goals and expectations of the program;
- the capacities and resources that supported implementation;
- the challenges experienced in delivering the program; and
- how the program was adapted across sites.

RESEARCH METHODS

The researchers used both qualitative and quantitative approaches to understand the program. To shed light on factors that affected program implementation, we conducted interviews with *BizCamp* facilitators and NFTE program staff at all programs. We documented program implementation more deeply in a sample of five program sites. At these sites, we conducted structured observations of lessons and activities as well as focus groups with a sample of students. The focus groups gathered information about students' experiences in and views of the value of the various elements of the program, the business plans they developed, program climate and their interactions with program staff and peers. The observations measured the nature and quality of participants' relationships with their peers and with other adults in the program, participants' engagement and opportunities for leadership and collaboration, and the overall environment of the program. We also examined changes in student responses to surveys pre- and post-program. These surveys were designed to measure student "entrepreneurial mindset" and knowledge related to entrepreneurship, as well as overall perceptions of the program. These student surveys provide an important perspective on the quality of the program.

KEY FINDINGS

IMPACT

Results from student surveys at the end of the *BizCamp* program suggest that respondents valued their experience at the *BizCamps*. The vast majority of students reported that they would recommend the program to a friend, and over three-quarters of students indicated that they would be excited to participate in other NFTE activities. Almost all students indicated that the program engaged them in critical thinking: over 90 percent of students reported that it was "totally," "mostly," or "somewhat" true that the program got them "thinking about concepts we learned," and that it allowed them to "test or try out my ideas." Just over 80 percent of students indicated that the program was challenging.

Most students felt that instructors supported their learning: almost all students indicated that it was somewhat, mostly or totally true that instructors questioned students to assess whether they are following along, and that the instructors made learning enjoyable. In regards to time management in the program, most students reported that the program didn't waste time, although approximately forty percent of students indicated that it was at least somewhat true that they get bored, suggesting that there are some elements of the program that do not hold students engagement.

The Entrepreneurial Mindset Index (EMI), a NFTE-designed survey used during the school year program, asked students about their perceptions of the program's impact. An overwhelming majority of students indicated that the skills they learned during *BizCamp* would help them in the future. Approximately 95 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that the skills they learned at the program would help them in their life and in business. Another 90 percent of students indicated that the skills they learned and experiences in the program would help them in school. When asked to compare their program experience to a normal classroom course, just under 90 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that they would remember what they learned in program better than they would have in a normal classroom.

On both the pre- and post- EMI assessment, students were asked to indicate whether they would like to own a business. Not surprisingly, prior to the program, almost all students (91.1%) indicated they would like to own a business. This percentage declined to approximately 85 percent after program participation, a small but significant decrease from the pre-test ($p < .001$). At the same time, more students indicated that they were likely to start a business in the next year, increasing from 25 percent before the program to 38 percent after the program ($p < .001$). Students were also slightly more likely to report that they were likely to start a business ever ($p < .001$). So although students were less likely to indicate interest in owning their own business after participation in the program, it appears that those who were interested in starting a business felt more prepared to act in the near future.

When asked about the barriers they saw to starting a business in the next year, students were most likely to report on both the pre- and post-EMI that they didn't have enough money and were too young. However, comparing responses from pre to post suggest that perceptions of these barriers changed over time. Although still most frequently cited, at the end of *BizCamp* students were less likely to indicate that youth and lack of money were a barrier than they were prior to the program ($p < .001$). After the program students were also less likely than on the pre-EMI to indicate that lack of business ideas or skills was a barrier to starting a business ($p < .001$). Instead, compared to the pre-assessment, students were more likely post-program to indicate that they were too busy to start a business ($p < .001$). Thus, on average by the end of the program the students perceived their lack of skills, ideas or resources as less of a problem while they became more cognizant of the time involved.

Analysis of the EMI results suggests that students' mean ratings of communication and problem-solving increased, whereas no change was detected in risk-taking and opportunity recognition. The lack of change in these constructs may be due to the fact that these characteristics are less concrete than the skills and knowledge related to communication and problem-solving. They may be more difficult to influence, more difficult to measure, or were not of particular emphasis during the *BizCamp*.

In addition to constructs related to an entrepreneurial mindset, students were also asked to rate their level of confidence in specific skills or abilities, including interviewing for a job, managing personal finances and competing in a business. Students' mean confidence ratings increased very slightly from the pre- to post-test ($p < .05$) suggesting that students felt slightly more confident in their professional or workplace skills and abilities by the end of *BizCamp*. Students

also ranked a series of options regarding their future orientation and locus of control. A comparison of mean rank for each category between the pre- and post-EMI suggests that students ranked the role of chance in determining their future lower (indicating that it is less important), on average ($p < .05$).

Results from the content assessment suggest no change, on average, in student learning on the knowledge measured. This may reflect the lack of incentive students faced in completing the assessments, the difficulty in measuring specific concepts in a short survey, or the challenge of requiring students to acquire an extensive amount of new content over such a short period of time. Moreover, three sites did not administer this assessment and the response rates for other sites were quite low, making it difficult to know whether respondents were representative of the *BizCamp* population as a whole.

Finally, in focus groups students were overwhelmingly positive in their assessment of the program, and reported valuing their experience at the programs, in particular their interactions with volunteers and guest speakers as well as the individualized support from staff. Students reported feeling challenged and engaged by the program, that they learned a great deal about starting a business, and that these skills would support them in school and in future careers. Although students reported they were more prepared to start a business, they were not more likely to be interested in starting one. Furthermore, many students worried about the competing time demands of starting a business and going to school. It may be that participation in the program served to clarify student career goals and interests.

In interviews staff reported that students learned a great deal about starting a business, and that these skills would support them in school and in future careers. They also reported that students' communication and problem-solving skills and confidence had improved, as had their knowledge of the importance of determination, persistence and flexibility. Moreover, they felt that the program and curriculum could be adapted to meet the needs of students with varied academic backgrounds.

At the *Startup Summer* sites, while survey data for students is not available, observations of classroom activities along with interviews and focus groups of staff and students consistently point to a rigorous and significant experience for participants. Observers of *Startup Summer* program sites reported well-structured activities that incorporated student perspectives and required students to collaborate constructively with their peers. *Startup Summer* facilitators were able to harness students' pre-existing knowledge and motivation about business to collectively move business plans forward. Observers witnessed many examples of students teaching and supporting each other, providing insightful feedback to each other, and collaboratively building businesses. Students reported the duration and cognitive demand of the *Startup Summer* program fostered a spirit of camaraderie among their peers.

Focus groups of students at the *Startup Summer* sites also revealed their motivation, knowledge and skill-level to be very high. Overall these students reported participating in the program in order to develop an idea and turn it into a business, learn how business works in general, or gain more skills and tools with which to run an existing business. In this summer-long program students found their mentors from the business world to be an extremely important resource.

Mentors met with students weekly and depending on their relationship, emailed or texted regularly. In some cases students experienced a lack of match between their interests and their mentor's backgrounds and recognized a lost opportunity. A few staff and students suggested identifying mentors from a broader array of industries and selecting for reliability and consistency to ensure that mentors could provide reliable and consistent support to students throughout the program.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION: CLIMATE AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Observers of *BizCamp* program activities reported they were well structured and organized, although student engagement often tapered off during independent work when students who had completed tasks were waiting for their peers to finish. Program culture and environment fostered positive relationships between staff and youth and youth and their peers. The business plan competition at the end of the program was a significant motivator for students, and program staff felt it was a key component to the program, serving to challenge students to meet high expectations and empower them in the future. The field trips, guest speakers and volunteers from local businesses were also key components to the program, serving to engage students and provide them with a unique exposure to opportunities in the world of business.

STUDENTS

BizCamp and *Startup Summer* sites mainly served students from low-income families, the majority of whom were black, Hispanic and Asian and from a variety of neighborhoods across their cities. Student recruitment was a significant challenge across all sites, mainly due to the short planning period, and many sites had fewer students than they had originally planned for.

STAFFING

Most sites were adequately staffed with experienced facilitators, but in a few cases the ratio of staff to students was too low to allow for sufficient individualized support for students while developing their business plans. This lack of support was in part due to underutilization of teaching assistants or in some cases other staff in the room who were occupied with administrative tasks. Staff facilitating or supporting the *BizCamps* brought considerable experience and backgrounds related to both business and instruction. All facilitators and local NFTE staff had experience in either business or education and most of the instructional staff were seasoned teachers with several years of experience teaching subjects related to business or the NFTE curriculum itself. Facilitators felt that this experience was essential for effective implementation of the program. In some cases where deep content knowledge was needed, a few sites used mentors and volunteers to provide the missing expertise.

TRAINING AND RESOURCES

To implement the program, facilitators utilized NFTE's *BizCamp* agenda and prepared power-point templates to develop lesson plans. Overall, most staff reported that they felt prepared to implement the program curriculum, and attributed this in part to the turn-key nature of NFTE materials and activities. Many facilitators reported relying on their past experience teaching the

NFTE curriculum during the school year. The facilitators who did not have prior knowledge of the program curriculum reported feeling less-prepared to run the program. Most felt the guidebook was too dense to navigate, although they did access it occasionally. Key resources supporting implementation included timely access to NFTE resources and strong working relationships with program partners including universities, schools and city youth agencies.

Lack of time posed considerable challenges to implementation. First, staff felt they had inadequate time to prepare for and plan for the *BizCamps*. As a result, many staff reported having to make last minute adaptations in response to contingencies that would have been foreseeable with additional planning time. Second, facilitators and program staff consistently reported that the pressure to complete student business plans in a short amount of time did not allow for sufficient time to ensure student comprehension of the content. Many felt that the program was output driven at the expense of deeper comprehension. Finally, staff at different sites had different aspirations for the program itself. While facilitators may have covered all topics, their choices about the content to emphasize and areas to skim were not consistent across sites. These differing approaches reflected different understandings about program goals and priorities.

CONCLUSION

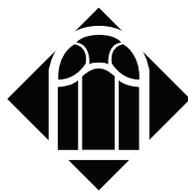
Our results suggest that student experiences in the NFTE *BizCamp* and *Startup Summer* programs were beneficial and that the implementation of the programs promoted core NFTE principals. In focus groups and surveys, students were overwhelmingly positive in their assessment of the program, and reported being deeply engaged in developing skills related to entrepreneurship. In the post-program Entrepreneurial Mindset Index, a strong majority of students reported that the program engaged them in critical thinking, that instructors supported their learning, and that the skills they learned during *BizCamp* would help them in school and in life.

Results from the post-program EMI suggest that students' mean ratings of communication and problem-solving increased. This mirrors reports from staff and students that students' communication and problem-solving skills had improved. Staff also reported increases in students' confidence in their own ability to accomplish their goals and an increased awareness of the importance of determination, persistence and flexibility in meeting those goals. Other constructs on the post-program EMI did not change. This finding is perhaps not surprising given that communication and problem-solving were practiced consistently throughout the two weeks, while less time was spent on other skills. Results from content assessments also suggest no change, on average, in student learning, though analysis of this survey was hampered by low response rates and implementation challenges.

Program staff reported that students learned more about starting and running a business and that these concepts and skills would support them in school and in future careers. Although more students reported they were prepared to start a business by the end of the program, most were not more likely to be interested in starting one. It may be that participation in the program

served to clarify student career goals and interests. Furthermore, many students worried about the competing time demands of starting a business and going to school.

Findings from observations, interviews, focus groups, and surveys indicate that NFTE *BizCamps* were for the most part implemented successfully and as designed. Nonetheless, NFTE should consider improvements to the program particularly related to: increasing efficiencies in planning and staffing the program sites; in refining guidance regarding the overall goals and outcomes of the program; and negotiating the trade-offs between completion of the business plans and deeper content knowledge. Using the program sites as an opportunity to test new ideas or adaptations and providing a channel for feedback to NFTE's national office, along with following participants' longer-term outcomes, may provide a few avenues to refine and further develop the program.



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