

MEMO

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Sarah Booth Riss

DATE: August 19, 2015

RE: DRAFT Webster Small Business Innovation Center Concept

A group of professionals from local businesses, Webster University, WGSD High School, and Mayor Welch, John Simpson, Michael Shipley and I have had several conversations focused on the development of a Webster Small Business Innovation Center that would be staffed by students/staff from WGHS, Webster University, and local leaders. A very rough draft of this concept is attached for your review. We really only have the seed of an idea that we feel would be beneficial for students, local businesses, and our community. I will be sharing this draft concept during our meeting on Monday, August 24th. No action is needed at this time.

Webster Small Business Innovation Center

Mission: Promote and support small business development and learning through creative collaborative efforts among the local businesses, city government, university, and school district.

Vision: The Webster Small Business will be a leader in learning and business development by establishing a center where members of the community work together to solve real problems and promote creative business development.

Thematic Goals:

1. Local businesses, college students, and high schools will learn together about best practices in business and entrepreneurship.
2. Commercial business will thrive in the WGSD area.
3. The WGSD area will become a center for creative entrepreneurship.
4. The WGSD area will be known as a group of business, educators, and students that work together to design creative solutions to the unique situations experienced by all types of businesses.
5. Local businesses, university students and staff, and WGHS students, alumni and staff will collaborate to promote creative marketing, business, and technology practices.
6. The WGSD Community will be a creative learning community that supports one another in business development and learning through collaborative and creative problem solving and ideation.

Suggested Design Question(s)

1. *What would a successful creative small business innovation center look like and result in?*
 - a. *One year in the future*
 - b. *Five years in the future*
2. How might all residents of the community feel connected?
3. How could Webster Groves create a small business collaborative and learning environment for local businesses, the university, and the school district?
4. What would be the benefits for each constituent?
5. How do we market to university and high school students to get involved?
6. What would be attractive to businesses?
7. What does the Innovation Center need to provide?
8. What resources do we need to start such an effort?

Ideas to Remember

- Identify local mentors both retired and practicing to support the work of the center, help design the center, and support new business leaders.
- Establish a welcoming process for new businesses.

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