

Virtual Enterprises International (VEI) is an in-school entrepreneurship program and global business simulation that draws on the European tradition of apprenticeships. While VEI thrives in all types of schools and is open to all interested students, the program targets high school and college students from underserved communities, empowering them to unleash their potential through creating and managing business ventures. Each year, VEI transforms 500 classrooms into offices and 10,000 students into business executives.

VEI students learn by doing. The simulated business replicates all of the functions and demands of a real business in both structure and practice, from product development, production and distribution to marketing, sales, human resources, finance and accounting. As “employees” of the virtual business, students are accountable for their company’s management and performance. Through a web-based banking system that connects 5,000 student-run businesses in 40 countries, VEI students experience the expectations of the global economy and find new solutions to drive business results by trading across industries, borders and cultures.

VEI students receive 90 minutes of daily instruction for a full year. Rather than deliver prescribed lessons, VEI teachers guide learning using a project-based curriculum that is aligned with state standards, validated by the business community, and measured by a national exam. Business partners expose students to real-world learning by connecting them to professionals across industries who deliver technical content and serve as role models, coaches, mentors, business advisors and internship hosts.

VEI students are transformed into independent learners who take responsibility for the success of their firms and devote many hours beyond the school day:

- conducting market research
- developing business plans
- creating annual reports
- paying wages and taxes
- maintaining 401(k) plans

To further enrich their experience, students participate in a series of extended learning opportunities, including:

- VEI’s Global Business Challenge
- VEI’s Advertising Futures Competition
- local and national business plan competitions
- local and national trade shows
- national and international business trips/exchanges
- internships and career-readiness seminars
- college credits while in high school

Students also develop skills in:

- technology
- accessing, using and analyzing information
- critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making
- communication and collaboration
- time management

As students develop workplace expertise and an entrepreneurial mindset, they also sharpen academic skills in math and English through activities such as working on their firm’s financials, analyzing risks and returns, and developing presentations and reports. With hands-on experience running and marketing a business, making complex decisions, communicating with customers and investors and preparing reports and presentations, these young entrepreneurs emerge prepared to tackle the demands of post-secondary education and meet the expectations of the job market.