



# Program Description & Implementation Guide

## *2021-22*

[veinternational.org](http://veinternational.org)



## Building a Continuum for College & Career Readiness through Entrepreneurial and Work-based Learning Experiences

### The Middle School VE-JV Career Academy Model

An Initiative Supported by the  
New York Life Foundation

## OVERVIEW

The only program of its kind in the U.S., Virtual Enterprises International (VEI) is a live global entrepreneurship and business simulation that brings the workplace into the classroom. Through an in-school, credit-bearing course paired with extended learning opportunities, VE students develop and run business ventures that engage in trade with 5,000 virtual firms across more than 40 countries. The program has been shown to effectively prepare students for postsecondary success and, most importantly, to motivate young people to stay engaged in their education. After a year of hands-on professional experience, students emerge from the program with a vision for their future, a passion for learning, and the skills and knowledge they need to have a competitive edge as they transition to college and careers.

The New York Life Foundation has been an integral partner in the national expansion of VEI. We now have programs in 20 states and in every major region of the country. While the VE model thrives in all schools, VEI targets schools in underserved communities, where providing students with needed opportunities and putting more young people on the path to success has the greatest impact.

### Need for a Middle School VE Model

While there is a growing interest across the country in fostering career readiness from an early age, there are relatively few educational programs in place to address this need.

Building on the success of its high school program, VEI developed a middle school model that creates a distinct set of entrepreneurial and work-based learning experiences within a middle school. This model, in combination with VEI's high school program, forms the basis of the VE Continuum for College and Career Readiness. These experiences become the primary vehicle by which all students make progress toward building career pathways.

The high schools in our network see significant advantages to adapting the VE program for middle school. Numerous studies correlate students' 9th grade academic standing with both their drop-out risk and their career readiness upon graduating from college. VE-JV was created to get more students on track before high school so that they enter 9th grade engaged in school, prepared, and oriented towards postsecondary goals.

## THE VE-JV CAREER ACADEMY MODEL

The VE-JV Career Academy is a two-year program that enables middle level students, grades 6-8, to develop technology and entrepreneurial skills by starting and managing business ventures. The Career Academy will also engage students in fun and exciting competitions that build 21st century skills in business, communication and technology. The learning experiences for students are designed to allow students to progress toward a stronger and deeper understanding of the more complex business concepts that are built into the high school program. The first year of the program may start in 6th or 7th grade and the second year of the program may continue in 7th or 8th grade.

The objectives of the VE-JV Career Academy are to:

1. Build career awareness about a variety of careers.
2. Convey the expectations of the workplace.
3. Develop age-appropriate, 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills in entrepreneurship, global awareness, problem solving, decision-making, time management, public speaking, financial literacy, teamwork and technology.
4. Develop professional behaviors.
5. Provide a context for interdisciplinary instruction to support academic skill development.
6. Use technology as applied in business.

### Year 1 Program

The VE-JV Career Academy begins in the 6th or 7th grade with a Technology Applications class that includes typical business projects that require facility with spreadsheet, presentation, word-processing, graphics and web design software. The activities are built around an entrepreneurial theme and include some of the following projects:

#### GRAPHICS

Company logo, letterhead, business card, brochure, poster, advertisement, newsletter

#### WORD PROCESSING

Company description, market analysis, resume, cover letter, sales pitch, mission statement, newsletter, business plan

#### SPREADSHEET

Budget, income statement, break-even analysis, sales trends, surveys, expense report, charting

#### PRESENTATION

Persuasive sales presentation, business pitch, informative marketing presentation

#### OTHER TECHNOLOGY

Web Design: Website  
Video: Commercial  
Direct Mail Marketing

To take full advantage of the contextualized, project-based learning opportunity VE-JV provides, students need to develop foundation skills in math, ELA, technology and business. The 6th, 7th and 8th grade teams—including technology, art, math, Social Studies and English teachers—may work together to help students accomplish some of the VE-JV projects.

## Year 2 Program

The VE-JV Academy's second course challenges Year 2 students to build on skills from Technology Applications by collaborating with their classmates to launch and manage a business that replicates the functions and demands of real business in both structure and practice. Students will be involved in all aspects of running a business from marketing, sales, and human resources to accounting, finance, and IT. Students fill different positions within the company including department managers and Chief admin positions. Students will utilize the full VE Banking system and Marketplace Tools as well as attend trade shows and competitions representing their business.

## EXTENDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

As in the high school model, the VE-JV program will engage the expertise of industry partners to support both classroom and extended-learning activities. Middle school students will have the same opportunities offered at the high school level to participate in the following activities and competitions:

- Business Pitch Competition
- Trade shows
- National Website Competition
- Mentoring by members of the local business community
- Leadership development workshops
- Stock Market Game

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

A critical part of the VE-JV development process is to consider the resources that exist in the school, review the school/district's mission and vision, and assess whether your school/district has the capacity and commitment to pursue VE-JV program implementation. Issues to consider:

### Programming Considerations

Both Year 1 and Year 2 courses are designed for students to meet 5 days per week for one year. While there is some flexibility in programming these courses, the Year 2 program course should meet 5 days a week for one 45- to 50-minute period or be blocked-programmed for the equivalent time. For schools that can only offer the Year 1 program 3

days a week, VE will recommend adjustments to the curriculum that supports the learning objectives but does not compromise the integrity of the program and provides the students with the foundation technology skills.

### Technology Infrastructure

Every student in the VE-JV class must be able to work with his/her own computer and the school must have wireless access. Students must be able to print their work.

### Teacher-Facilitator Selection

The ideal candidate for a VE teacher/facilitator position has an **in-depth understanding of technology and a background in business, math, and/or economics**. Because the curriculum is task-based and depends on a tight schedule of activities, the ideal candidate also has both time-management and project-management skills. Teachers must be willing to attend summer training and other professional development throughout the year.

### Building a VE Laboratory

The VE laboratory simulates the workplace and is a key component of the VE experience. The classroom should include workgroup clusters of furniture to reflect company departments.

### Furniture and Equipment

- Networked laptop or hard-wired computers for each student in the class
- Wireless internet connectivity
- Conference table with 8-10 chairs
- Copy/scanner machine
- 1 color, 1 black-and-white printer and one 3D printer (3D printer optional)
- LCD projector or Smart Board or Touch-Screen LED Monitor
- Filing cabinets
- Laptop computer (if others are hardwired)
- Ideation board (large whiteboards)

### Software

- Microsoft Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher)
- Google Suite (Docs, Sheets, Slides)
- Adobe Creative Cloud (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign) desired
- Wix/Weebly (free download)



### Building an Advisory Board

An advisory board is a group of external partners, including community business leaders, civic leaders and volunteers who can provide guidance and support to the VE program and its students. An advisory board provides the school with a pipeline of partners who can provide opportunities for students and teachers.

## PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR SY 20-21

### January/February/March 2020

- The National VE-JV Program Director or Regional Director will meet with school district administration to discuss middle school program components, support services and recommendations.
- National VE-JV Program Director or Regional Director will meet with middle school principals identified by school district and other stakeholders to review program and implementation guidelines to assess:
  - Whether initiative supports district/school goals and objectives;
  - Potential issues/conflicts with programming and/or staffing;
  - School's technology infrastructure; and
  - Space and needed resources to develop a VE-JV laboratory.

### March 2020

- The National VE-JV Program Director or Regional Director will meet with principals/guidance/teachers of pilot schools to review implementation timeline and dates for student activities.

### April 2020

- Regional Directors will invite stakeholders and a few students from schools to attend local and national events
- Schools to identify a laboratory site.
- Provide furniture/equipment requirements/layout for laboratory to VEI.

### May 2020

- Schools select teachers for Year 1 and/or Year 2 programs.
- Schools register teachers for summer professional development on VEI website (veinternational.org)
- **To request a new program or reaffirm an existing program, do the following:**
  - Go to [veinternational.org](http://veinternational.org)

- Select the header tab Get Involved.
- Follow prompts to start a new program.
- Follow prompts to enter required information.
- VEI will follow up with information about the professional development calendar.

### June 2020

- Prepare a VE-JV lab.

### July 2020

- Teachers attend summer professional development (cost included in program fee)

### September 2020 (or first month of school back in session)

- VE-JV National Program Director will follow up with each new school.

## ONGOING SUPPORT

VE's National Middle School Program Director will provide direct support for the following and/or connect you with regional directors for participation and registration in local events.

- access to curricula
- onboarding students
- technical support
- student activities
- banking
- the wholesale marketplace
- news and events (VE-JV brief)
- training and workshops

VE regional directors will also provide strategies for developing collaborative practices for use by teachers to develop projects, share student support strategies and map instruction/standards.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **How does VE-Junior Ventures Career Academy (VE-JV) fit into my school's course offerings?**

VE-JV is a two-course sequence, each requiring approximately 100 - 135 instructional hours and typically offered in the 7th and 8th grade years. The first, Technology Applications for Business, introduces students to the Microsoft Office Suite and other digital tools and uses real-world projects built around an entrepreneurial theme to apply technology skills. In the second-year course, students launch and manage a business and apply technology skills to achieve company goals and objectives. These courses are typically offered as electives and students must take Technology Applications for Business before taking Junior Ventures; depending on specific requirements for your state or district, one or both courses may satisfy a technology requirement or CTE requirement for students.

### **Does VE provide curriculum and professional development for teachers?**

VE provides a full curriculum, including activities and assessments, and offers a four-day National Teacher Conference in New York each summer (typically early July). Attendance is highly encouraged, and teachers may attend as often as they like. The National Middle School Program Director can also provide support throughout the year as needed.

### **What makes a successful VE-JV teacher?**

Knowledge of business, accounting, marketing, entrepreneurship, (or a related field) and/or industry experience, as well as a facility with technology, contribute to the success of a VE-JV teacher. However, enthusiasm, a willingness to adopt a facilitation mindset and a passion for providing students with unique educational experiences is essential.

### **Can I implement a VE-JV program without a specialized lab?**

Yes, but each student must have access to a computer and a classroom printer. However, a regular computer lab can be reconfigured into workgroup teams. It is important for students to experience a business environment. A specialized lab creates the simulation, helps to transition students to the workplace, and separates them from the high school world.

### **Can I implement only the 2nd Year VE-JV program?**

No. Unless students come into VE with an understanding of basic business concepts, it will be difficult for the instructor to play the role of “guide on the side” rather than “sage on the stage.” The role of teacher as a disseminator of information is contrary to the student-directed learning model.

### **Are there certain types of businesses that don't work well in VE-JV?**

In general, service businesses are more difficult to implement than merchandising businesses. Service firms' customers sometimes resist paying for services that are not provided and have difficulty conceptualizing the nature of the service being offered. Service business should be able to truly perform the service. Businesses that require time (like a



Yes, with guidance.

National VE-JV Program Director