

Teacher Overview

The Vacant Lot Project is a Project Based Learning designed project that asks students to look at a vacant lot in their community and determine what should go there that would create value for the community. This could be a business, nonprofit, community amenity, etc. The item selected for that location should be an economical, feasible choice for the city and its constituents to support. Students will conduct research and planning to design a business model that they will pitch. Only one business will be selected for investment by the city, so students must be prepared!

When to Use This Lesson

You can use this lesson at any point throughout the year. It is a great activity to teach market research.

Time



The amount of class time required will depend on the way you choose to have your students experience the Vacant Lot Project.

BEFORE CLASS PREPARATION

- > Decide any additional learning outcomes you expect your students to achieve.
 - For example, do they need to address specific marketing, business finance, economics, or entrepreneurship standards in addition to the general expectations of the activity?
- > Develop your project timeline, including deadlines and deliverables.
 - Include a deadline of when your students need to share what product they will create so you can purchase their supplies.
- > Determine how your students will reflect and receive feedback regularly throughout the project.
- > Decide how the vacant lot will be selected. Here are some ideas:
 - Allow the students to choose which vacant lot they want to address.
 - You can leave this wide open to the entire community or you could select a handful of vacant lots that the student would choose from.
 - Select a specific lot that all students address.
 - Explore your community resources – Some cities and universities have initiatives in place for repurposing vacant lots.
 - Finding a community initiative could also open the door to project mentors, focus group participants, and/or presentation panelists.
- > Decide if you will have students work individually, in groups, or allow student choice of who they work with.
 - Consider having your students, whether working individually or in groups, complete an “Action Plan” – see this document posted in the lesson on YE Academy.

KEY TERMS

- > Market research
- > Demographics
- > Psychographics
- > Target market
- > Customer focus

MATERIALS

- > Depends on the outcomes your students decide to create.

FOUNDATIONAL VALUES

- > Responsibility
- > Sound Judgment
- > Win-Win Focus
- > Knowledge

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- > PE LO 1c, PE LO 3

ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION

- > You have been contracted by our city to identify what business should fill a vacant lot here in our community. The business selected for that location should be an economical, feasible choice for the city and its constituents to support. You will conduct research and planning to design a business model that you will then pitch. Only one business will be selected for investment by the city, so you must be prepared!

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS

- > Throughout the project, it is important that students are reflecting on their work regularly. Check out the "Reflection Log" document posted in the lesson on YE Academy for an idea of how you could do this.

Part 1: Research

- > Students must conduct research to learn more about their community, so they can decide what kind of business would be successful and beneficial. Allow students to generate their own driving questions – These are questions that push them through their research. What do they need to discover to help them answer the essential question of "Which business is the best addition in my community"? As they research, make sure they are recording what they learn – Check out the "Research Log" document in the lesson on YE Academy for a way to do this.
- > Examples of driving questions might include:
 - What are the demographics, psychographics, etc. of our community?
 - What do community members think should go there?
 - What was at that location previously (if anything)? Why did it fail?
- > Options:
 - Do a community walkabout. Get your students out of the classroom and go on a trip to view the vacant lot in person. This also allows the opportunity to see what environment surrounds the vacant lot (houses, businesses, etc.)
 - Use Google Earth. Students can explore the entire community at their fingertips.
 - Host a focus group. Invite in community members with connections to the property to share their inputs for what they think the community needs, what they would like to go in that location, etc.

Part 2: Product Creation

- > Allow students the opportunity to choose what product they create to outline/develop their business idea.
- > Option: Encourage students to create a business model to share their best idea for what should be developed in that location.
 - Use the Business Model Canvas as extra practice and/or reinforcement for their understanding of the tool.
 - If the idea is a not-for-profit business, have students use the Mission Model Canvas.
- > **IMPORTANT:** Research continues through this part – Students will need to continue researching driving questions related to their business idea. Ideas to research might include those questions found in the "BIO Sheet Teacher Guide".

Part 3: Pitch Preparation

- > Have students prepare a brief pitch to share their business model. Here are some ideas of how you could set up this pitch:
 - **Class Pitch:** Students will pitch their business model in front of the class, using whatever visual aid they feel best supports their idea (PowerPoint, model, display board, etc.).
 - **Video Pitch:** Incorporate digital media and audio/visual skills by having students create a video pitch to share their idea. This could be posted to YouTube or your school website and shared with community members.
 - **Gallery Walk:** Students will create a display for their business model. Visitors to the gallery walk will visit each display to learn about the ideas. You could split the class into groups and rotate who are the visitors in rounds. You could also invite other classes to visit. Be sure to include a way for visitors to give feedback to the presenters – This could be comment cards, have visitors “vote” for their favorite idea, have visitors “invest” in the business model they think is best, etc. You could use YE bonds to have students vote.
 - **Judges Panel:** Invite in community members, staff, administrators, etc. to sit on a panel to hear each pitch. The judges will provide feedback to the presenters. You could also have the judges select the top pitches.
 - **Student Choice:** If possible, allow students to choose which presentation method best suits their idea and personality. This may be difficult to logistically plan; however, it will give your students greater ownership in the project.

Part 4: Pitch Presentation

- > Allow students to deliver their pitch in whatever mode you selected. Don't forget to plan a way to record and/or collect feedback – This includes from their classroom peers, other students, staff, or community members.

Part 5: Post-Presentation Reflection

- > Engage students in a reflection of the entire project. Ask them to think about what they learned and the process of how they learned it. Are they proud of their work? What would they do differently next time?

SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES

- > Optional: Expand this project to include a variety of other standards or competencies that your students may need more work in. For example, you could ask your students to design a marketing campaign or determine cost of goods sold if they need to improve mastery in these areas. This project also allows for great cross-curricular opportunities, like collaborating with digital media classes to design logos or advertisements, with an economics classes to analyze the economic impact of the business idea, or an English class to write a research paper.

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