

Curriculum Package
LESSON PLAN

Title: Business Lessons from the Basket Weaver
Author/School: Olga Florin, John F. Kennedy High School
Course: Accounting/Entrepreneurship
Grade Level: 9-12

Standards Met:

1. (To be met along with those specific to the Principles of Accounting course)

Scope of Curricular Package

Minimum of one class may be extended to two or three class periods.

Brief Introduction

This package will spotlight the basket weaving business as an example of entrepreneurship in action.

Objectives

1. Highlight basket weaving as a thriving business that originated as a skill common to regular folk
2. Identify or point out business concepts that apply to the creation and sell of baskets.
3. Identify factors that regulate the introduction of a new seller to the basket weaving market
4. Prepare a draft for a business plan (for Class Period 3 only)

Content Elements

A. Actions/Activities/Programs/Procedures

1. Based on an interview with a local basket weaver, students will learn the basics of the basket weaving business.
2. Teacher-led reading, class discussion
3. Search www.sweetgrass.html, and www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/proceedings1993/v2-442.html (sweet grass: history, basketry, and constraints to industry growth)
4. Handout: A transcript from an interview with Mrs. Sue Middleton, basket weaver in the city of Charleston, South Carolina, on July 31, 2002
5. The following questions were presented to Mrs. Middleton. The same questions, along with her answers are supplied separately:
 - a. Where did you learn to weave baskets?
 - b. Where do you live and make your baskets (city, islands, rural areas)
 - c. Are basket weavers only women, mostly women? Do you need a license to sell your product, what to do to get started in this business?
 - d. Is there an association, or organization of basket weavers in Charleston?
 - e. How do you obtain your materials (grow it, buy from a vendor)

- f. Do you use standard designs or do you create our own.
- g. Additional comments from Mrs. Middleton.
6. After reading and discussing the interview, students will complete a brief questionnaire relating the entrepreneurial concepts learned in class with their own ideas on how to start their own business.

Class Period 2 (Optional)

B. Actions/Activities/Programs/Procedures

1. Students will search the Internet for additional data on the history of sweet grass baskets and similar products
2. Students will work on their individual PCs, each searching a different engine (google, yahoo, others)
3. Use a checklist to find ways to procure raw materials (either shopping on-line, or growing sweet grass at home, etc.)
4. Individual PCs, class notebook
5. Questions:
 - a. Why would a basket weaver spend so much time in the making and selling or their product?
 - b. How profitable is the basket weaving market
 - c. Would you advise someone to weave baskets for a living, or as a source of extra income
6. Students will submit their educated answers to the questions above, in complete sentences and within a 10-minute timeframe.

Class Period 3 (Optional)

C. Actions/Activities/Programs/Procedures

1. Students will choose a possible business venture
2. A worksheet will be made available to assist in the thinking process
3. Students will sketch a draft for a business plan, concentrating in the brainstorming process.
4. Students will be able to write their ideas down in their class notebook, and then type them on the computer using Microsoft Word.
5. The following questions will serve as guidelines:
 - a. What kind of (legal) business do you see yourself involved in?
 - b. Do you have any previous experience in this field?
 - c. Which particular product would you like to introduce to the market?
 - d. How much time do you think you will need to run your business?
 - e. Would you need to employ other people to help you, such as a cashier, an accountant/bookkeeper, a lawyer, a banker, a salesperson?
 - f. Are you aware of the services provided by the Small Business Administration?
 - g. Where would you go to obtain their assistance?
 - h. How much money do you plan to make?

- i. For how long will you run your business (during the summer, all year long, for years to come)
6. Students will turn in their activity sheets and will be graded according to the efforts shown toward producing complete answers, creativity, and neatness.

Brief Background Essay

Basket weaving, a skill brought to America by Africans during slavery, has grown from pieces made for use at the rice plantations and at home, to a thriving business in the city of Charleston. Basket weavers are individuals, mostly women from rural areas, who having learned the art at home, have found a ready market in the city. The only product that distinguishes Charleston's market from those in other cities is the presence of baskets woven out of sweet grass, palm and pine needles.

Ways to extend or enhance the package beyond the classroom

A visit to the local market, where students can shop and talk with local entrepreneurs. Search the Yellow Pages for possible contact with local basket weavers, or shops where sweet grass baskets are sold. Scan the Entertainment section of the Sunday paper for any appearance of a basket-weaving event in town (festivals, workshops)

Bibliography

Personal interview with Mrs. Sue Middleton, basket weaver in the city of Charleston, South Carolina, on July 31, 2002

Row Upon Row, by Dale Rosengarten, 72 pages, \$19.95

www.google.com. (type sweet grass in the google search area; select Sweetgrass.html)

www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/proceedings1993/v2-442.html (sweet grass: history, basketry, and constraints to industry growth)