

Community Comment 6/10/2013  
By Jon Sapper  
Statistics and Entrepreneurial Thinking

I was talking with someone the other day about innovation, creativity and entrepreneurial thinking in education and they said, "Well Sapper, when the average citizen thinks about those things, it's usually not in the context of what's going on in K-12 education. I said, "Well, when I think of great employees, top notch customer service and a wonderful product, I don't think of your business either. I laughed. He didn't. I wasn't serious. He was. But this led to a longer conversation. He threw some statistics at me. I love statistics. Really good ones can reinforce your position, regardless of what it is. Even if you change your position, if you have really good statistics, you can use the same ones for each position you have.

He asked me a question...."Why do you think almost one in three high school students nationwide drop out of school before graduating?" I could tell from the way he phrased the question that he had an answer. So I asked him, "Why do you think it is?" He said, "It's obvious. Eighty-one percent of high school drop outs report they would have stayed in school if school was more relevant to their lives. 81%, huh? That's a big number and a good statistic, so I looked into it.

I found that when children and youth are involved in entrepreneurial thinking, activities and programs, neat things happen. They're more engaged. They see a relationship between their interests and their education. They are challenged to use their brain in new and different ways to solve problems. I ALSO looked at statistics from Harvard and Brandeis University studies.

When children and youth were engaged in creative, innovative and entrepreneurial programs, interest in attending college increased by 32% compared to a 17% decrease for the control group of students that didn't take the program. Knowledge about business and our economy increased 62% for those who took the program compared to only 3% for those who didn't. 83% of the students who took the program wanted to start their own business and 36% actually did. Their confidence and job aspirations increased 44% compared to only 10% for those who didn't take the program and students who took these

kinds of programs believed THEY had control to reach their own goals at a rate 5 times higher than the other students.

The answer is pretty clear. When we engage our children and youth in innovative, creative and entrepreneurial programs related to their interest; school achievement goes up, high school completion rates go up, going on to school for advanced studies go up and starting new businesses go up.

Sorry for all the statistics, but it reinforced the point I wanted to make anyway.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.