

VENTURE ACADEMY

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WORLD-CHANGING ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERS

“We’ve really put students in charge of their learning. Some faster than others, they’ve started to set and track their own learning goals, find their passion and voice, and take leadership to help the school.”

JON BACAL, VENTURE ACADEMY

KEY FEATURES:

- ✓ New School
- ✓ Flex Blended Model
- ✓ Entrepreneurship
- ✓ Experiential Learning

AT A GLANCE:

State Date: Fall 2013
Grades Served: 6–12
Location: Minneapolis, MN
Operator: Venture Academy
Operator Type: Charter
Setting: Urban
Students at Start: 110
Students at Capacity: 275

MODEL TOOLBOX:

Learning Management System: none

Student Information System: PowerSchool

Gradebook: Kickboard

Assessment Tools and Approaches: i-Ready, STAR (Renaissance Learning), MasteryConnect (teacher-created)

Digital Content Providers: i-Ready, Achieve 3000, Khan Academy, Accelerated Math

Hardware: Refurbished Lenovo laptops; 100 Mbps upload/download fiber cable

Venture Academy, a 6-12 charter which opened in Minneapolis in August 2013, isn’t just creating 21st century learners. They’re helping ignite the passion of the next generation of entrepreneurial leaders: self-propelled students who know how to imagine new opportunities, take initiative and risks, and solve problems. The learning takes place on the edge of the University of Minnesota campus, in a pastel-painted, high-ceilinged former printing plant with lots of windows but no classrooms.

In Venture’s model, students—one-fourth of whom receive special education services and two-thirds are learning English—are known as trailblazers. The learning model is designed to help trailblazers make rapid learning progress by sparking self-direction and passion. Trailblazers spend most of the school day in their Learning Community. Each

community has 55 trailblazers and three learning coaches. Personalized learning pathways are guided by real-time progress data generated by digital content, coach input, and self-reflections. Trailblazers also receive feedback by earning dollars weekly on Venture Paychecks, which track virtue attainment and learning productivity.

The school day includes digital learning, responsive small group coaching in literacy and math, independent study projects, athletics, and experiential learning in art, digital media (making music and movies), tech entrepreneurship (web development and coding), and Makerspace (hands-on tinkering and product development). The latter two courses are coached by Venture’s 23-year-old Entrepreneur-in-Residence. Other key activities include a Maker Faire, Life Hack Fair, auctions, a Venture

VENTURE’S PRINCIPLES, CORE VIRTUES, BIG IDEAS



6 CORE VIRTUES

1. Courage
2. Grit
3. Integrity
4. Mindfulness
5. Community
6. Entrepreneurship

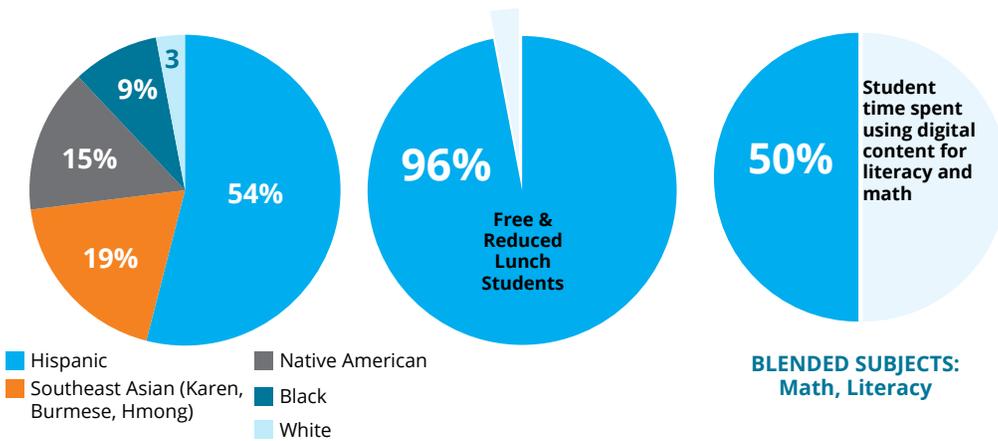
3 PRINCIPLES

1. Every young person has a unique gift and purpose that can change the world
2. Young people should make real-world contributions and assume leadership responsibilities
3. Every young person can and should direct their own learning

9 BIG IDEAS

1. *Learning/leading* is a lifelong hero's journey
2. *Entrepreneurial leadership:* All trailblazers can become world-changing leaders
3. *Entrepreneurial learning:* All trailblazers will become self-directed learners

4. *The “campification” of school:* Venture learning is filled with adventure, joy and friendship
5. *Trailblazers are makers:* They build, create, design, invent, discover, tinker
6. *Trailblazers are founders:* They create new ideas, solutions, organizations
7. *Trailblazers are scholars:* They think critically, write clearly, speak confidently, learn deeply
8. *Trailblazers are citizens:* They take responsibility for improving the world around them
9. *Character is destiny:* Trailblazers act with integrity, grit, courage, mindfulness and purpose



BY THE NUMBERS:

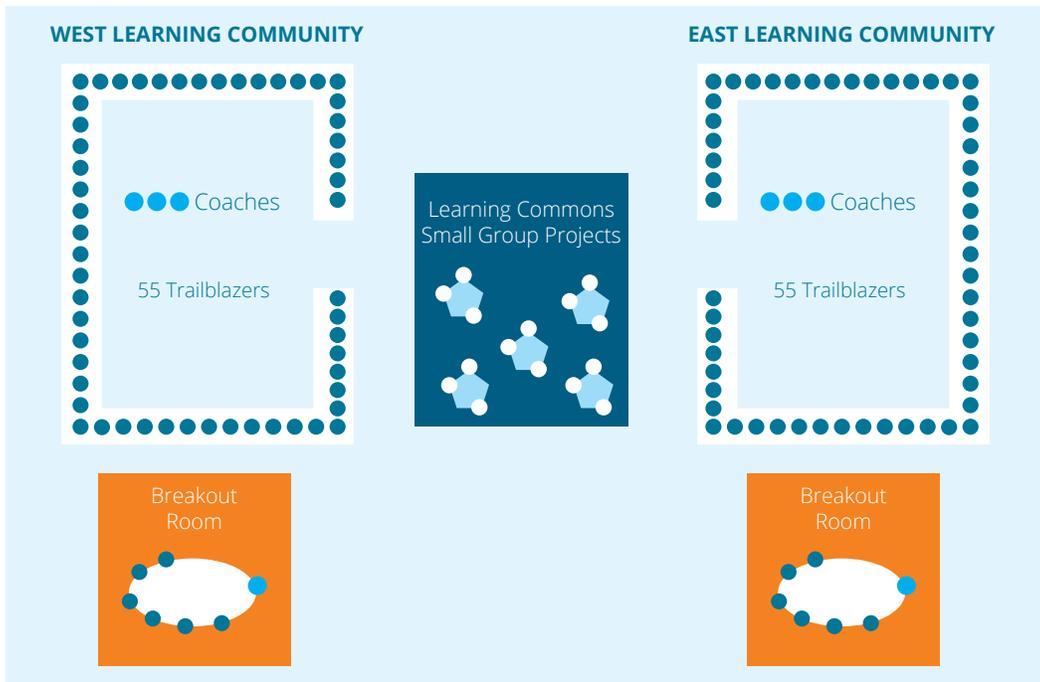
- Year 1 public revenue per pupil:** \$11,152
- Year 1 expenses per pupil:** \$15,138
- Year 4 revenue per pupil:** \$10,621
- Year 4 expenses per pupil:** \$9,585
- Years to sustainability:** 2

Exchange to buy and sell trailblazer creations, and entrepreneur guest speakers. All Venture stakeholders are focused on achieving two culminating “Big Goals” for Year One: 1) Trailblazers initiate independent study projects that include a Venture Pitch, demonstrating public speaking, persuasive writing, research, SWOT analysis, and teamwork skills; 2) Trailblazers make three years of growth in reading and math.

entrepreneurial leadership by encouraging learning from productive failure. In its first month, Venture itself was as much a productive failure as a successful startup. After a month focused—successfully—on building a consistent, orderly, and caring culture for students from some of Minnesota’s most struggling schools, its team realized it was not on track to achieve its mission. Venture pivoted, replaced reading and math classes with flexible pullouts and added the

tech courses and time for independent projects. A 33-member Trailblazer Leadership team designed an elected government and student jobs to give trailblazers real responsibility for academic tutoring, tech support, cleaning, and other previously adult-staffed areas. As it grows, Venture seeks to remain a lean startup with the agility to try, measure, learn, and iterate in rapid, data-driven cycles.

THE VENTURE LEARNING COMMUNITIES



The Learning Commons is a large, open area that includes tables where students can access digital curriculum, videos, and learning games as well as work on independent and small group projects and tutorials. On the perimeter of the Communities, breakout rooms let coaches provide responsive pullouts and tutoring in literacy and math. The Venture learning space also includes a Makerspace, Wood Shop, Digital Media Lab, Art Studio, Movement Studio, and Conference Room.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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