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Elmhurst Academy's Kindergarten Class Achieves 21st Century Entrepreneurial Learning with "Go-Nuts" Business Model

Elmhurst Academy's Kindergarten class completes their school year with the eagerly-awaited launch of "Go-Nuts Bakery" to the public, a year-long business project that prompted the young students to think as young entrepreneurs. The students celebrated this achievement with the live-selling of their "Go-Nuts" donut at Elmhurst Academy's Earthfest.

"Go-Nuts Bakery" started from the Kindergarten students' idea to make a food product "to ship around the world." With the assistance of their teachers, Ms. Heather Escobedo and Ms. Kristen Dietmeyer, the students were given the opportunity to attain this goal on a local-scale and create their own multi-faceted bakery business from the ground, up. The project focused on entrepreneurship, which is a main goal of 21st Century Learning, a set of learning requirements outlined by schools nationally to help students thrive in today's information age. Entrepreneurial experience allows students to make appropriate personal economic choices, understand the role of the economy, and use entrepreneurial skills to enhance workplace productivity and career opportunities.

Since the project's start in September, the Kindergarteners took on several professional roles in order to produce their bakery. First, they became avid researchers as they explored the bakery business—touring commercial kitchens, learning about tools, how to delineate healthy and unhealthy foods, and conducting professional interviews with chefs. Their research also included a mini field experience with school's professional chef, Chef Sigy, for an up-close demonstration of a professional at work.

As the students ventured into the bakery's production stages, they learned to be co-workers that collaborated to make important business decisions. These decisions involved writing recipes, taste-testing and creating an edible product to be sold to the public, and creating a bakery name and logo. "It's easier to work with everyone because there are more people and when we are in groups, we are able to do more things," Elmhurst Academy's Kindergarten student, Miles Dalley said.

Promoting their business, the Kindergarteners became savvy advertisers and marketers as they scripted, videoed, and edited their own jingle for "Go-Nuts," and produced social media to publicize their business. In its final stages, the students became packagers and now are eager

sellers, familiar with money values and taking in-person and over-the-phone bakery orders.

The project provided a well-rounded learning experience with lessons and activities across subject areas. In order to develop their complete business model, students engaged in math activities such as graphing data, reading exercises involved in compare and contrast, science experiments with ingredients and recipes, and worked on a technological platform. The Kindergarten class also participated in Junior Achievement, which was a six-week economics class with Mr. John Heflin from IBM, the school's corporate partner.

"The students were learning important skills and higher-learning concepts that are seen at third and fourth grade levels, without realizing it," Ms. Heather Escobedo, Elmhurst Academy's Mentor Kindergarten Teacher said. The most rewarding part for the teacher was seeing the students' excitement to work, and their hard work paying off. Ms. Escobedo and Ms. Dietmeyer recognized their Kindergarteners growth and they started to be confident leaders. Throughout the process, their students took led their own learning and generated their own ideas on what to make at their bakery and how to sell it. They were also able to develop their creativity and hone in on what interested each of them to find their own success.

The overall success of the Kindergarteners "Go-Nuts Bakery" has Elmhurst Academy teachers looking forward to similar entrepreneurial projects for future students.

Elmhurst Academy Kindergarten students "live" sold their "Go-Nuts" cinnamon carob donut at Earthfest on Friday, May 20, 2016. Their proceeds will be donated to Ann & Robert H. Lurie, Children's Hospital, a charity selected by the class president, Michael Dorko.