START-UP CURRICULUM

Week 1 - Finding the Right Problem & Defining Your MVP

Our focus: Idea selection, real-world relevance, and building a foundation for execution

- Introduction to problem-first businesses: Why great businesses solve real problems
- Understanding global, local, and community challenges
- How to identify issues you're passionate about solving
- What makes a "good" startup idea
- Defining users, not just customers
- The concept of the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) — what it is and what it isn't
- Choose your own project idea OR grab one from a list of 50+ real-world problems across industries
- Draft your first MVP sketch: problem, solution, user, and how your MVP will deliver value

Week 2 - Market Research & Customer Discovery

We begin grounding your ideas in data and understanding your audience

- What is market research, and why does it matter for startups?
- Learning how to find and interpret trends in your industry
- Tools to gather research
- Understanding your customer
- Identifying competitors and finding your unique angle
- Evaluating market size, saturation, and opportunity
- Mapping your value proposition clearly and simply

Week 3 - Prototyping & MVP Development

We create your first version using low-cost tools and methods

- What makes a great prototype?
- MVP examples: software, service-based, product-based, and hybrid models
- Introduction to low-code and AI tools
- Building out an initial version of your MVP
- Creating landing pages or pitch decks as prototypes
- For physical products: how to design and test basic concepts using household materials or mockups
- Sharing MVPs with a small group for feedback
- Reworking MVP based on early insights

Week 4- Marketing Strategies & Early User Acquisition

Getting your idea in front of real people the right way.

- What is guerilla marketing and building out low cost campaigns
- Understanding the basics of brand messaging
- Channels for early traction: social media, email, word-of-mouth, niche communities
- How to design and run a simple campaign
- Crafting a "hook" — what makes people pay attention
- Generating good content and leveraging AI to automate processes
- Collecting and analyzing early feedback to adjust positioning

CREATE FUTURES

START-UP CURRICULUM

Week 5- Financial Planning & Start-Up Costs
Building a simple but smart understanding of money in startups
- Estimating your start-up costs realistically
- Understanding fixed vs. variable costs
- Introduction to bootstrapping, pre-sales, and lean models
- Building a basic startup budget using templates
- How to price your product or service
- Exploring revenue models (subscription, one-time purchase, freemium, etc.)
- Using tools like Excel, Notion, or AI to manage finances
- Thinking ahead: how to sustain your project or idea over time

Week 6 - Pitching, Communication & Preparing for Investment
Learning how to communicate your idea clearly and confidently
- What investors, mentors, or sponsors look for in a startup
- Structuring your elevator pitch and full pitch presentation
- Crafting a compelling pitch deck: what to include, slide-by-slide
- The power of storytelling and personal connection
- How to pitch without jargon — clarity over complexity
- Common mistakes to avoid in startup presentations
- Peer review and feedback on your pitch

Week 7- Product Testing, Iteration & Metrics
Using feedback loops to improve and grow
- Why iteration is the secret to successful startups
- Gathering structured feedback (surveys, user interviews, behavior tracking)
- Defining key metrics to measure what's working (engagement, conversions, etc.)
- How to know when to pivot, pause, or persevere
- Simple tools for tracking metrics and feedback
- How to apply feedback without losing your vision
- Preparing for Demo Day: what to expect, how to make an impact

Week 8 - Demo Day & Future Planning
Showcasing progress, setting next steps, and building long-term confidence
- Final pitch polishing and visual clean-up
- Practicing your Demo Day presentation in front of peers
- Live Demo Day presentations to an audience (parents, mentors, teachers, local entrepreneurs)
- Q&A coaching: how to answer questions with confidence
- Reflecting on lessons learned from the 8-week journey
- Goal-setting for the next 30/60/90 days
- How to keep momentum: communities, mentors, funding options, learning

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