

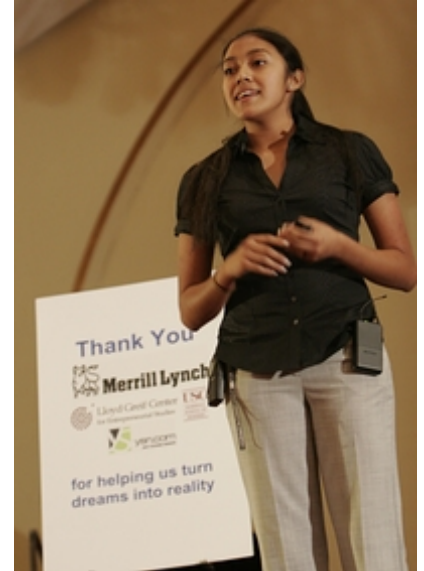
Student Entrepreneurs Compete For the Best Pitch

Posted By [Raymund Flandez](#) On October 24, 2008 @ 8:57 am In [Entrepreneurship](#), [Events](#), [Competition](#) | [3 Comments](#)

A landscaping and lawn-care business; a candy factory; a yoga class; a smoothie store in the school cafeteria; and an online costume retailer for kids and adults.

Those were just some of the ideas presented at the National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, held in midtown Manhattan yesterday. Some 35 students, age 18 and under, from all over the country gave their strongest 10-minute business-plan pitch to some of the power players in the corporate world. The panel of judges included founders and executives from Nantucket Nectars, BlackRock, USA Network and the Boston Celtics. In return, the students endured tough questions about the practicality, profitability and uniqueness of their ideas. One girl was stumped about how many of the 535 teachers she plans to recruit for her yoga-class center currently practice yoga. She didn't know, but said she would get back with an answer.

The slides the students presented included information on competitors, growth plans, income statements, time management (remember, they're still in school), and social-responsibility plans (most volunteer or donate their services to local charities). Some of the business plans were just in the conception stage; others have been viable businesses for years. For example, [1] [Cosfurs](#) of Cleveland, Ohio, is a costume retailer run by twins Naomi and Noemi Romero, who make the costumes in their mom's attic. "This is one of the most rewarding opportunities in my life," said Naomi Romero, who got a trip to New York with her sister/business partner.



One of the most interesting ideas I came across was making football-helmet shields with photo-chromatic paint that allows them to change color when the lights change. Macalee Harlis, of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., came up with the concept, having experienced the problem of seeing the football field at dusk as a senior varsity linebacker.

The winner won \$10,000 in seed capital or for education.

The contest is sponsored by Oppenheimer Funds Inc. and the [2] [National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship](#), a New York-based nonprofit. With a budget of \$19 million, NFTE has a mission to teach entrepreneurship and small-business skills to high school students in low income areas.

Since 1987, the NFTE program has been a part of the curricula of some high schools around the country, providing a way for students to learn what it means to be an entrepreneur and picking up valuable skills. Careful planning, strategizing, critical thinking, collaborating and calculated risk-taking are picked up, along with the basic principles of opening a business.

"When I took the class, I didn't even know what ROI was," says Evelyn Espinoza, who took the NFTE course at Soledad Enrichment Action Girls Academy in downtown Los Angeles. She's now running an organic candle-making company called [3] [The Hippie's Candles](#).

These students may have the right skills and tools to weather a downturn once they graduate from school and enter the job market by starting their own business, says Steve Mariotti, NFTE founder. "That's a huge asset for the country," he adds.

Do you think you can teach kids how to be entrepreneurs? What inspired you to become a small-business owner?

Photo courtesy the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship

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URLs in this post:

[1] Cosfurs : **<http://www.cosfurs.com>**

[2] National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship: **<http://www.nfte.com>**

[3] The Hippie's Candles.: **<http://www.thehippiescandles.com>**

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