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PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION PILOTS NEW EDUCATION PROGRAM DIRECTED AT YOUTH

GUELPH, ON – March 24, 2021. The Ontario Co-operative Association (OCA) is piloting a brand new education initiative to introduce students to a different way of doing businesses.

Numerous studies have shown that while the co-operative business model resonates with teachers, teenagers and young adults, very few of them are learning about it in school. *Co-operative Minds* is a project-based learning program designed to address the lack of co-operative business education in the classroom, while teaching youth the value of working collectively to solve real world problems.

“There’s strong evidence that projects with real-world outcomes hold some of the greatest potential for helping students become driven, empathetic and engaged citizens,” says Michelle Christmann, OCA’s Education Manager who is leading the program. “*Co-operative Minds* provides authentic and meaningful ways for students to share their collective voice, and the opportunity to collaborate, think critically and communicate in ways that make our world a more co-operative place to live.”

Teachers are provided with a tool-kit that includes everything they need to lead students through an authentic and collaborative problem solving challenge to tackle an issue in their community. Brett Manlow, a teacher at Centennial Secondary School in Belleville, ON who participated in the first pilot session with his Information and Communication Technology in Business students, says:

“Doing the *Co-operative Minds* challenge was like seeing butterflies come out of their cocoon. This was a great opportunity for students to safely take a risk and stretch them out of their comfort zone, as they problem solved a real issue. The process was clearly laid out and easy to facilitate. I highly recommend this for anyone who wants an authentic challenge that will build student confidence and develop leadership skills they can carry with them.”

OCA is seeking partnerships with co-operatives and credit unions across Ontario who are interested in connecting with youth in their communities. By acting as mentors and assisting students in working co-operatively to solve an issue, they are actively helping increase awareness of a different way of doing business, while creating a new generation of members and co-operatively-minded leaders.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Michelle Christmann 1.888.745.5521 x29 or at mchristmann@ontario.coop.

ABOUT THE ONTARIO CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION (OCA): Co-operatives are a different kind of business model that are driven by people, planet and profit. OCA supports, develops, educates and advocates for Ontario's 1,500+ co-operative businesses. We exist to strengthen and unite the co-operative movement and we believe that co-operatives are the solution to creating stronger communities, which help to build a better world. Visit us at <http://www.ontario.coop> for more information.

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