

Meet Cathy Ashmore and the Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education

The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education is proud to release the new National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education.



Members of the National Entrepreneurs Advisory Council at the introduction of the new Entrepreneurship Education Content Standards in June 2004. Dr. Ashmore is second from the right.

Dr. Cathy Ashmore, a former marketing education teacher, has served as executive director of the Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education since it was created at Ohio State University in 1982. The nonprofit corporation is the major membership group for organizations providing entrepreneurship education for K-12, colleges, state departments, training organizations and all types of national leaders interested in advocating for entrepreneurship education.

Ashmore has organized an annual **FORUM for teacher professional development** for 22 years. This year 100 teachers received scholarships to attend the conference in San Antonio thanks to the generosity of the Kauffman and Coleman Foundations and others. Check the Consortium's Web site: www.entre-ed.org.

For many years, Dr. Cathy Ashmore has worked to help educators recognize that teaching about entrepreneurship can unleash paths to business success for virtually all students. Here is a sampler of her insight. (The remarks are excerpted from the *entre-ed.org* Web site.)

On building an entrepreneurial culture

"With businesses and government downsizing, the wise person asks where the jobs of the future are going to be. One answer often overlooked by educators is the option to create your own business, to be responsible for your own income.

"Entrepreneurship education is made up of all kinds of experiences that give students a vision of how to access opportunities of many different types. The key word here is 'experience.' Research shows that two-thirds of American entrepreneurs come from homes where someone has owned a business. But where do the rest of our students learn it is possible to create a business of your own?"

"Rarely have business courses assumed the students will be the creator and owner of a business. Business management courses are good background for those who do see themselves as a future business owner. They teach the competencies that are essential in analyzing the viability of a business idea.

"But at the same time, all types of educational courses can contribute to the experience of the student who might eventually become an entrepreneur. Education at all levels can include experiences that help students see opportunities and possibilities. It can become a part of the educational culture in the same way it is part of the culture of entrepreneurial families in America."

Opportunity versus risk

"Entrepreneurs generally tell us that they did not really take a big risk when they started their business. In fact, it would have been more of a risk in terms of 'lost opportunity' if they had not launched the enterprise.

"Educators (with little or no entrepreneurial experience) often quote the SBA [Small Business Administration] data about how many small businesses fail in the first five years. 'Failure' becomes their reason for not supporting entre-

preneurship education in our schools. Yet according to the SBA, of every seven businesses that shut their doors, only one of seven actually fails . . . that is, leaves unpaid obligations. An owner might sell a business, retire, get a better idea, move to another state or country, go to work for someone else, die or become disabled, etc.

"Most of us have heard that Henry Ford 'failed' several times before he started the Ford Motor Company. Perhaps business failure is a way of learning what might have been learned through experiences in entrepreneurship in the earlier years in school. It is time we realistically weigh the risk of failure versus the loss of opportunity for success as we advise young people about their lives."

National Curriculum Standards define the field

"For several decades we have defined entrepreneurship education as a life-long learning process that builds expertise at all levels of education in progressively more difficult learning experiences. The Consortium is proud to release the new National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education this year. **We started by asking entrepreneurs what they do, and what they need to know to do it.** After a series of entrepreneur focus groups across the country, we sought input from a wide variety of educators.

"The resulting 15 standards are organized in three major areas: Entrepreneurial Skills, Ready Skills and Business Functions. Supporting the Standards are 403 performance indicators that help teachers organize the objectives, learning activities and assessments appropriate to the students they teach. No one course can expect to teach all 403 performance indicators, and all of them can be addressed in progressively more advanced objectives throughout education . . . thus developing "expertise" for our future entrepreneurs as well as employees of entrepreneurial businesses." [The Standards are at www.entre-ed.org.]

