

Won Strategy Values Challenged Students' Lived Experiences; Creates Life Changing Experience for High School Students

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Providence, RI-based [Won Strategy, Inc.](#) introduces high school students with intellectual or developmental disabilities and behavioral challenges to the fundamental of business, creating opportunities for them to become entrepreneurs or prepare for meaningful employment. The Why To How (WTH) program is practical, yet creative," notes Won Strategy founder Brian LaFauci, "and the results of the yearlong curriculum are inspired as well as inspiring.



Instructor Bryan Hoffman shared this story: “When Emma first joined the class, she walked out of the room and barely participated for the first couple of weeks. But something shifted. Over time, she became one of the most engaged students I’ve ever taught, raising her hand, leading discussions, and fully owning her idea. She created a coffee shop concept and went on to sell more than \$150 in coffee and pastries at our student marketplace in less than an hour. To see her confidence grow, and then to learn she was officially adopted by a woman who had been showing up to every event to support her, was incredibly powerful. Emma’s journey is a reminder of what can happen when students are met with consistency, encouragement, and the chance to discover what they’re truly passionate about.”

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Brian LaFauci

One of the most powerful strengths of the [Why to How \(WTH\) entrepreneurship program](#) is its ability to follow students wherever their educational journey takes them. Because the program is

offered statewide, students who transition out of behavioral-based or alternative educational settings can continue their entrepreneurial education without interruption if/when they re-enter the public school system.

“As many of our students move between programs, the continuity really matters,” said Heidi Millea who oversees program implementation. “Even when students are transient, they’re able to stay connected to us and continue building on what they’ve already learned.”

That continuity has proven transformative. Several students who began Why to How in behavioral-based programs were able to step directly into the next level of entrepreneurship coursework upon enrolling in a traditional public-school setting. Rather than starting over, they rejoined the curriculum in sync, reinforcing earlier concepts while advancing their business ideas.



Bryan Hoffman with proud student Emma

Notably, students arriving from alternative settings demonstrated clear growth in maturity and life skills. “They came in with organized thinking, a clear vision for their businesses, and an understanding of next steps,” Heidi explained. “That’s not just academic progress - that’s future-focused thinking.”

In fact, some students proactively asked their new schools whether an entrepreneurship programming was available, expressing excitement when they learned they could continue with Why to How. Their businesses evolved alongside them, from initial concepts to evolved business plans, reflecting maturity and a deeper understanding of long-term goals.

“At its core, this program teaches practical, real-world skills: decision-making, financial awareness, and confidence,” LaFauci commented. “Students don’t always get this in a traditional classroom – in any program. They’re not just thinking about today. They’re thinking about tomorrow.”

The guiding principle of this ten-week course is that inclusion – of non-traditional students – begins with opportunity, together with the mantra: “connection over content,” where clearly both happen in every classroom throughout the state. From business ideation to marketing and business plans to financial literacy, students are actively engaged in every facet of the learning process. That means learning to make eye contact and shake hands, to work collaboratively -from building the highest tower in five minutes using spaghetti and marshmallows to developing a business name or creating a product such as bath bombs to sell.

In twelve schools within nine districts in eighteen classes, more than two hundred students have showcased their business ideas in this first half of the 2025/2026 school year. More importantly, they have acquired valuable life and works skills, which Won Strategy offers as pre-employment transition services in its partnership with the RI Office of Rehabilitative Services.

The team of instructors represent diversity in background and profession. Business owners, financial planners, advertising agency owners, have worked with the disability, veteran and incarcerated populations. Sensitivity, empathy, and supportiveness are among the critical skills required, and are enhanced through ongoing professional development training classes.

Partnerships with local small businesses, non-profit organizations and banks are interwoven into the program. Student field trips to a combined coffee-shop and consignment shop owned by a person with developmental disabilities who shares his personal story provide real world insights and real hope.

Host schools witness the pride as well as the products created by their students. One district representative decided to print, frame and permanently display the student-created logos. At another school, the director of Special Education wrote, "Clearly, there has been significant growth, supported by thoughtful and intentional practices. The program is invaluable in building skills, fostering connections and strengthening self-esteem."

Together, these stories illustrate the broader impact of the Why to How program: meeting students where they are, staying with them through change, and equipping them with the tools to imagine and build a future beyond their circumstances.

The next step designed for these students is Entrepreneurship 201 program, the advanced level that provides a deeper level of understanding of business concepts, along with additional one on one support. At the culmination of the 201 programs in the spring of 2026, Won Strategy will seed fund over \$20,000 to the participating students. In turn they will use that seed money to fund their first vendor fair, selling their goods/ services. This process teaches the students how to turn \$100 into \$1,000 through the process of entrepreneurship.

About Won Strategy

Won Strategy provides business planning, growth, consulting, and brokerage services while developing innovative educational programs to inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs. Through its W.T.H. Program, the firm partners with schools to prepare students - especially those with disabilities - for success as business leaders and change-makers.

Districts represented within RI: SMITHFIELD; SCITUATE; EAST PROVIDENCE; DAVISVILLE; NORTH KINGSTON; CENTRAL FALLS; WEST BAY COLLABORATIVE; LINCOLN; and JOHNSTON. Additionally, Won Strategy has worked with the RI TRAINING CENTER and HARMONY

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