

District 101's *Dog Tank*...the Power of Partnerships

For the past 8 years, McClure Junior High students, also known as McClure “Bulldogs,” have been taking elective courses such as podcasting, computer repair, musical composition, 3D art, robotics, theater and pastry arts. One of the electives, *Dog Tank*, is based on the television show Shark Tank, where entrepreneurs pitch their products to investment “sharks,” in hopes of receiving funding. McClure teacher Courtney Douglas created the *Dog Tank* elective and then partnered with UnChartered Learning, a company that focuses on “engaging students in a learn-by-doing, real-world setting” to take the elective to the next level. Ms. Douglas developed the middle school elective curriculum for D101 and UnChartered Learning and presented at their conference this summer.

The *Dog Tank* elective challenges students to solve a problem of their choosing with a product idea and create a prototype of the product, most often utilizing 3D printers which were purchased through a grant from the Western Springs Educational Association (www.wsfee.org). Students identify all costs, including production and marketing expenses, and pitch their idea to D101 “sharks,” administration and outside business experts, who assess if their start-up idea has a chance at success. Each semester, Western Springs community members volunteer to serve as mentors and share their expertise in everything from finance to patent law to production & marketing with the students. It is through a mentor’s connection that the students are able to take a field trip to visit mHub, an innovation center for physical product development and manufacturing in Chicago.

The students utilize the built-in focus groups of their peers to assess their product throughout the development process and sell their products via the McClure “Dog Tank” marketplace. If a profit is realized, it is divided between investing in future production supplies and donations to a selected charity. Some of the most recent inventions include a foot hammock for resting your feet under your desk; an ear bud/iphone stand; a disk to hold socks together in the washer; and pouches for bike handlebars. This past semester, “Sloppy Stop,” a handle for your dripping ice cream cone, was a big success with field testing and sales happening on location in front of the Western Springs Oberweis store.

One charity that has received *Dog Tank* proceeds is the Healing Hearts for Ashley Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to raising awareness and supporting research for inherited heart rhythm diseases. It was founded in honor and memory of

esteemed McClure math teacher Ashley Jurjovec who passed away from an undetected heart condition. In the Spring 2022 semester, the *Dog Tank* elective students teamed with the students enrolled in the *Be the Change* elective and directed the charity portion of the sales to the Share Food, Share Love Food Pantry in Brookfield, IL.

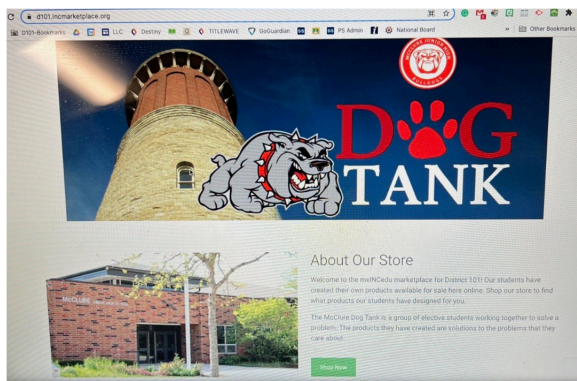
The elective *Dog Tank* is itself an example of taking a conceptual idea to reality and is possible through the power of the partnership between D101 teachers and students, Western Springs community members, the Western Springs Business Association, and the Western Springs Foundation for Educational Excellence. If you are interested in joining the *Dog Tank* team of mentors, please contact Courtney Douglas at cdouglas@d101.org.



Students presenting their product.



Students selling, "Sloppy Stop" a handle for your dripping ice cream cone, outside Western Springs Oberweis store.



Dog Tank's Store