In Philly, an incubator for students' start-up ideas

Myra Kimmervich
Special Staff Writer

On a recent afternoon, two young entrepreneurs were brainstorming names for their online dress shop they were starting, playing as usual off each other's strengths.

"Let's call it Enticing," Elena Myftaraj, 17, said to her business partner, Newon Dennis, 16. Both are juniors at Philadelphia School Leadership Academy (SLA).

"That sounds really nice," Dennis said. "I hadn't thought of a name."

Dennis has been designing the dresses; Myftaraj has been selling them.

"I can picture dresses, but can't draw, and Newon can draw, but can't make the dresses," Myftaraj said, explaining how the two came to collaborate in an unusual program called StartupCorps.

The students are among 15 from the charter school - and 70 in the city - attending StartupCorps weekly entrepreneurship classes, also taught at Haverford, KIPP, Boys Latin, and the Urban Technology Project. Interested high school students must apply to the program.

"We started to develop a concept of how to help students identify a business, and we thought that if we empower them, they can make it happen. And then, who's to say that if they can make it happen, that's the centerpiece," StartupCorps founder Christopher Kunkel said. Kunkel, a 21-year-old Wharton University graduate with a degree in economics, founded StartupCorps almost two years ago.

"I'm interested in entrepreneurship, and after I was asked to help startup and teach in a junior high school, I decided to try my hand at starting my first business, in consumer electronics electronics," Williams explained, at 15 and 17, West Philadelphia School for technology company.

At this point in the school year, the high school entrepreneurs are refining their ideas with the help of business people and venture capitalists who come to the classrooms to mentor the students.

Rashawn Williams, Anthony Torrance, and Douglasse Wallace, all juniors at SLA, have held a cleanup event for their community-cleanup nonprofit organization, Phresh Philadelphia. They are already working on the next event, yet to be scheduled. Their goal is to improve communications between police and youth.

And they continue to revise their business, focused on cleaning up North Philadelphia, with the help of StartupCorps mentors.

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Another student, Blae Biello, 16, started BluysApp, a business selling Android apps he develops. Bluys bought himself four months ago, and his first app, which played sound bites from the show "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart," was downloaded, said. Though his first app was free, Bluys sells. Bluys sells to sell his next one, a video game involving snowmobiles, for $1.

StartupCorps begins the course with exercises to help students identify their interests and passions.

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Blogging My Mistake - 1:45pm

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1. TV
2. Website
3. Facebook
4. Other social media
5. Radio
6. Newspaper
7. Other

View results

http://www.philly.com/philly/education/20110503_In_Philadelphia__an_incubator_for_students__start-up_ideas.html

3/5/2011
Some views of recovery signs from companies

March 20, 2011

We asked companies what signs of economic recovery they were seeing in their business or industry. Some are seeing more sales, and less fear. Here’s more of what they said:

Edmund Optics Inc., Barrington

Edmund Optics, and the photonics industry, began seeing signs of recovery in mid-2010, with sales and product demand increasing worldwide. As a result, Edmund Optics ended 2010 breaking sales records. Recently, Edmund Optics attended the largest industry conference and exhibition, Photonics West, which drew record number of attendees and exhibitors. The show also sold out exhibit space where more than 150 new products were introduced. It is clear that the technology sector is seeing an upswing and improved growth.

Legacy Planning Partners, Plymouth Meeting

Employers are reconsidering their 401(k) match contributions, and people are willing to implement estate plans. To sum it up, there is less fear.

FMC Corp., Philadelphia

As a diversified chemical company, we were not as directly affected by the recent recession. We have great businesses in agricultural products, food, and pharmaceutical ingredients that are less sensitive to the cycles of the broad economy. We entered 2010 in a strong financial position and actually created about 40 positions at our Philadelphia and Ewing locations. We plan to add about 25 corporate positions based in Philadelphia in 2011 as we gear up for growth.

Peirce College, Philadelphia

Peirce is granting pay increases and adding faculty and staff. Recognizing the effect of the economic downturn on our students, the college increased institutional aid through scholarships by more than 25 percent in the last two years. Peirce has also introduced a series of career-related workshops to enable students and alumni to maintain their skills and reduce vulnerability to changes in the workplace.

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Martin Banks, Philadelphia

[The law firm represents claimants for workers’ compensation and Social Security disability.] If there are fewer people working, there are fewer people on workers’ compensation. Additionally, people are more fearful of making a workers’ comp claim because they do not want to take any chance of losing their job.

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The following chart shows how the top companies were ranked by their employees in our region:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Size</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Employees</th>
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<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brown’s Super Stores Inc.</td>
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<td>Large</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>PricewaterhouseCoopers</td>
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<td>Large</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The University of Pennsylvania and Health System</td>
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<td>Large</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chester County Intermediate Unit</td>
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<td>Large</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Campbell Soup Co.</td>
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<td>Large</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Special People In Northeast Inc.</td>
<td>850</td>
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<td>Large</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Arista Inc.</td>
<td>575</td>
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<td>Large</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Philadelphia Insurance Companies</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Comcast Corp.</td>
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<td>SAP America Inc.</td>
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<td>Swarthmore College</td>
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<td>Main Line Health</td>
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<td>The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia</td>
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<td>West Chester University</td>
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<td>Upper Darby School District</td>
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<td>Microsoft Corp.</td>
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<td>CB Richard Ellis Inc.</td>
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<td>Urban Engineers Inc.</td>
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<td>Lincoln Investment Planning Inc.</td>
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<td>Maria Grove by Erickson Retirement Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Vertex Inc.</td>
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### Midsize
- **19. Genesis Rehab Services**
- **20. Corporate Synergies Group Inc.**
- **21. Penn Jersey Paper Co.**
- **22. Regional Women’s Health Group L.L.C.**
- **23. Karr Barth Associates Inc.**
- **24. West Pharmaceutical Services Inc.**
- **25. Paul’s Run Retirement Community**
- **26. Center For Family Services Inc.**
- **27. Edmund optics Inc**
- **28. KlingStubbins Inc.**
- **29. Turner Construction Co.**
- **30. Chestnut Hill College**
- **31. Philadelphia Workforce Development Corp.**
- **32. Alpha Systems**
- **33. Mastery Charter Schools**
- **34. True Position Inc.**
- **35. National Label Co. Inc.**
- **1. Chariot Solutions**
- **2. Cherry Hill Volvo**
- **3. Charon Planning Corp.**
- **4. First Financial Group L.L.C.**
- **5. Balfour Beatty Communities, LLC**
- **6. Global Tax Management Inc.**
- **7. Evergreen Printing Co.**
- **8. Omni Hotel at Independence Park**
- **9. Miller’s Insurance Agency**
- **10. Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau**
- **11. Don Rosen Imports**
- **12. Excel Physical Therapy & Fitness**
- **13. Dunmore Corporation**
- **14. Software Inc.**
- **15. NewAge Industries Inc.**
- **16. Fujirebio Diagnostics Inc.**
- **17. The Judge Group Inc.**
- **18. UGI Corp.**
- **19. Volpe and Koenig P.C.**
- **20. Movers Specialty Service Inc.**
- **21. Peirce College**
- **22. Merck Sharp & Dohme Federal Credit Union**
- **23. George Washington High School**
- **24. Community Legal Services Inc.**
- **25. Kimberton Whole Foods**
- **26. Penn Liberty Bank**
- **27. Danske Inc**
- **28. Delaware County Regional Water**
- **29. Haas Group International Inc.**
- **30. Creative Financial Group**
- **31. Triumph Group Inc.**
- **32. Kistler Tiffany Benefits**
- **33. Quaker Chemical Corp.**
- **34. Devine Brothers Inc.**
- **35. Community Action Agency Of Delaware County**
- **36. Maxwell systems Inc**
- **37. The Radnor Hotel**
- **38. Compaq Inc.**
- **39. Voice Systems Engineering Inc.**
- **40. Please Touch Museum**

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**SPECIAL REPORT: JOBS AT A LOSS**

**Bleak lesson for jobless**
- Bob Niemeyer arrives hours before Macy’s opens and begins hanging sale signs, having been promoted to full-time, earning $8.50 an hour. He used to make $100,000 as an analyst. The Labor Day, his story provides a tough lesson.

  **How to reinvent yourself after a lay off**
  The full series: Jobs at a Loss

  **Jobs: Secretary reads the economy**
today's PHILLY.COM POLL
Have you given to a charity...  
- By text?
- By tweet?
- On Facebook?
- Via a web site?
- None of the above.

View results

Top Fans of Phill.ly.com This Week

RECENT ACTIVITY ACROSS OUR COMMUNITY

latest PHOTO GALLERIES
- 76ers 104, Clippers 94
- Behind Philly Coffee
- NCAA Wrestling Championships
- Apartment fire
- Vaux 59, Prep Charter 44

76ers 104, Clippers 94
Behind Philly Coffee
NCAA Wrestling Championships
Apartment fire
Vaux 59, Prep Charter 44
Kim Maguire has been assistant superintendent of schools at Radnor since Jan. 24.

Despite snow days, it hasn’t taken her long to get in stride.

Maguire has brought four-and-a-half years of experience with the Delaware County Intermediate Unit with her. Before that she worked in the Cheltenham School District as director of gifted and support programs, and before that, in the Lower Merion and Upper Darby school districts as a teacher.

Maguire received her Ed.D. degree from Columbia University. She has taught at St. Joseph’s University, Drexel University and Peirce College.

Maguire has also worked in sales, marketing and communications for Atlantic Richfield.

At Radnor Maguire’s focus is on making sure that curriculum, student achievement, the instructional program, and staff development all mesh, no easy task. Her work at DCIU has given Maguire an experienced perspective. There are 15 school districts in Delaware County, each unique.

“The IU puts you in touch with so many schools and their concerns,” Maguire says. “And, across the state [Maguire has been] working with gifted program and curriculum development.”

From that diverse perspective, Maguire sees Radnor as having a “talented staff, involved parents and a school board that takes issues seriously.” But she adds, “Everyone can get better.”

The challenge to “get better” will doubtless involve the start of a state graduation requirement known as the Keystone exams. The Keystones are about to change the educational landscape across Pennsylvania.

While the educational news has been full of Senate Bill 1 and voucher legislation recently, Keystone exams have quietly crept closer to becoming a part of the instructional-standards reality. Keystones will count for the class of 2015, but for middle-school students taking Algebra I, the high-stakes testing begins later this spring.

“The tests for Algebra I, biology and literature were field tested last year,” Maguire says. “This will be the first year they are operational.”

Since the tests are designed to be administered at the end of the coursework being tested rather than just before graduating, this year’s eighth-graders, seventh-graders and the occasional sixth-grader taking Algebra I are going to be the first to experience a test that Maguire says, “isn’t easy.”

Students taking the exams in biology and literature, who will be 9th and 10th graders, will establish a scoring scale for those tests in the future, but, since they will graduate before 2015, their test performances will not become part of their graduation requirement. The state is recommending that students who have finished the coursework take the tests.

According to the spring bulletin of the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Standards Aligned System, testing will take place in early May. In addition to the three operational tests, field-testing will be done for Algebra II, English composition and geometry this spring.

When all the tests are operational, students will need to pass six of 10 Keystone exams to graduate. The exam will also count for a third of the student’s final course grade in that subject. As there is much more to the Keystone exams, aligned standards and a newly adopted common core curriculum, those interested should go online at www.pdesas.org/Assessment/Graduation for more complete and comprehensive information.

Maguire sees the ongoing national “accountability shift” both in terms of the “waiting for Superman” phenomenon – “holding schools accountable is not a bad thing,” she says – but also as a challenge to, as she puts it, “education as transactional.”

As a former teacher Maguire doesn’t seem ready to cede the measurement of educational success exclusively to high-stakes exams. “Students are unique individuals,” she would like to remind the test-designers and of “the complexity of being a child.”

Other parts of Maguire’s job that require her attention are bound to include “how to provide gifted students with what they need [and making sure that] special education students have adequate accessibility to resources.”

Maguire’s experience suits her well for those challenges, too.