



This is a reprint of a published article featuring a Minnesota high school implementing the [INCubatoredu entrepreneurship program](#) from Uncharted learning, NFP (formerly INCubatoredu).

Stressed-out dog? Mayo students have invented a pet toy for the problem

By MATTHEW STOLE
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Three Mayo High School students have worked for months to create a pet toy that reduces separation anxiety in dogs.

Pet toys are an incredibly lucrative, \$22 billion market. The students would have to capture only a tiny fraction of it to strike a financial Bone-nanza.

The students, Daliso Chitulangoma, Noah Decker and Ethan Kleven, call themselves team "FürDogs." On Wednesday, the trio pitched their toy concept "Shark Tank"-style before a board of advisers, seeking funding to test their product.

But this wasn't a TV drama. It was a high school course offered for the first time through Rochester Public Schools. Called INCubatoredu, it seeks to

create and nurture an entrepreneurial spirit in students by getting them to start their own businesses.

Other products pitched by students included an environmentally friendly, edible spoon made of granola and an app that helps students stay organized and on task.

The entrepreneur course is taught in the heart of downtown Rochester, in a converted halal market and mosque, the better to give students access to the business community and business mentors. Its separation from the high schools also gives the program a uniqueness, said Michael Hutchins, an INCubatoredu teacher.

The program is year long and has eight students, down from 14 when it started in the fall. The goal is to grow the class to about 25 in future years, Hutchins said.

Chitulangoma, a Mayo student and aspiring fashion designer, said the program is unlike any course he has taken.

"What intrigued me the most was the ability to do what you want. You're working towards things that matter to you," he said. "Your motivation comes from within. This class is not necessarily someone telling you what to do."

Entrepreneurial programs are not unique in the state. The INCubatoredu program in Rochester is modeled after a program in Barrington, Ill., and is the first of its kind in Minnesota. Interest in entrepreneurship education has been growing, sparked in part by television shows such as "Shark Tank," which dramatizes people trying to start or boost their own business.

The idea of a pet toy for stressed-out dogs originated from team member Kleven's own personal experiences. His 12-year-old dog suffers from terrible separation anxiety when left alone. But the dog's anxiousness could

be tempered, he discovered, using aroma therapy, specifically, a blanket made out of old clothing.

Most pet toys that use smells to calm dogs rely on generic aromas such as lavender or vanilla. Their toy is custom-made: a pet toy in the shape of a bone stuffed with the clippings of the pet owner's clothes. It also squeaks.

The students bounced their business concepts against a board made up of Jenny Hosfeld, executive vice president and chief banking officer for Think Bank, and Joe Powers, owner of Powers Ventures, a restaurant and catering business.

"I really like the prototype. I love your idea," Powers said about the toy.

Team member Decker said the class has taught him how trial and error are essential to building a business.

"You have to be willing to fail. You have to be willing to take criticism" Decker said. "Our product has changed so much from the beginning."