



Alternatives
4 children

Reckoning - Amsterdam

www.reckoning.nl

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INTRODUCTION

The MashUp Academy develops creativity, personal and professional leadership, and technology (including tech-thinking) skills in students from underprivileged communities. Based on a start-up creation model, the Academy works with students who are less likely to be exposed to related jobs and less likely to leave school with skills that will see them in such jobs.

The MashUp Academy is essentially an enrichment program that exists outside the regular school day. It will fill in the creativity/entrepreneur piece missing from traditional education, and extend this particularly to students who need an extra push over some of their peers to connect to the best opportunities in future job market: by visualizing themselves in it!

Pillars of MashUp include:

- **Diversification:** MashUp contributes to connecting a generation of young people from non-Dutch backgrounds (currently, while this program is only in the Netherlands) and from more marginalized communities with leading software and tech companies, StartUps, agencies, and other tech-related industries.
- **Skills (21st Century) and connections :** MashUp students create real connections with people working in tech. This helps them climb an invisible barrier that otherwise makes it difficult to know what jobs are available, what skills sets are needed, and most importantly, the ability to network into these jobs.
- **Innovation:** MashUp provides hands-on experience with fostering innovation and the creative thinking processes behind it (Agile, etc)
- **Scalability and relevance:** MashUp is creating real-time curriculum with companies with the goal of being able to roll out the program to other schools and communities, particularly where those companies and their partners operate.

How does Alternatives 4 Children help?

A4C funds were used to pilot the project at the Comenius Lyceum in Nieuw West, Amsterdam. Development and implementation of the project was funded by A4C and by The Atlassian Foundation, which matched the A4C funds.



Additional project info and update

We rolled out an improved second module based on the experience and lessons we had first Module 1. We had a strong ending with the Comenius Lyceum in the Spring of 2016 and had many interactions to ensure that the MU academy would have a strong beginning at the school. We had a landing page for the website, and worked on the content and flow, we had strong corporate partners who were eager to work with the students as well.

Unfortunately, as we wanted to roll out the next module for the new academic year The Atlassian Foundation pulled their funding in late September 2016. The MU academy needed those funds to continue the project. In addition, sign up for the project was lower than expected, and upon further reflection there are a number of reasons why this could be the case:

1. MU was perceived as being another class, but done in “free” time
2. “Cool factor” - there wasn’t a strong person who was known by the students who could transfer the perception that this was a cool, good thing to do.
3. Overworked - students are impacted and overworked. It would be better to be part of the school day or part of a class.

Therefore, with part of the funding abruptly stopping and less than 10 students signed up, we decided not to roll out the next academic year.

However we have learnt valuable lessons which will help us roll out in the future and given sufficient funding can easily be resurrected at the same, or another, school.

Case studies

Adobe Software led the Spring session of MashUp with seven enthusiastic students from the Comenius Lyceum. This school is in Amsterdam West and is located in the heart of a marginalized community. It is marginalized because most of the families in this community are employed in commodity type jobs. They are high immigrant families with children who are Dutch citizens by passport, but culturally isolated from the indigenous Dutch culture.

The volunteers from Adobe streamlined their workshops and made each session practical and relevant for the students. They facilitated the workshops so that the students created a mock website, a Slate presentation, a logo and a [Facebook page](#), with a goal of getting 50 likes in one day, they got 80!

The last session on 19 April 2016, was held at Adobe’s head office in Amsterdam. They presented their slate presentations, were given feedback and praise and the winner was announced. They got additional career advice from Adobe volunteers and stayed an additional 45 minutes asking questions about working at Adobe, what they can do to get a job there, if they like it, etc. These 7 students were fully engaged and excited about the possibilities of working at this type of company.

“what do I have to do to get a job here?”

Without MashUp, there is no possible way they would have had the network, exposure or even the knowledge that these types of jobs existed. Their parents, their community, their school does not have natural ties into local businesses that are utilizing the technology that will dominate the job market by the time these students graduate from high school. With this program these students will be more prepared and aware of the jobs in the technology field when they graduate.

The volunteers at Adobe were open and loved working alongside these young students. This module was a win win for both the students and the company.

There was a follow up meeting directly after with Adobe with ideas and ways to improve what we had started. Implementation of these ideas began and shared with the Director of the school.

Conclusion

A4C allowed Stichting Reckoning to try out a new idea. It was a good idea and MU was even one of the top 100 finalists in the TEDx award in Amsterdam the year before. We learned that technology in schools is largely underserved and the skill sets the students are learning are largely out of date and will not prepare them well for future jobs. We also confirmed that most students aren't even aware of the jobs they can get in the tech circles and unaware of the many businesses, start ups and corporations right here in Amsterdam where they could potentially work and earn a really good living. The most rewarding result was when 2 of the students put their hand up and asked "what do I have to do to get a job here?"

