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estate agent), Sue Stoll (Regional Director for South Dakota Small Business Development Center), Dr. Mel Usted (Governor's Office of Economic Development and angel investor) and Nate Welch (Executive Director of the Vermillion Area Chamber Development Company - VCDC).

"I thought they did an amazing job and Nate Welch did an amazing job picking the panel," Vermillion High freshman English teacher Teramie Hill said. "We could tell they invested a lot of their energy into this as well."

"The kids knew their products really well and the judges asking specific, great questions, really helped the kids explain and communicate all the research they had really done. The kids were extremely engaged."

Hill and Carla Kozak were the two teachers who brought this project to fruition.

"There really wasn't any failure and that's not to coddle any kid," Welch said. "It's just a part of that lesson that there is advancement and there is selection. People are only going to buy one thing over another and people are going to select something and four of them were selected."

Why Do This With Freshmen?

Kozak explained some of the reasons why taking on such an ambitious project was first centered on the freshmen class.

"We are the only two teachers that see all the kids for one whole year, the others are only there for a semester," Kozak said. "The YBA Business Adventures program is for the juniors and seniors and kind of piggybacks off of 'Shark Tank' and is week-long at USD. This is the one whole year that freshmen get a feel for everything: survey course, reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, and ties them with the common core."

Hill has been pleased with how enthused the students have been over the course of the work.

"I have never had a unit where the students were so engaged and put their heart and soul into this," Hill said. "Even the groups that didn't (advance) were phenomenal."

"You see the kids out in the hallway practicing and it gives you goose bumps," Kozak said. "There are those days where they feel 'I can't do this,' but you can see that spark."

Hill said they hope to do this project, even bigger and better, in the future.

"We have even asked the kids about making some improvements," Hill said. "They said they would like to actually make the products, so we are hoping to, in the future, get some 3D printers so they could at least make models."

Kozak said that some of the kids' prototypes broke and couldn't stand up well, but that the USD business school is looking into help-

ing out with this problem in the future.

Hill and Kozak are pleased with the first go of the project.

"The concept overall worked very well," Hill said. "The kids built presentation skills, they built collaboration skills, they had to learn what it is like to work within a group, defend your position, and make compromises. That's exactly what we were after looking at real-world skills."

Kozak indicated that the two teachers hope to get the word out about 'Shark Tank' and involve more than just themselves and Yankton in similar competitions.

"That's the goal and our hope for the future," Kozak said of the potential of making it an actual state high school competition.

Hill and Kozak acknowledged that some of these groups are seriously eyeballing the possibility of taking their products further than the current competition.

"Few of them are very serious about obtaining patents," Hill said.

"Some of them are so serious that they asked us if they had a disclosure agreement or something so no one would steal their ideas," Kozak said.

Freshman Carter Larson recognized the stress of the challenge at first, but then it appears he and the rest really dove into the tank.

"Then I understood why they gave us the challenge after a while and it ended up being fun," Larson said.

Sharks Swimming in Student Waters

After getting applause prior to announcing the top four teams, Welch and the other sharks were sure to give the students their just due soon after the competition ended and a bit later when talking with *The Plain Talk*.

"I thought the sharks did a good job and asked some interesting questions that we hadn't thought about," freshman Gabe DeJong said. "They gave us some good advice and some things we needed to hear and what other groups needed to hear. It was fun up there, but a little nerve-racking."

One thing the students appreciated was seeing the sharks take this activity seriously.

They didn't feel patronized and instead had a strong sense of confidence that they were being taken seriously.

The sharks' intensity made going later a bit more uncomfortable for some.

"I was in the tenth group to go and when I saw what the judges were asking everyone else, it made me more nervous," freshman Madisen Martinez said. "It helped knowing that they were really getting into this and not taking this as a joke."

Maddie Lavin agreed with her teammate.

"Going up there you didn't know if they would change the questions about your product or not," Lavin

said. "I felt like someone was really paying attention and engaging in what I had to say," freshman Shinayne Whipple said.

Welch gave his explanation of why the sharks worked harder to challenge the students than some might have originally anticipated.

"They did so well that it was hard not to judge them at a higher level," Welch said. "Anytime we put our time into anything you want to give your best effort, but because they did so well, it was hard to not mail it in. They really brought some real answers and real thinking so they triggered me to think, so we made sure to challenge them and we brought the harder questions in."

Every judge scrutinized different things according to Welch and that tally led to the final four making their move forward.

"What was so exciting is seeing these groups of two to four kids, every single one of them, brought an idea as though each one of them had the collaboration and that exact same idea and same exact thought of those ideas," Welch said. "They came together and had the look and feel that they were one."

What are The Young Really Capable Of?

Shark (judge) Dr. Venkatachalam said. "Their ideas are so far reaching in terms of impact, solving problems and improving the quality of life in so many ways. Another key aspect of entrepreneurship is to be thinking big. These kids were never short of that."

One thing that Hill and Kozak saw come out of this is that the American youth can stand up and be called upon to raise its level of expectations, surpass them, and ask for more.

"The thing that they have taken from this is perseverance and work ethic," Hill said. "They came up with the ideas themselves and we just structured our lesson plans for searching for patents to do that for common core. They did the ideas themselves and we helped, but they had to work through it themselves."

Kozak said they worked with the kids about how to present and both teachers addressed that not every team was going to see their hard work bear fruit.

"You are going to fail and you have to overcome those obstacles," Hill said. "That's the real world where that happens."

"It's the closest simulations we could get to the real world," Kozak said. The challenge was one thing, the answer was another, but the big picture came much clearer into focus.

"It was challenging and really hard coming up, with figuring out what

idea and what we needed for the products to go up to the next level," freshman Maddie Abbott said. "This project was really crazy because we are doing things that college kids are doing and we are only freshmen in high school. We should be taken more seriously."

Both Dr. Venkatachalam and Welch can see some of these ideas continue forward and maybe become reality.

"There were times, where some of those ideas, made me think 'what else do they need to get this up and going?' Welch admitted. "What guidance, what mentorship do they need?" "This is the beginning, not the end," Dr. Venkatachalam said.

What Are The Values, Skills These Kids Learned?

Another characteristic of this project is seeing young people work hard to still realize they may not get the prize they hoped to claim.

"I am very proud of myself and my group," freshman Anneliese Taggart said after finding out that her StoreMore Brush would not go any further. "Our presentation went really smoothly and we put our all into it; however, at the end of day, it came down to the best product that would really excel and increase the quality of life for people, and our product wasn't quite as well thought through as some of the products of our competitors."

"As a group, our presentation skills and our ability to think/answer on the spot increased immensely. We walked away from the competition a little disappointed, but with a good attitude and experience that will most definitely pay off in the future."

Freshman Nick Lubbers valued the importance of public speaking skills a lot more as the project moved forward.

"When we went through it the first round, we thought it would be a big deal speaking in front of our classmates," Lubbers said. "Before we presented we were so nervous but when we got up there it wasn't that bad. We just

opened up."

The sharks see this as a way for these young people to learn about the entire process of putting an idea down and into reality.

"These kids are getting an opportunity for not only an idea, but all aspects of it," Dr. Venkatachalam said. "A real important component is to be able to tell the whole story."

"It is learning the process and learning about expectation."

Essentially they learned they are members of an age bracket that should be taken a lot more seriously.

"This shows we are much more capable of doing incredible things than people give us the credit for being able to do," Abbott said. "If we actually put the time and work into it, we can move farther and make it into an accomplishment."

This experience – and seeing older classmate, senior Chloe Nielsen open up her own business earlier that week – gives these students a lot of hope for themselves.

"We're not babies anymore and we have the potential to grow, expand and probably change the nation somehow at a young age," Martinez said.

The next accomplishment may have come later on at the 'Wire Me Awake' conference, but these students know what their goals are for that as well.

Larson said that the lead up to it would be "intense" and that the four groups would bring their 'A' game.

"I need a suit," Lubbers said.

The 13 Final Teams

Spoil Alert: Meant to keep food from spoiling and detect gasses emitted from spoiled food.

Maddie Abbot, Nick Lubbers, and Tristin Mal-lory.

TemperToe: Meant to eliminate the pain associated with quick movements in fast-paced sports.

Haley Doty, Mia Johns, Taylor Weber, and Kasey Jensen.

Sun Charger: A solar charger that is portable and promises to work thanks to advanced solar chips that charge effectively.

Ivy Hays, Jennifer Ensminger, and Melissa

Mikkelson.

EZ Brush: Toothbrush designed to help children use the proper amount of toothpaste while developing cognitive development skills.

Devin O'Neil, Colton McNear, Shinayne Whipple, and Joey Sweeney.

The Groundhog: Designed to help baseball players with fielding, experience by "throwing" grounders, line drives and pop flies to players without the need of an extra person.

Gabe DeJong, Carter Larson, and Riley Johnson.

Cap Eyes: Solves a problem for the hearing-impaired by letting them go to a movie theater and be able to see captions.

Kirstyn Bohn, Kara Mulheron, and Sierra Furry.

Anti-Tangle: A brush that eliminated the problem of tangled hair for people of all ages.

Kieonni Knight, Savannah Simmons, Shelby Brady, and Wyatt Waage.

StoreMore Brush: A brush meant to store hair accessories and other items while providing an easier way to dispose of hair from the brush without damaging it.

Anneliese Taggart, Josh Prescott, Morgan Graham

Nice Ice: A space saving product that is an anti-spill ice tray that will save time and energy.

Bali Summers and Madelyn Zevecke.

Shield X: A roll down remedy that provides a shield for a classroom in the event of a school shooting incident.

Maria Flores, Shelby Noteboom, Carrie Skriver, Ivan Morales

Pocket Perfection: Combines all makeup products in one item and eliminates the need to dig through a purse or drawers.

Madyson Gilbertson, Emily Bye and Kinsey James.

Size-a-bra: Adjustable bra meant to meet the needs of a variety of women who may need size adjustments due to medical issues or personal preference.

Kayla Farmer and Jessica Ruring

Gum Numb: Oral surgery device which will eliminate pain for people going to the dentist.

Maddie Martinez, Maddie Lavin, and Haleigh Melstad.

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