

## Small loans, big difference

Campers learn about business

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### Document Text

A summer program at the Tobin School in Roxbury is revolutionizing the idea of the lemonade stand by teaching fourth- and fifth-graders about microfinancing and how to be "socially responsible" entrepreneurs.

Last week's program was part of a five-week summer camp taking place in Boston and five other U.S. cities and co-sponsored by One Hen Inc. and BELL, or Building Educated Leaders for Life. The Hub participants include the Tobin School and two other sites in Roslindale and Dorchester.

BELL, a provider of after-school and summer educational programs, began in Boston 17 years ago to offer opportunities to children in poor communities, said Brenda Brathwaite, BELL's Boston regional director.

One Hen is a nonprofit organization that took its name and developed its vision from the 2008 children's book "One Hen," by author Katie Smith Milway and illustrator Eugenie Fernandes. Based on a true story, the book is about a farmer in Ghana who took out a small loan to buy one hen, which enabled him to sell the eggs and buy more hens to produce enough profit to pay for college and then lend money to others in his West African community.

The story evolved into a teaching curriculum this year when the One Hen group partnered with BELL. With rigorous tutoring and positive mentoring, the camp shows children how they can use a small loan to make a big difference.

"Students can learn from stories of entrepreneurs who started with much less than they have that it is possible to build successful lives for themselves," said Amma Sefa-Dedeh, executive director of One Hen.



Photo by Nancy Lane

FOR SALE: Anton Lucas, 9, holds up a sign advertising key chains as part of a summer program in Boston.

In the school program, "scholars" are divided into teams of five and each team signs a loan agreement to receive \$10. Then team members sign an employment contract promising to work hard and do their best in the roles they are given.

The loan, with 10 percent interest, is used to make and sell a product, beaded key chains. Every Friday, guest speakers from local companies visit the school to help the students understand how business works.

"They are excited about going to the `marketplace' to sell their key chains, because they don't want to be in debt to me anymore," said teacher Brence Pernell.

One student named Michael, whose company is called "Diamonds and Pearls," said his team plans on giving its profit to charity.

"(The story) sends a message that needs to be shared, that success in business and in life should always be modeled to giving back to the communities in which we live," said Sefah-Dedeh.

CAPTION: FOR SALE: Anton Lucas, 9, holds up a sign advertising key chains as part of a summer program in Boston.

CAPTION: ON DISPLAY: Amari Morgan, 9, shows his team's keychains as Tobin School campers take a look at micro financing in a five-week summer program. STAFF PHOTOS BY NANCY LANE

Credit: By AMANDA JAMES

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### **Abstract (Document Summary)**

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