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School to teach business sense to sixth-graders

Cleveland charter will run year-round, include 2,000 hours of class time a year

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CLEVELAND (AP) — Students will learn how to write a business plan and evaluate the bottom line at a charter school that opens Aug. 23 under the leadership of an entrepreneur who wants to instill business sense in young people.

John Zitzner hopes to have a class of 125 sixth-graders with high expectations to inaugurate the Entrepreneurship Preparatory School in Cleveland.

"I'm going to shake each student's hand and tell them they're going to college," Zitzner said. "That's what they're going to hear for seven years."

The taxpayer-supported charter school will be an outgrowth of the E City afterschool and summer program that Zitzner founded after he sold his software company in 1998.

Zitzner, 51, hopes to expand on the Entrepreneurship Prep idea. "By the time I'm 94 years old like my father, we're going to have 12 of these," he said.

To encourage a business spirit, students must learn how to handle money, have a bank account, understand income statements, gross profit and return on investment, develop a business plan with an eye toward individual enterprise, practice professional manners and make a presentation.

One of E City's participants, Crystal Ramos, a senior at Cleveland's Success Tech, was named a National Young Entrepreneur of the Year for 2004 in a competition by the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship Prep, which eventually will include grades six through 12, will operate year-round. Students will receive 2,000 annual instructional hours, more than double the Ohio minimum of 920.

The privately run charter school will be sponsored by the Cleveland Municipal School District, giving the district limited oversight.

Zitzner recruited Marshall Emerson III, who was assistant director at the W.E.B. Dubois Academy in Cincinnati, one of Ohio's top charter schools, to be director of Entrepreneurship Prep. Zitzner will serve on the board of directors.

Emerson has spent much of the last year training at Building Excellent Schools, a Boston nonprofit group dedicated to replicating successful charter schools. Emerson was one of 16 people chosen from among 200 applicants for fellowships designed to prepare charterschool leaders.

The yearlong program pays fellows a \$50,000 stipend and includes more than 90 days of training, three dozen visits to successful charter schools, an extended residency in a highperforming charter school and continuing coaching and support.