

# BE YOUR OWN BOSS

## GUIDE TO THE UNIT

### INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to *Be Your Own Boss*, a unit that prepares students to use math and reasoning to make big decisions and teaches about small business ownership through real stories using authentic student voices. Throughout the unit, students will follow the stories of four current or former adult education students who own three businesses and learn about business ownership through videos of interviews with these students.

This is a context-driven unit that incorporates academic skills as they are relevant. The primary focus is on learning about small business ownership, but you will find additional learning opportunities throughout that provide for additional learning and practice with specific math and digital literacy concepts and skills.

The unit has 5 main sections:

#### **LEARN ABOUT**

- Lesson 1 – Introducing Student Voices

#### **MANAGING YOUR BUSINESS**

- Lesson 2 – Expenses
- Lesson 3 – Decisions about Selling
- Lesson 4 – Decisions about Pricing
- Lesson 5 – Is It Worth It?

#### **MARKETING**

- Lesson 6 – Market Research
- Lesson 7 – Advertising Decisions

#### **FINANCES**

- Lesson 8 – How is My Business Doing?
- Lesson 9 – Taxes

#### **PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

- Lesson 10 – Planning for the Future

Two big questions of the unit are: *How do I make a really big plan for something and make it work?* and *How do I use math to make decisions?* At the end of the unit, the students use what they've learned about researching, organizing, and analyzing information to either (a) make a personal or business decision and justify it with mathy and non-mathy reasons, or (b) make a concrete plan for the future and support it with research.

### FLEXIBILITY AND CHOICE

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The design of this unit is as open as possible so it could be used in a variety of settings with students of many levels. As with any curricular unit, it is up to the teacher to decide which elements best suit their class and their students. Pay attention to the places where you have choices. You are strongly encouraged to do all the main activities. However, additional learning opportunities are

provided that may or may not suit your class depending on your class's academic focus, students' levels, and materials available to you. Within those additional learning opportunities, you may also find options for customizing the activities.

A special note regarding digital literacy and internet access: Digital literacy is a big part of this unit and is essential to small business ownership. However, we recognize that this unit may be used in settings where internet access is not available to students (for example, in correctional settings). For this reason, we have provided alternative approaches in digital literacy activities that will allow students to learn some digital literacy skills even if they do not have access to the internet.

What you can expect to find in the lesson plans:

- A **Lesson Overview** giving a narrative description of the flow of the lesson
- **Essential Questions**
- **Lesson Objectives**
- **Evidence of Learning/Assessment**, which will tell you what students will do or produce that will help you see their progress.
- **Materials** lists, which include the handouts required for the main activities (these can be found in the lesson folders on Dropbox). Note that some materials for additional learning opportunities, such as books from the *EMPower* series, may need to be obtained separately
- A list of **Relevant Vocabulary** that will be introduced in the lesson
- An **Opening Exploration** to get into the main content of the lesson
- **Learning Activities** that advance the main direction of the unit – growing the capacity for informed and mindful decision-making with large decisions, breaking down imposing tasks, and taking on big projects
- **Additional Learning Opportunities** which make connections to relevant content and provide opportunities to learn or practice academic skills
- Videos of student business owners talking about the content of each lesson and how it pertains to their individual stories
- **Closing** activities such as an exit ticket, journal prompt, or wrap-up discussion

## STUDENT VOICES

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The videos of the student business owners talking about their businesses are the centerpiece of the unit. These video interviews were conducted with real students who came through adult education classes and became their own bosses. **Be sure to give the videos the time they deserve, and to give your students time to reflect on the stories and be inspired by them.** Here are a few examples of what your students will hear:

- The story of Zulma and Edwin\*, who own a cleaning business, talk about the challenges of figuring out how much to charge for their services.
- The story of Matthew, who owns a plowing and landscaping business, talk about his family history of entrepreneurship and how it inspired and supported him.

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\* Thank you to *The Change Agent* for introducing us to Edwin and Zulma. To read their articles, members may go to: <https://changeagent.nelrc.org/issues/issue-55-february-2022-re-training-ourselves-re-making-our-work/>

- The story of Max, who owned a sushi franchise in a supermarket, talk about the advantages and disadvantages of owning a franchise and what she dreams of for her new “freedom business.”

The videos for the unit can be found at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/9626752>.

## WHAT ABOUT STANDARDS?

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This unit incorporates the *College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education* (CCRSAE; Pimentel, 2013). Because the lesson plans are context-driven and flexible, it is difficult to say exactly which CCRSAE standards will be addressed in each lesson. Much of this depends on the choices teachers make.

You will find relevant standards that are addressed in a specific activity in brackets after the activity title, or in the relevant part of the activity.

Here is an example from **Lesson 2 – Expenses**:

Draw a circle graph showing approximately what fraction or percentage of the expenses were needs vs wants. Describe your graph using a benchmark fraction or percent (e.g., Less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the expenses were wants). [CCRSAE Math I.MD.4]

In addition, any time students use math or mathematical reasoning to make sense of decisions in this unit, they are using **Mathematical Practice 4 – Model with mathematics**, which states,

“Mathematically proficient students can apply the mathematics they know to solve problems arising in everyday life, society, and the workplace. This might be as simple as writing an addition equation to describe a situation. A student might apply proportional reasoning to plan a school event or analyze a problem in the community. A student might use geometry to solve a design problem or use a function to describe how one quantity of interest depends on another. Mathematically proficient students who can apply what they know are comfortable making assumptions and approximations to simplify a complicated situation, realizing that these may need revision later. They are able to identify important quantities in a practical situation and map their relationships using such tools as diagrams, two-way tables, graphs, flowcharts and formulas. They can analyze those relationships mathematically to draw conclusions. They routinely interpret their mathematical results in the context of the situation and reflect on whether the results make sense, possibly improving the model if it has not served its purpose.”

The real-world nature and student-driven style of this unit forge a link between adult education and the world of work. Students apply mathematics to solve real-world and mathematical problems throughout; even where a specific content standard is not listed, the spirit of the Key Shifts is present. The opportunities to engage with the Standards for Mathematical Practice are plentiful.

Although this unit is focused primarily on developing math skills, English Language Arts (ELA) skills have also been integrated throughout the unit. That means that you will also find references to ELA standards in addition to seeing notations for math standards in each lesson. To see the full text for

each ELA standard, refer to the *ELA Anchor Standard Chart*. For tips on how to target these standards more fully but efficiently, see *Tips for Strengthening ELA Skills during the Be Your Own Boss Lessons*.

### **FACE-TO-FACE OR REMOTE?**

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Either! These lessons are designed to be delivered in an in-person or virtual setting. Look out for options to use in-person materials like sticky notes or cloud-based tools like Jamboard if you're teaching remotely. Many lessons involve generating class lists and these can be done in a shared online document or workspace as easily as on a classroom whiteboard.

### **DURATION**

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The unit is broken up into ten lessons, but one lesson – even without additional activities – may take more than one class period in your class. Decide on pacing and breaking off points that make sense for your class.

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***Need help using the resource? Reach out to the SABES Mathematics and Adult Numeracy Curriculum & Instruction PD Center at [adulthoodnumeracy@terc.edu](mailto:adulthoodnumeracy@terc.edu) for information about upcoming workshops or coaching sessions.***

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