

AT A GLANCE

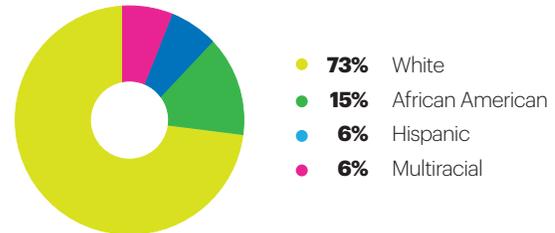
Tiger Ventures, a new, alternative high school, opened in fall 2016 with 45 students in grades 8 and 9. The school will add a new class of students each year over the next four years. Tiger Ventures is located in a former elementary school. The facility includes an incubator space for start-up businesses, arts organizations and artists.

Superintendent: Suzanne McLeod

Principal: Michaelene (Mikki) Cardell

Projected Student Demographics (at Full Enrollment)

Student Enrollment: 250 Students (Grades 8–12)



99%

QUALIFY FOR FREE OR REDUCED PRICE LUNCH

21%

QUALIFY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

A DEEPER DIVE

Once known as the “Valley of Opportunity” and the birthplace of IBM, Endicott-Johnson Shoe Company, ANSCO, Borden’s, Link Simulation and others, Endicott, New York, is a place where leaders are looking for new ways to bring innovation back to their community of approximately 30,000 residents.

Wisely, this tight-knit community recognizes its young people as its main resource for making a prosperous future a reality. The leadership of Union-Endicott Central School District (UECSD), along with others in the community, believe that innovative thinking, combined with decisive action, will be needed to carry their region into a new era. Knowing that the best way to create future innovators is to create an innovative school, they got to work, and Tiger Ventures was born.

With plans to serve 250 students in grades eight through twelve, Tiger Ventures will change the face of “alternative education” by raising the bar for students, not lowering it. This alternative school prioritizes a rigorous academic curriculum and immersive, entrepreneurial and work-based learning experiences that are being co-developed by educators, students and partners.

How will they accomplish this? Tiger Ventures High School is fully integrated with a venture incubator that school district leaders have created to provide working space for brand-new local businesses. In addition to classroom and startup spaces, the facility includes a well-equipped makerspace with computers, 3D printers, cameras and robotics equipment which facilitate high-tech collaboration. Within this unique environment, students have the opportunity to work alongside local entrepreneurs and artists, explore their own passions, and see how they might help revitalize the local community through their own business plans, prototyping experiences and onsite internships. It’s a win-win situation: The students get mentoring and access to real-world, on-the-job learning; and the businesses get young talent to collaborate with on their projects and challenges, as well as space to get their businesses up and running.

Students work as interns with start-ups to problem-solve, work as part of a team and, along the way, develop a strong work ethic and the resilience that comes from trying and iterating. By working directly with the start-ups and their clients to create and present relevant work,

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students will acquire broad business and communications skills, as well as skills specific to the nature of the business partner; and experience how their work can add to their community. The opportunities are expansive, given the diversity of the enterprises currently housed in the incubator space: an internet technology business, an organic mushroom company, a community theater company, a painter, a printmaker and a hydroponic garden.

In keeping with the school's entrepreneurial approach, the day at Tiger Ventures looks more like a workday than a school day, with flexible use of time and extended hours. The learning day includes a coursework block and a project block. Within these blocks, teams of teachers and students use time flexibly based on their current projects. Students have a major voice in setting their schedules, and they may vary from week, or from day to day.

With this focus on entrepreneurship through hands-on learning and the support of adult mentors, students can even turn their own ideas and passions into real businesses. Every student will leave Tiger Ventures with a business plan of their own—one that has the potential to positively impact their own future and the economic development in their community.

The school is designed to reach disengaged students, students identified for special education programs and services and students who demonstrate a strong interest in the entrepreneurial model. Because teachers at Tiger Ventures believe all students deserve access to a challenging curriculum that prepares them for college, career and lifelong learning, they provide all students a rigorous academic curriculum that is tailored to their learning goals. Foundational knowledge in core subjects is developed within the entrepreneurial learning environment through personalized curriculum—not unlike the structure of graduate school, where each

student works closely with an advisory team over several years. Regents exams are a requirement for students at Tiger Ventures, as the school curriculum has been built to fit the demanding New York State framework.

Individual pathways, combined with the necessary support, ensure every student can meet or exceed high standards. Each student will work with a faculty advisor to help guide an individual learning plan. Advisory time is built into each day so that students and advisors can work together to track student progress toward targets, receive coaching on next steps and reach out to community contacts. During weekly meetings with advisors, students will show evidence of their learning and self-assess progress toward their goals. The school has also built-in a process in which students work cooperatively with teachers to evaluate and fine-tune teaching practices.

Each quarter, every student works with an advisor to develop a personalized set of learning goals and an action plan. The plan includes formal courses (required and optional), projects and independent study, as well as the means to evaluate each. Student work is evaluated on a scale of one to five and the advisor and student jointly write a narrative evaluation to document success and plan next steps.

The school's teachers and leaders firmly believe in the power of honoring and elevating student voice and choice, while still keeping expectations high. At Tiger Ventures, students are empowered as learners, leaders and meaningful contributors to their entire community. "I am part of a team that is so full of enthusiasm and so full of support for the students in our district," said Michaelene Cardell, the school's principal. "They are the driving force behind our vision to change high school and encourage community redevelopment."