



# News Release

## Office of Communications

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*Next Stop - New York City!*

## **Normandy Freshmen Take 2nd Place in Youth Entrepreneurship Competition, Advance to National Finals**

“They’re good kids, I’m so proud of them. They’ve come a long way,” said Obinno Coley, Entrepreneurship Teacher at Normandy High School. “(Raheem) Larry at the beginning of the year, he wasn’t a bad kid, just a little all over the place. Since he started on this project, I haven’t had any problems out of him. He’s been extremely focused.”

Coley was recalling the progress of his student Raheem Larry, who along with his business partner Deimon McKinney, won second place in the NFTE St. Louis Metro Regional Youth Challenge held May 3 at Saint Louis University.

Larry and McKinney are freshmen at Normandy High who will go on to the national competition in New York City in October. There they will put their business plan for the Double Backer Packer up against teams from across the country. This is the first time Normandy students competed at the regional level. The first place winner, Nathanael Wheadon, is a senior at McCluer North High School, and will also compete in NYC.

For the NFTE – Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship – regional finals, the freshmen had to present a full business plan, complete with marketing data, profit/loss margins, prototype of their product, and long-term business projections to a panel of judges from various corporations including MasterCard, Citibank, and Clayco. After the teams presented their plans, the judges asked the students pointed questions about a variety of topics such as their target markets, supply/demand challenges, and production costs.

McKinney says there were some initial nerves he had to contend with, but once he started talking, he said he just rolled with it.

“This will be my third time presenting this so I’m fine,” he confidently said prior to the competition.

Larry and McKinney pitched their idea, the Double Backer Packer. The Double Backer Packer is a two-sided backpack that allows students to carry and separate their athletic gear from their classroom

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materials. Larry says the idea is a solution to a real-life issue he and other student-athletes deal with.

“I came up with the idea after I had to bring two backpacks to school,” he explained during his presentation. “It was basketball season and I had to carry practice [gear] in one backpack and my books in another.”

Angela Lewis, director for NFTE St. Louis, could see the progress made from the first Normandy presentation earlier this year to the one given during the regional finals.

“I’m so proud of how far they’ve come,” she said. “They’re learning how to do research, analysis, public speaking, and critical thinking, skills critical to any career path they eventually take.”

NFTE is fairly new to St. Louis, bringing their unique offering to the region just four years ago. Its mission is to equip students “with the tools and mindset necessary to prepare them for successful futures in school, college and the workforce.” More than 1,000 students have participated in the program since 2013. NFTE St. Louis has also recruited a distinguished advisory board which includes executives from a variety of businesses and organizations like Express Scripts, St. Louis University, and Wells Fargo.

There’s five months until the competition in New York City, but Larry and McKinney have already started to brainstorm ways to improve their presentation and their product.

“We’ve got to come up with a better prototype, a website, and more surveys (referring to a judge’s question after the presentation),” said McKinney.

“We’re going to work our butts off,” Larry added.

“We came in 2nd place in St. Louis, we’re going for first in New York,” McKinney said.

- 30 -

**CAPTION:** Obinno Coley (center), entrepreneurship teacher at Normandy High, with his students Raheem Larry (left) and Deimon McKinney at the recent NFTE regional competition at Saint Louis University. Larry and McKinney placed second in the contest and are advancing to the national competition in New York City.