AMIkids Experiential Education Curriculum: A Race to the Top

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What are five things that keep kids engaged in school?
Introduction

History of AMIkids, Inc.

- A Judge
- A group of kids
- A friend with a boat
- .....and a new way was born...
History of AMIkids

- FOSI (Day Treatment Program)– 1969
- Expansion
- Associated Marine Institutes (AMI), Inc. – 1972
- Currently have 55 programs in 7 states
  - Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia, Illinois, Louisiana, and Texas
AMIkids is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping troubled youth develop into responsible and productive citizens.

AMIkids’ mission is to protect the public safety and positively impact as many youth as possible through the efforts of a diverse and innovative staff.
AMIkids Programs

Day Treatment Programs

Residential Programs

Infinity Programs

WINGS for Life

Functional Family Therapy
Personal Growth Model

- **TREATMENT**
  - Treatment staff with required credentials
  - Sound Theory & Research Based Interventions
  - Individualized Service Planning
  - Assessment for risk and protective factors

- **EXPERIENTIAL CHALLENGES**
  - Differentiated Instruction
  - Vocational Programming
  - Highly Qualified Teachers
  - High School Graduation Preparation
  - Functional & Core Academics
  - Experiential Education
  - Post Secondary Prep
  - Computer Assisted Instruction

- **BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION**
  - Rank System
  - Token Economy
  - Positive Reinforcement
  - Certified Behavior Modification Personnel
  - Individualized Behavioral Goals and Objectives

- **EDUCATION**
  - Knowledge Base
  - Theoretical Perspectives
  - Skill Deficit Areas

- **PROGRAM EVALUATION**
  - Lower Recidivism
  - Higher Completion Rates
  - Educational Gains
  - Satisfaction of Key Stakeholders
  - Staff Retention

- **Professional Development Staff Recruitment**
- **Leadership Communication**
May 2008 discussion of AMIkids curriculum development
  - Being the best at educating troubled youth
August 2008 contract with Florida Atlantic University and Pine Jog Environmental Center on curriculum development
September 2009 training for 8 pilot programs
October 2009 implementation of the first module
Currently preparing for the implementation of second module for February 2010
All four modules should be completed by July 2010
Data analysis report to be completed by September 2010
New Model for Educating At-Risk Youth

- Tools for social and emotional development
- Tools to create safe opportunities in class for youth to experiment with success and failure
- Tools to lead students to a place where they can take responsibility
- Tools to help students care for themselves and others
Process of making meaning from direct experience
Main concepts for you to take away from this presentation are:
- Learning can take place anywhere, anytime
- Learning can involve academics but can also take place outside the academic realm
- Learning can involve new information about one’s self, the world, relationships, etc.
Experiential Education

- This approach advocates having learners construct knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences.
Our experiential education lends itself to environmental and conservation themes
In the 80’s, conservation education evolved into environmental education
Interdisciplinary integration of subject matter and hands-on learning experiences using problem-solving and project-based activities
“Process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, math, social studies, science, and other subjects across the curriculum.”

Uses hands-on, real-world learning experiences to help develop a “stronger tie to their community, enhances students’ appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens.”

Like environmental education, helps gain an understanding of the world around and inspires an interest on how one affects it.
Service Learning

- “Integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”
- Uses hands-on, real-world learning experiences to help develop a “stronger tie to their community, enhances students’ appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens.”
- Some of the lessons in this curriculum utilize service learning to enhance the education experience.
“The presence of regularly scheduled, challenging and exciting activities that engage our students physically, emotionally and mentally; enrich learning; provide staff-student bonding opportunities; and create a unique personality for the program with which students, staff, and the community are proud to be associated.”
Psychosocial Outcomes
- Improved self-concept/self-esteem
- Increase in emotional stability
- Improved decision-making abilities
- Better time management skills
- Improved leadership and teamwork skills
- Increase in ability to act independently
- Increase in social competence/pro-social skills
- Increase in ability to be flexible in challenging situations
- Increase in self-efficacy
Research on Experiential Education

**Academic Achievement**

- Substantial gains in reading levels, reading achievement, and math achievement
- Increases in writing scores as compared to the group that did not participate in the experiential activities.
- Increases in outcomes in academic achievement continued one-year post-participation.
- An average student who participated in EE moved from scoring in the 50th percentile on achievement to the 67th percentile.
- Increase in the number of students who passed the state academic assessment
Research on Experiential Education

On Student Behavior in Class

- Increase in the amount of time spent “on task” in class
- Improved classroom behavior
- Less need for discipline referrals
- Decrease in number of out-of-school suspensions

On Teacher Performance

- Decrease in the number of days teachers were absent
- Better instructional practices by teachers
Curriculum Design
Components of the curriculum consist of two distinct elements:

- **Horizontal alignment** is a side by side course arrangement where the content of one subject is made relative to the concepts of another subject.

- **Vertical alignment** is concerned with longitudinal treatment of concepts within a subject across grade levels.
Success depends on collaboration of teachers of various disciplines and grade levels

In broad field design, related subjects are expanded into categories

- Social studies encompasses history, geography, and civics
- Physical science encompasses physics and chemistry

Intent of the broad field design is to integrate the traditional subjects so that the learner develops an expanded understanding of the areas included
AMLkids EEC Model

- Differentiated Instruction
- Individualized Instruction
- Experiential Education Curriculum and Core Academics
- Small Learning Communities
Nine Strategies for Effective Teaching
#1. Essential Questions – Main Ingredients

- Immediately noticed when students enter classroom
- Big Idea/Main Topic/Main Focus of lesson(s) in unit
- Supported by “Key Questions”
- Guides instruction and assessment
- 2-6 per unit, posted sequentially
#2. The Three R’s

What are they?

- Rigor
- Relevance
- Relationships
The EEC incorporates learning strategies from the *CRISS* - Project, *Creating Independence through Student owned Strategies*. 

www.mvrhs.org/eel/caruthers/linkforallteachers/index.html

- Concept Mapping
- KWL – Know, Want to Know and Learned
#4. Differentiated Instruction

Focused on Three Distinct Practices:

- Content
- Process
- Product

“How To Differentiate Instruction In Mixed-Ability Classrooms”, 2nd edition by Carol Ann Tomlinson
Providing accommodations for both learning disabled students and non-disabled students is critical.

High numbers of students in juvenile justice and alternative education programs have below level abilities in reading, writing and math.
#6. Bellringers

- First 5 minutes of class period.
- Every day
- Graded
- Requires student concentration
- Starts class on learning foundation
#7. Individualized Instruction

It is focused on:

- Individual student ability
- Individual student course requirements (based on course enrollment)
- Designed to continue students progression towards the attainment of a high school diploma
#8. Progress Monitoring

- Ongoing process for measuring each student’s individual growth in their coursework or learning
- Used to guide and modify instruction
Implementing the model as defined by the International Center for Leadership (2009)
Works well with decentralized schools
Ideal for small student populations (35 to 150 students)
Focus on results – Student Achievement is the key


AMIkids SLC Model

- Thematic Curriculum
- Team Participation in Selection of Teachers
- Student/Teacher Pro-Social Relationships
- Data Driven Decision Making
- Team Accountability
- Commitment to Professional Development
Transition Strategies/Goals

• Preparing students to return to the community
• Plans to better prepare for reintegration
Data and Analysis
Data

- Data is used to determine appropriate instructional improvement strategies
- Role of pilot programs, includes the collection of data to further assess and improve the EEC
- Change will be determined from data collected, including attitudinal surveys of the students, teachers, parents and stakeholders
- Data gathering is a key step that gives meaning to what is being measured
  - Information will be gathered via Student Information System, test scores, and surveys
Effective Communication

- Successful implementation is highly dependent on effective communication of the changes that are occurring, especially if the new curriculum upsets the status quo.
- Channels of communication must always be open so discussions and exchanges are ongoing at all levels.
- Effective communication requires high quality exchange through two-way channels with a defined network – the interdisciplinary team (SLC).
- Informal lateral communication is essential with top down support.
With proper data collection, analysis and research, the AMIkids Experiential Education Curriculum will become evidenced-based.

By doing so, AMIkids will lead the industry in establishing an evidenced-based, academic intervention for “at-risk” youth.
Questions and Discussions

Feel Free to Contact us:

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