The EdEssentials
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The Ed°Essentials
EdVisions Design Essentials and suggested practices

EdVisions has a long history of assisting schools in implementing a structured, student-driven, project-based learning model to personalize learning. Through this approach, learning is driven through highly engaging, individual and group projects designed to meet or exceed state standards, allowing students to practice critical 21st Century skills and allow them to integrate their passions, strengths, and goals into their learning. All students typically have a personal learning plan connected to a digital project management system with a very tight standards tracking system, which also develops a portfolio of authentically assessed projects.

EdVisions helps to develop student-centered schools that practice democratic values. Authority is shared between staff and students as practice and empowerment are the best ways to learn quality citizenship. This approach provides the autonomy and empowerment that leads to higher levels of satisfaction, engagement, and belonging. EdVisions encourages teacher ownership, leadership and management, using the 'teacher professional practice' concept.

Research studies indicate the importance of social and emotional learning for student success. The Hope Survey, one of the assessment tools that EdVisions uses to assess student emotional growth, has shown that adolescents need autonomy, belongingness, and mastery goal orientation to feel successful. When all three of these areas are increased, a student’s level of engagement is also increased, which is directly related to growth in an adolescents’ dispositional hope. A growth in dispositional hope means a higher sense of agency, an ability to meet goals, and also a higher sense of pathways, seeing a means of overcoming obstacles. Schools need to support programs that build hope, as high hope students do better in post-secondary situations.

The Ed°Essentials create highly personalized learning experiences for students through authentic learning communities, personalized PBL, authentic assessment, and teacher governance. The essentials are based on research-based best practices and help schools meet the changing needs of our learners in a complex, global world.

Reflect on a middle or high school experience when your emotions impacted your learning:

Why do you believe that your emotions played such an important role in your learning during this particular experience?

How could you have changed the outcome of this experience?
Strong relationships are the key to authentic learning communities. Peer to peer and adult to youth relationships are strengthened through advisory activities and circles. Individual learning spaces within an advisory are places where students can personalize their work space. It is through advisory that students get connected to their school and greater communities. Strong connections with peers and adults and being treated as an individual is what sets a student up for success in working toward post-secondary goals.

EdVisions works to ensure that their schools are places where learning is continually enhanced by the world and that the community is a learning place. As each project creates a community connection with its necessary community expert requirement, the web of elders that students are connected with grows exponentially as their time in an EdVisions’ school continues. This network becomes vast and wide over the course of multiple years.

PRINCIPLES:

• Highly personalized setting: every student treated as an individual.

• Social-emotional learning and skill development featuring positive and caring relationships. Respect and responsibility is modeled and practiced.

At Valley New School in Appleton, Wisconsin, students are divided into multi-age advisories with 15-18 students. They are given an individual work space that they can decorate and customize to make their own. An advisory works hard and plays hard together. Students meet with peers and their advisor to discuss projects and use circles to make important group decisions and to address issues where it is important that every voice is heard. Advisories at Valley New also regularly go on excursions and activities together. They are also known to challenge other advisories to some all school competitions to build a strong school community.

Reflect on influential relationships that you had with peers and adults in your school and community. How did this impact your learning?
The backwards planning approach is rooted in constructivist pedagogy which says that people learn how to interpret the world through experiences and reflection. Continued experience, critical thinking and interaction is when life and learning occur. At Northwest Passage in Coon Rapids, Minnesota, the best projects start with a question. “I wonder why this tastes so good?” asks a student at an EdVisions school. “I bet it is some sort of fresh herb”, replies the advisor. “A fresh herb like cilantro? I don’t like that stuff, it tastes like soap”. This exchange between an advisor and their advisee led to multiple projects ranging from measurements and ratios in recipes to food disparities and social justice to the building of an aquaponics unit to grow fresh herbs year round.

EdVisions offers schools an opportunity to implement personalized learning at the highest level. By using the instructional construct of project-based learning that is student focused, student driven, and connected with their personalized learning plans, student success is exponential.

PRINCIPLES:

• Focus on equipping students with knowledge and skills for an engaged post-secondary life.

• Learning supported by constructivist pedagogy.

Reflect on your experience as a student. Were you an observer or a participant in the planning of your learning? Did you get to define your learning or did a teacher do it for you?
Students at Escuela Verde in Milwaukee, Wisconsin complete a senior project that is a larger version of the projects that they complete in their previous years. One of the students decided to do a project that strengthened the LGBTQ+ community in the school and connected them to the greater community. This was done through a community event that was sponsored by the school’s GSA. The student planned a community potluck that featured vendors who were students as well as from the community. It was an event that brought awareness, acceptance and celebration.

New students to an EdVisions’ school will quickly learn that tests are rarely used as an assessment tool. Instead, EdVisions’ relies on self-directed, project learning and the quality learning and products that are built within the projects themselves. In order for advisors to accurately assess projects for the highest level of quality, students need to design projects that are: R.E.A.L. This acronym stands for: relevant, essential, active, and laborious.

**PRINCIPLE:**

- Assessment of life, cognitive, and career skills and knowledge through a comprehensive formative assessment system with opportunities for students to improve deliverables to meet quality expectations

Reflect on your experience as a student presenting your work. Did you receive meaningful and frequent feedback from peers and adults? Did it better prepare you for post-secondary and career responsibilities?
Avalon School in St. Paul, Minnesota opened its doors in 2001 and has been governed by a model where all staff members assume administrative duties and have equal authority in all decision-making situations. Avalon staff use the “fist to five” consensus decision making tool as a means for equity in voice when navigating important decisions regarding programming and budget. While some roles of a couple of the advisors have changed slightly over the years to allocate part of their time as business manager and program coordinator, it has not compromised the authority or decision making power of any of the staff at this teacher owned and democratic governed school.

Creating a Teacher Professional Practice (TPP) is a key element in this model. The best way to describe a teacher professional practice is to compare it to a firm (law, medical, etc.) where the employees “own” and are responsible (by contract) for specific services provided. These services, in the case of a school, most often include the learning program, administration, professional development, evaluation and daily facilities maintenance.

PRINCIPLES:

- Group and individualized responsibility and accountability for school finance and educational success.
- Teachers model ownership and democratic leadership; inspire students, parents and community to take ownership and actively contribute to decision making.

Reflect on your time as an educator. Do you think that you and your colleagues have the autonomy to make decisions about curriculum, budget, evaluation and professional development? Do you think the example of decision making and collaboration of your team influences your students?
Contact us for assistance implementing the Ed°Essentials at your school.

Visit edvisions.org or email info@edvisions.org for more information.