

NWCET Best Practices

Title: ATEEC Project Dissemination

Challenge:

Across the United States there are numerous Advanced Technology Centers practicing innovative approaches to improve education. These Best Practices are often documented and serious efforts are made to share them. And yet, there seems to be no coordinated effort or standard method to provide a consistent clearinghouse for these valuable lessons that should not have to be reinvented, only refined, by the next user.

Solution:

The Advanced Technology Environmental Education Center (ATEEC) at the Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute in Bettendorf, Iowa provides an outstanding example of how to disseminate its Best Practices. From 2000 through 2002, ATEEC published on CD-ROM this information in *A Guidebook for Improving Programs*.

The contents included the following:

Chapter 1	Administration
Chapter 2	Curriculum and Instruction
Chapter 3	Student Support
Chapter 4	Alliances
Chapter 5	Professional Development
Chapter 6	Learning Resources
Chapter 7	Facilities and Equipment
Chapter 8	Program Assessment

Additional sections provided a Program Self-Study Instrument and ATEEC Web site updates along with an index.

Although the publication of the Best Practices was designed to address Environmental Technology education, many of the experiences could easily be applied to other areas of education. For example, in Chapter 2, Section 9 there is a description of how to structure a program to accommodate students' individual differences.

In Chapter 3, two sections should be of particular interest to any educational department. Section 3-2 explains how to design a student recruitment plan for a department. Ways to cultivate support from non-departmental partners is addressed at the beginning. The section then provides a series of clever ideas that would promote any department. These ideas include topics with detailed descriptions and how-to examples such as:

- Invite Prospective Students and Their Parents to the Department
Invite potential students to visit classes or host an open house for students, parents, and secondary school counselors and teachers.

- **Sponsor a Creative Activity**
Design and initiate a creative activity in the community that draws interest in your program such as a photography or logo contest.
- **Variety Adds Spice to Marketing and Outreach Efforts**
Active promotion of a program serves two important functions: the department is advertised to prospective students and parents and the community and potential employers better understand the nature of a potential workforce source.
- **Calendars – 365 Days Worth of Recruiting**
Advertising with calendars is an old idea but very effective. It works almost subliminally since, every day that the recipient sees the calendar, its message is in the background of the daily routine.
- **Make a Promotional Video or a Video Scrapbook**
Today's generation of potential students typically has spent more hours watching television and videos that they have in a classroom. One of the best ways to get to these students is to give them the basic information about how great your program is in a form of media with which they are most familiar. The first is a video shot with a camcorder and the second is a montage of still photos.
- **Use the Alumni Web Site to Inform New Potential Students**
Potential students continually as questions about your program and some of the best sources for answers are graduates of the program. Develop profiles whenever possible of your graduates and publish electronically.

Chapter 3-3 provides all of the characteristics required to design a proactive student retention plan for a department. A list of seventeen elements is augmented by additional references and a case study.

Finally, other issues of interest to any educator can be found in Chapter 6's Learning Resources which includes an important section on ways to ensure that disabled students are receiving appropriate assistance as well as ways to engage students in real-life problem-solving through integrated contextual learning simulations.

Outcomes and Benefits:

The compilation produced by ATEEC is a valuable source of documents and forms, case studies, how-to explanations that not only would improve an environmental education program but also other types of programs. The examples provided above represent only a few found in its eight chapters.

The benefits to users are also numerous. The processes and sample documentation save development time and provide a wealth of information that does not have to be researched or tested again and again.

Next Steps:

Continuous updates to the CD-Rom with new practices are expected along with expansion of the categories of chapters.

Key Issue:

Capturing the best ideas and instructional methods that have been used and proven effective is the key to overall improvement of all of our educational programs. This CD-ROM publication represents one of the most convenient means for dissemination of these Best Practices and other project information for ATEEC.

Partners:

Advanced Technology Environmental Education Center (ATEEC) and the numerous authors of the Best Practices contained on the CD-ROM.

For copies:

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