

Make Your Own

You could copy or buy our classes or, better yet, you can make your own... or, better still, get your staff to make their own. That's what we did.

Here's the story. We always felt that a "program" should do more than just clean, feed, and take people to the movies. It should be teaching!

And so we went down to the little old Special Education Department and poured over textbook after textbook only to notice that textbooks were, for the most part, written for teachers. Our employees are not teachers. (As little as teachers make, they remain well out of our "State funded" range.) We therefore find ourselves constantly trying to teach people to teach just as they are supposed to be teaching. Mindful of this reality, our original curriculum pages were designed to be directly accessible to our population of both students and student teachers while, at the same time, not compromising quality.

We laminated each class and we placed them in cheap plastic bins labeled after the general subject headings (Professionalism, Social Skills, General Knowledge, Philosophy, etc.) so that they were right at the fingertips of our staff. We then scheduled in times of the week for each class to happen.

Needless to say, our staff looked at us like we were crazy. If there was one thing they knew, it was that they were not teachers.

At first, we did the teaching and the staff just watched. Little by little, they became more involved with "team teaching". Meanwhile, staff turnover took place and new people were hired with the understanding and expectation that teaching was part of the package. It evolved into a cultural norm.

At the same time, the staff were given a boilerplate outline for class design and were encouraged to create their own. A bonus system was proposed so that those who produced were compensated.

When someone is presenting his/her own material, he/she is unquestionably more connected to it. As he/she does it repeatedly, it evolves into a thing of beauty. Of course, this experience breeds higher professional self esteem among the staff. They come to actually recognize themselves as teachers.

Two employees in particular who deserve special recognition for their curriculum building efforts are Cathy Chapman who has moved on to a different career and Rickina Williams who is now the Director of our Day Program.

Here is the Boilerplate Outline for Class Design. Go for it!

General Format for Class Design

Introduction

- State & Define Topic / Subject
- Refer to & Review Related Subject Matter from Earlier Classes (if applicable)

Presentation

- Give Definitions, Examples, Demonstrations, Visuals, etc.

Draw from **Exercises** such as:

- Direct Q&A / Interviews, Surveys
- Flash Cards or Overheads as Discussion Stimulants
- Games
- Interpretive Reading
- Journaling, Creative and/or Collaborative Writing
- Listing / Brainstorming
- Make a Video
- Mantras
- Music, Art, Dance, etc.
- Object Exchange / Usage
- Research (Internet, Library, etc.) & Share
- Role-Play (pre-scripted or ad lib)
- Show a Video as Discussion Stimulant
- Storytelling
- Task Analysis with Model
- Test, Teach, Test

- Worksheets
- Others!

Summary

- Restate Key Points
- Solicit Repetition
- Reinforce
- Clean up
- Reinforce some more