My Indigo Curriculum Story

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In the teachers lounge one afternoon in 1956 Mel Sudd (taught 6th grade in Roosevelt Laboratory School of Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan) and I (I was the Art teacher) came up with this Curriculum. In our educational testing, students lost about 6 to 8 weeks of learning over the summer that had to be repeated when school started in the fall. Normal summer school held this loss to 3 to 4 weeks. Mel and I were looking for a curriculum that would stop this loss. He and I started to analyze the Philosophies of Education to see if there were clues to a better learning structure. Summerhill, Montessori, Waldorf etc. Then we went to question, "How" does lasting learning (stop that loss) take place?. Mel was very interested because I had just helped him by teaching a few "trouble makers" who were disrupting his 6th grade math presentations. So we three went in to the long old fashioned coat room, and explored math while Mel continued to teach the class. I taught that there are no rules, only expected answers. My first question to them was how much is 4 + 4? "Stupid" was the reply. OK I said how many ways are there to get the number 8. They listed all the ways they knew. I said no one asked "4 what?" So you are not working with all the data. Let's add to the list with our new in formation and we found it necessary to make up symbols to represent "explain" some math group functions, they in exploring, reinvented Algebraic theory. I found a book "Do Math Fast" and introduced all the short cuts of mentally bundling numbers etc. In the mean time some of their friends asked Mel if they could join our group. The new were taught by the experienced. Then I found a book written by a WWII interned math professor that developed a math system with the base of 13. More kids joined us. Soon we had more kids in the coat room than Mel had in his class. The experienced taught the new. A lot of peer teaching was done outside of Math

time. They blossomed. When it was time for "regular math" to continue, Mel was confronted by student questions of method, process and a thirst for math that forced his entire math approach and teaching structure to change. Mel and I went over that math event, and wrote a sequence-of-event-structure that developed; to see if we could identify the factors that caused this sudden thirst for math. We came up with self-imposed student identification of challenge, reaction, action, reaction and action. We broke it down into a learning pattern of divergent, convergent, divergent, convergent exploratory thinking. Now; how to structure this so the learning pattern will be facilitated. After much discussion we came up with this broader application of optimized learning, guided by these thoughts.

1) The most significant lasting learning involves all the senses and the most important learning sense is kinetic. 2) All learning is inter-related. If this is truly practiced then the selection of the exploration of a singular subject should not be of concern. 3) The interest, in and the sense of discovery during that subject learning action, would sustain the learning process 4) Students should be treated as "clients not products". [We found that when the student's initial "intention" of learning was filled they would move on to another sequence of learning.] These basic tenants proved positive. When reviewed at the end of the summer session. The students had jumped in IQ 15 to 30 points, and they also jumped 2 to 4 grade levels. We had a summer school mix of 3rd graders going into 4th etc. 4th, 5th, and 6th graders with some advanced 6th graders that were going to be 7th graders in the fall. Age was not a factor. Gender was not a factor, Race was not a factor. Being a lab school we had the enrollment structure to be determined as a "Near IQ" bell curve. Our program pushed the curve to off-the-chart high side as a near "high flat oval" blob of water form. We were astonished. The Education Department was so astonished they lobbied to have us shut down as "being to controversial" and disrupting of "The Basic Structure of Education." They won. (Even though they were very, very, pleased with the growth of "their" children.)

We staffed the Summer program with experienced teachers that needed student teaching credits. We sent the word out and screened applications. (We were able to reimburse their college expenses with the profits of the Cooking and Business group.) The curriculum subject matter evolved through discussion with students and was set at 13 courses. [We added some, dropped others as students asking evolved.] All classes were open enrollment. The day would start in a "home room" Attendance etc. then gather in the gym for class selection (Classes were offered twice each day and lasted 1 to 3 hours as interest required. Some classes were structured to allow for drop-ins at any time) In the gym we would have the "What and Where" session informing what was happening and where it was meeting and they would select. Same after lunch. Plans for out-of-school-classes would be announced one week or more ahead and required a parental permission slip, and parents were welcomed to join us.

The classes selected were:

1) Exploring math. Students decided they would like to explore geometry after a very rocky start by the teacher who told them what they could do on the first day to 20 students. Next class 1 student. That student asked if she and the teacher could learn geometry. Teacher asked her to think about how can we teach geometry that would involve action. The next class she had 25 students. A third grade girl said, "My father says that 'shooting pool' is all geometry." Everybody said "please." Mel and I helped the teacher organize the tools necessary. We contacted the local pool hall and the owner became very interested so he gave us the use of the tables free. With large plastic protractors, blue chalk, fine white thread, and the physics of " measuring applied force and of every action results in an equal reaction" it started. The teacher learned about the science of "pool" and the pool hall owner learned the science and math of geometry and taught correct Cue Stick technique to more-likely prove the geometric theory. We ended renting the entire pool hall and had 90 students plus

"out-of-students" teachers participating in the learning and helping to supervise the learning.

2) Creative Writing: Poetry and One Act Plays written and performed added to the entertainment during the cafeteria lunch hour on specific days.

3) The Sciences: Also became involved in the physics of the Pool Hall. The class went fishing, measured the temperature of water at different levels. Set hooks to settle at those levels and determined what level the fish were at by nibbles. The fish were dissected when caught, Drawings of the organs were made and identified and they each opened a stomach to see what the fish were eating to select appropriate bait.

4) Art: during this program Art was not widely selected as an activity. The need for creativity was filled with action and innovative academic exploration. During the year it was "No rules in art, but a seen vision or a recorded reality vision was used. This philosophy continued during the summer classes. Drawing or painting what was not seen was given equal importance to "what was seen." "How can you draw an orange if you don't know what it tastes like?" I passed out sections of orange. "In order to paint an angel you need to become that angel as you paint. (an eastern philosopher) During the year life drawing was taught every Friday in all grades. Anatomy of the human body (bones, fat and muscles) was taught to the 7 grade. The 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students all drew on the college level. Back to the program. The most popular art activity was Remote Viewing into paintings at the College Art Gallery. But it was just a one quick teaching. Art Museum Field trips were popular and remote viewing practiced. [During the school year the Art room was full at lunch and was a requested after-school elective. Visual exploration.]

5) Typing, taught in combination with spelling. A super combination. Well attended, as an "off hour" class. It was possible to work one on one.

6) "Cooking from Scratch" Very popular, took recipes and fractionally increased or decreased them. Pies, cakes, bread, rolls, donuts, coffee cakes, soup, and salads. Fractions ruled in dry and liquid measurement! They used the

cafeteria kitchen and since the cafeteria was cool during the summer, plus some prudent advertising, many college summer students would eat their bag lunch there. The class would offer them salads, coffee, iced tea, and lemonade for $; sold out; made more; as a food service program grew to include soup and sandwiches we had to split off to create number 7.

7) Starting Your Business.

Vendors, ordering, planning, writing business letters. Pricing, percentages, cost, expenses, accounting, accounts payable, accounts receivable, profit/loss marketing, advertising. Consulted with cooking division, added salads, soups, sandwiches. They made so much money, we were hard pressed to spend it. Bought all new electronic typewriters.

8) Exploration Wednesday afternoon. We organized excursions into the community. Hired a Helicopter to take two students at a time; fly over their house and then fly in a 7 mile spiral. Recruited businesses to teach a student to be part of their business staff for an afternoon. All kind s of occupations were represented. Many parents had local business we tapped into. We also offered field trips and tried to implement any student request.

9) Take Apart. We brought a junk auto in that the students took apart and put together under supervision of a retired auto mechanic Grandfather of one of the students. We were able to buy (thanks to "Start Business" and Cooking" the sets of tools necessary for many classes.

10) Sports skills taught were offered by request and on different days, Archery; Matt Gymnastics; Basketball, Softball.

11) Photography, still and movie. Two parents had the skill and equipment for five students each. They also recorded the school activities in single pictures and as a movie production with Mel as coordinating advisor.

12) Music. Primarily for experienced students offering Composing, Folk and Jazz. Offered short class in rhythm (second hour of classes to pick up students who had enough of a particular activity) with different rhythm instruments. Also gave performances on cafeteria performance day.

13) Journal writing. At the end of each day the students would enter their day’s activities into their daily journal with personal comments on the activities and questions that the activities would bring up to ask the next day. That turned out to be very important. When they went home and the parents would ask "What did you do today? They had their answers ready. Parents loved it. In today's curriculum I would add: Brought about by their interest in Remote Viewing to "enter" their interest in using sheet music. Exploring Powers of the mind. Explorations of Realities, Hypnosis How and Why. I would also add: Yoga, Tai Chi, muscle identification and control. Sports and mental visualization.