

Texas students experience engaging summer learning during Camp Invention®

STEM program from National Inventors Hall of Fame® encourages exploration, self-discovery, and problem-solving in Lewisville ISD

Koby Stringer could barely contain his enthusiasm when, as the new Elementary Gifted & Talented Services Administrator at Lewisville ISD in Texas, he got approval to restart Camp Invention after the pandemic forced the district to take a hiatus from running the summer STEM program.

So, in the summer of 2022, robotic aquatics, erupting ice volcanoes and mega marble arcades were dazzling students and teachers across eight campuses in the sprawling school system, located just outside of Dallas.

“That first summer, everyone I spoke with was so excited and kept saying ‘We love it! How have we never done this before?’” says Stringer, who was familiar with Camp Invention from a previous district. “Teachers who had never taught at Camp Invention assumed they would be responsible for planning and lesson development. Instead, they were pleasantly surprised that everything was ready to go, thoughtfully developed and easy to facilitate. They were saying things like, ‘All I have to do is show up and let the kids go crazy with learning!’”

Summer STEM

A program of the National Inventors Hall of Fame, Camp Invention features a week of STEM activities for students in grades K-6, designed to encourage creativity, exploration, confidence, problem-solving and collaboration.

“Camp Invention provides a unique service to the community,” Stringer says. “It gives parents an alternative to traditional summer camps, engages students in fun learning experiences, and offers teachers rewarding summer work.”

Importance of self-discovery

Camp Invention also boosts students’ confidence to tinker and pursue their curiosity, Stringer says. “Every room I’d visit was filled with excitement and unbelievably high levels of engagement. Students get the opportunity for self-discovery, which is the best form of learning. And it’s great to see kids engaged in problem solving, sharing their thinking and taking risks in their learning.”

Students are clearly enthusiastic, he adds. “Campers would tell me, ‘I’ve never done anything like this before. This is amazing.’ Or they’d ask, ‘Can I sign up for another camp?’”



Plug and play

All curriculum and materials are provided by Camp Invention, offering unique approaches and perspectives for teachers, Stringer says. “Everything is geared towards exploration and open-ended learning.”

Most teachers have responded well and have even requested opportunities to turn Camp Invention into after-school activities, or to use Camp Invention strategies during the school year, Stringer says.

Continued expansion

“Kids need time to explore. They need time to create, to visit and communicate with others, and to think about the plan they’re putting together and what the implementation is going to be,” he adds. “Kids need opportunities to take the next step on their own without somebody directing them.”

Camp Invention had been at a handful of campuses in Lewisville for about five years before the pandemic. Now it’s back and Stringer plans to continue expanding locations in the ethnically and socioeconomically diverse district, which has about 49,000 students.

“We went from having Camp Invention on eight campuses last year to 12 campuses this summer, and we also increased the diversity of schools,” Stringer says. Areas were selected in part based on geography, whether other types of camps were nearby, and if principals would agree to participate. Stringer says he then recruited teachers by telling them about the program, and “Camp Invention took care of the rest.”

To learn more about Camp Invention, go to www.invent.org/educators/camp-invention

