

A Formative Program Evaluation Report on the National Inventors Hall of Fame® Club Invention® Afterschool Program Executive Summary

As part of the on-going evaluation of their educational programs, the National Inventors Hall of Fame (NIHF) contracted with The Bureau of Research Training and Services (BRTS) at Kent State University to conduct an objective formative evaluation of the Club Invention afterschool educational enrichment program for children in grades two through six. Using the program design as the background to the study, BRTS researchers visited six program sites nationwide and conducted both classroom observations and personal interviews with staff members to learn more about how program participants utilize hands-on explorations and creative challenges to build on their school experiences. BRTS evaluators were interested in learning about the common elements of instructors' experiences in the program and if the curriculum modules were being implemented as Inventive Education, Inc.™ anticipated. In the full formative program evaluation report, researchers present these general themes:

- All of the instructors work in the field of education and many have served as Camp Invention® instructors.
- Instructors reported that they have received more support than they have initial training in implementing the Club Invention curricula.
- Many of the instructors conveyed that the curriculum is of the highest quality and that the students indicate that they enjoy the activities. Some key highlights are the brainstorming component, the teamwork component, and the uniqueness of the “age-appropriate” activities.
- Instructors followed the curricula closely, making modifications only for time purposes.
- Preparation time varied depending on the program, but most instructors reported that the majority of the supplies are provided in the package from NIHF.
- The ideal place to hold Club Invention is in the school classroom.
- Club Invention student participants are predominantly of higher socioeconomic status.
- Students seem to be enthusiastic about the activities and the “club” atmosphere.
- Most instructors indicated that Club Invention is a good supplement to classroom learning. Some instructors reported that the modules offer the students opportunities to draw on earlier learning, to carry their comprehension to a greater level of depth, and to apply their knowledge through hands-on activities.
- Instructors reported that the younger students were eager to learn from the older students, but that the older kids are not always willing to work with younger kids. The brainstorming component of the program appeared to assist the implementation of the teamwork component. The full evaluation report concludes with recommendations for improvement that instructors provided in the interviews.

Instructors' primary recommendations for improvement:

- Teamwork projects are great, but every child wants to take something home to show.
- Program supervisors should understand the curricula thoroughly.

Conclusions

Students were extremely excited and enthusiastic about their experiences at Club Invention. The hands-on nature of the curriculum optimizes the student's ability to recall the activities and any experiences/knowledge associated with those activities. The use of everyday, household materials enables the student participants to recreate their experiences at home, therefore, continuing the process of discovery that began during their Club Invention encounter. Club Invention clearly encourages growth, creativity, and inquiry, while challenging students to explore and experiment within their world in order to understand and imagine how *they* might make it better.