

USA (Ohio)

Life Skills Center of Trumbull County

This is a programme for high school students (aged 16-21) who are at risk of dropping out or have dropped out of the traditional public education system. The objective is to create an atmosphere of genuine care and concern, and to provide students with a first experience of accomplishment and personal growth, focussing on social-emotional well-being, self-sufficiency, and employability in addition to academics. Teaching activities focus on raising reading and math proficiency, and values of discipline, integrity, teamwork, and perseverance. Upon enrolment, students are engaged in a transition period to undergo a needs assessment, be engaged in self-paced learning and to create an individualized learning plan. When students progress through the curriculum, they earn credits. They are enrolled in two core content courses and complete daily reading assignments to increase their vocabulary and reading comprehension. Students are expected to contribute to the community through work or volunteer programmes, and the school cooperates with companies and counselling services to offer the students work experiences and additional emotional support. The school employs teachers, and professionals like intervention specialists, employability specialists, and social workers.

Main Focus of Innovation: LEARNERS, TEACHERS, CONTENT, RESOURCES, ORGANIZATION

Other Keywords: equity

General Information

Name of the ILE: Life Skills Center of Trumbull County

Location/Address: 458 Franklin Street SE Warren, Ohio 44484

Website: wedidUcan.com

Rationale

Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21st century learning challenges?

The Life Skills Center of Trumbull County is a drop out prevention and credit recovery program for high school students who, for a variety of personal, family, or economic reasons, are at risk of dropping out or have dropped out of the traditional public school setting. We help students overcome obstacles and complete career preparation while earning a state-recognized diploma.

The strategy of Life Skills Centre is to deliver to our students an atmosphere of genuine care and concern, and to help them achieve academic success.

To that end, Life Skills has developed a long-range vision committed to high academic achievement, data-driven decision making, successful recruitment and retention of proven human capital, and innovation in learning. We offer students a chance to learn and grow at their own pace while being facilitated in the process by dedicated, qualified professionals. The challenges of living and learning in the 21st century have proven particularly difficult for these students. Life Skills takes a team approach to address all the needs of the student in order to meet those challenges confidently. Our goals are focused on social-emotional well-being, self-sufficiency, and employability in addition to academics.

Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE

What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)

The average Life Skills' student is more than one year behind in satisfactory completion of course work for graduation as compared to their peers. Most have, on average, a sixth grade reading level and a seventh grade level in math. We work with them to raise their proficiency levels so they can be successful academically and socially. We also want to develop and inspire the values of discipline, integrity, teamwork, and perseverance. Life Skills seeks to instil in students that respect is the foundation of productive relationships. We work to develop the skills our students need to be successful in all aspects of life and possess the knowledge and character to meet the challenges of learning, working, and living in the 21st Century. To that end, we not only expect our students to advance academically, we also expect them to be a good citizen and contribute to the community through work or volunteer programs.

Learners

Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?

Students who have not been successful in a traditional educational setting and face personal or economic challenges are our target audience. Any at risk student between the ages of 16 and 21 may enrol in Life Skills Centre of Trumbull County; our current enrolment is 350 students.

Facilitators

Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?

The personnel in Life Skills cover a range of professions and experiences in order to best address the needs of our students. Highly qualified and certified teachers are present in every lab. Intervention specialists address specific needs of special education students, and work with teachers to develop effective intervention strategies. All aspects of employment and higher education are addressed by Employability Specialists who work with individually with students. Family advocates are licensed social workers or counsellors who help meet personal responsibilities and challenges so students can more effectively focus on their academic progress. Every school also has a School Improvement Lead Teacher who is dedicated to improving achievement by working with teachers on professional development and modelling best practices.

This teacher is the academic leader in the building and is responsible for implementing the strategies laid out by the team in the School Improvement Plan. The Administrator of the building is a licensed Principal as well as an experienced Life Skills teacher who has effectively taken the leadership role in the building and is responsible for the overall success of each student.

Organization of the ILE

How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?

Upon enrolment, every student is engaged in a transition process—new this year—which has several purposes: to build relationships of genuine care and concern; to complete a focused needs assessment by a team of professionals; to engage the student in the self-paced learning and support program; and to create an individualized learning plan. Once a student moves out of transition, they are enrolled in two core content courses. In addition to those courses, students also complete daily reading assignments on a variety of subjects. The reading program is specifically designed to deliver high school content at their reading level and is designed to challenge them to increase vocabulary acquisition and comprehension in order to consistently raise their reading level. All curricula are electronically delivered and can be customized for special needs and abilities. We provide an atmosphere that promotes independence and cultivates self-discipline. Teachers facilitate learning by interacting with students individually as they progress in their studies and provide additional instruction, practice, or interventions as needed. Problem solving, reading, interactive gaming, and differentiated instruction are employed to help students achieve.

Learning Context

In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?

Academic labs are set up to accommodate up to thirty students at both computer stations and work tables, and two teachers work in each lab setting. Content teachers are working with students at various levels and in various courses throughout the day. Students progress through the curriculum and earn credit as they master the course work. We have strong partnerships with several community agencies. YouthBuild Trumbull County has a unique collaboration with Life Skills to provide students an opportunity to learn the building trades, develop leadership, and help educate our youth. Coleman Services collaborates with various communal businesses to provide disadvantaged students with first hand work experience and offer support services to help them successfully complete their education and continue in the work force. Trumbull County Life Skills has also partnered with Homes for Kids, an outside counselling service, to counsel students who may need additional emotional support.

In terms of parental involvement, we actively attempt to engage parents in the education of their student. We offer open houses and parent-teacher conferences. The Family Advocates also have on going, supportive meetings with parents to help them help their kids be successful.

History of ILE

Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?

The Life Skills model originated more than ten years ago. The original purpose was to educate employees who lacked the educational background to effectively be a part of an advance in the workforce. That purpose grew in scope to give young employees the chance to earn their high school diploma while continuing to financially support themselves. It became the vision of Life Skills to educate students who did not fit into the traditional model of education. The mission to educate, innovate, inspire, and love has not changed over the years. However, the environment has changed considerably over the years. As technology has advanced, so too have the methods by which Life Skills students are educated. New teaching strategies, technologies, curricula, and data-driven instruction have been implemented to improve academic achievement. Personnel have been hired as the needs of the students have changed and grown over the years.

Funding of the ILE*How is it funded?*

The Life Skills Centre of Trumbull County is a publicly funded school.

Learning Outcomes*What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?*

Learning is assessed in a variety of ways. First, formative and summative assessments are used in each course. Students also test in Scantron year to monitor student progress and measure student growth. Students also meet with teachers and staff members regularly to ensure that all needs are being met. We have found that as relationships are established, students are more willing to share personal concerns and experiences, which allows us to help them address those additional concerns and needs. Allowing students to work at their own pace also gives them a sense of accomplishment and personal growth that, for many, is the first they have experienced. Most students display more confidence and maturity, and take ownership of their own successes and failures. Data shows that as students increase their achievement, they also increase in reading proficiency, and show an increase in both attendance and retention. Likewise, as students are faced with setbacks, they are more likely to get into a cycle of dropping out and re-enrol. The transition process data shows a marked improvement in both achievement and retention this year. As we receive more data and direct feedback, Life Skills Centre of Trumbull County will continue to make adjustments in order to raise the achievement of our students.