

## **SURVIVAL SKILLS ACTIVITY DAY**

**Larry Sweazey**  
**800 Bahama Avenue**  
**Stuart, FL 34994**  
**772-219-1870**  
**sweazel@martinschools.org**

<https://www.martinschools.org/Domain/29>

***Key words:*** Literacy; perseverance; resilien

**Funding Sources:**

Title 1 school, National Endowment for Financial Education, general/discretionary funds and donations: House of Hope, City of Stuart, Martin County School District, Educational Foundation

**Project Cost and Budget Narrative:**

Depending on the program, there was little to no cost due to finding either free or donated resources.

**Project Description:**

Explained in Project Origination below

**Staffing Pattern:**

Staff members, including paraprofessionals and custodians, chose groups to lead/assist based on their own experience and talents.

- **Financial Literacy:**  
Rob Adriel (ESE teacher, self-contained unit)  
Joselyn Rohrscheib (Social Studies teacher)
- **Automotive Inspection**  
Larry Sweazey (Science teacher)  
Brian Quinn (IPS Coach)
- **Literacy Activism**  
Sara Dwyer (Intensive Reading specialist)  
Liz Wrocklage (English teacher)
- **Entrepreneur/Career**  
Kris Neller (Guidance Counselor)  
Glenn Talbott (Math teacher)
- **Green Initiative**  
Rebecca Conti (ESE teacher)  
Jill Figgiani (ESE support)  
Sonia Frehafer (ELL Paraprofessional)  
Bonnie Cooke (Head Custodian)
- **Support for students who need/want an alternative workspace instead of participating with the group**  
Elaine Kaufman (Dean of Students & Middle School Math teacher)  
Kim Parenteau (Paraprofessional)

**Population Served:**

NUMBER OF STUDENTS	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	ELL	ESE	Mental Health Support
Approx 100+/- Enrolled (Served 250+ over the year)	50%	10%	40%	21%	20%	35%

**Project Origination:**

On a traditional middle or high school campus, there are a variety of activities students may participate in to make connections with their peers, staff, and the surrounding communities. Since we are a non-traditional online campus and our population is in a near-constant state of transition for a variety of factors, we have been unable to support any sports, clubs, or other extracurricular to provide those much-needed personal bonds.

We have new students enroll every week. We have students leave because they have completed their academic and/or behavioral requirements to go back to their “home” school, graduate, enroll in other programs, or move out of the county. We also serve students from the entire county (consisting of five middle schools, three high schools, and several other programs), grades 6-12. The majority of our students come to us with a history of multiple barriers including, but not limited to, the areas of academic, socioeconomic, language, attendance and/or lack of family and/or community support.

However, we have seen a growing need for connecting with our students beyond the traditional/online classroom structure, as well as for them to forge positive relationships with the local community. Making the necessary changes on our campus to address this need was reinforced for us after attending the NDPC conference in June and our on-site training in August. We decided that this would be the year to lay the foundation for a program we believe can sustain and grow, with minimal added work for staff.

We brainstormed ways we could form (and then build upon) these types of bonds, despite our population fluctuation. We first looked at what we were already doing that was working:

- working with organizations such as Project Lift, Career Source, and/or Job Corps to place students locally
- Sara Dwyer and Rob Adriel resurrected a previous service learning project where our students read and play with the children attending daycare at the Gertrude Walden Center, which sits on a corner adjacent to our school.
- After observing what a positive impact these experiences were having on our students, the staff brainstormed how we could create a similar positive learning experience for all students, starting with the resources we already had on hand: ourselves.

We found in our discussion that when students saw us as not just instructors but as “real people” who are willing to share useful life experiences and strategies, they were obviously more willing to engage.

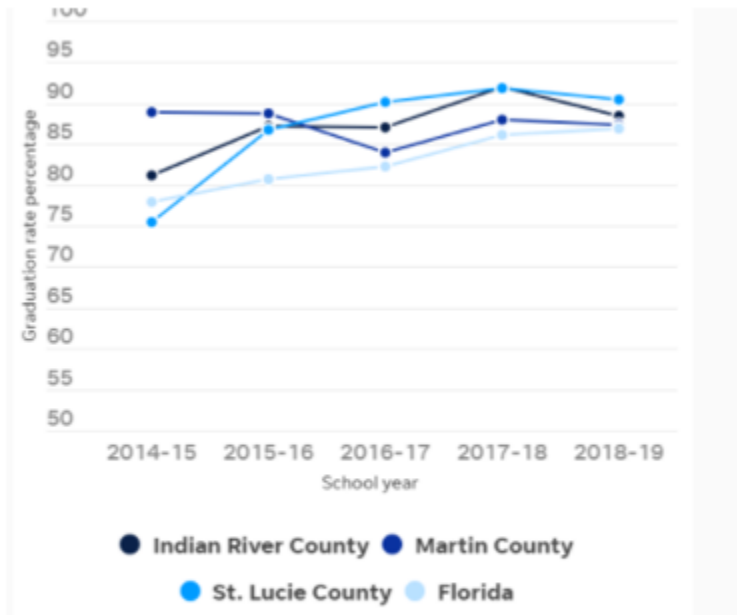
**Issues Addressed:**

Initially, this was an attempt to boost poor attendance on district-mandated early release days, as well as the weeks prior to extended breaks (Thanksgiving, Winter, and Spring). Eventually, we broadened it to make it at least once a month in order to provide a day for community building from within

**Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:**

Build rapport with students, reduce behavior incidents, and increase attendance on early release days.

To support the district with an upward trend.



<https://www.tcpalm.com/story/news/2020/01/09/graduation-rates-decline-across-treasure-coast-2018-19/4418447002/>

### Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:

- Provide students with valuable experiences and information beyond the standard curriculum.
- All students are eligible to participate, even students who recently had a discipline issue. During our survival skill day, there are no in-school suspensions or detentions served.

### Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

After reviewing our discipline reports in RTIB – our monthly average number of students began to drop in September (2.65%) versus August (3.27%), October through February remained below 3%. Classroom referrals for 2019 were 76.56% versus 2020 were 74.35% for the same period. Hall transitions for periods – 2019: 1.62% and 2020: .36%; cafeteria – 2019: 5.36% and 2020: 4.22%. Even though these were not significant decreases, it shows that our transition periods where all students are participating is showing discipline incident reductions.

### Project Timeline:

5 ER days (9.25.19; 10.31.19; 1.29.20; 2.26.20; 5.6.20) as well as the week before Thanksgiving Break, Winter Break, Spring Break and/or a day in April.

### Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates:

Year	Potential graduates enrolled	Early Grads	Grads	Positive data for cohort	Negative data for cohort	Percentage
2018-2019	39	4	25	30	9	77%
2019-2020	47	7	28	39	8	83%

**Special Conditions, Expertise, and/or Skills Required to Carry Out Project:**

We utilized the skills and passions of staff members to form interest groups.

**Current Status of Project:**

In process—we will be in collaboration for revising, expanding, and improving the program for next year.

**Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:**

In the classroom, students were set up into groups of three/four to solve various questions through collaborative efforts, then students would present their findings while other student groups would peer review. This led to the instructor then overseeing/implementing necessary answers if needed. After the class work was completed, we then shifted our attention to hands-on activities for mastery and wrapped up each activity with exit tickets: what did I learn, what I still do not understand, WHAT WOULD I LIKE TO STUDY NEXT (this was key into “buy-in” as they felt they were in control of what they wanted to learn each time we started a new activity)

**Lessons Learned:**

Automotive survival will focus on financing of a car all the way to installation of an infant seat. All activities are basic automotive skills designed to save money (personal/family). Some of these life-skills are performing (hands-on) activities on cars including, but are not limited to, changing a flat tire, jump-starting a dead battery, changing out various lights, washing/waxing a car. In addition, students learned how to use their inferring skills as they were exposed to different types of text, and collaboration amongst structured groups allowed the students to utilize their interpersonal skills.

**Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:**

Any student can learn literacy through various different opportunities/settings, not just in a language arts class. Make sure you keep it simple and relevant to your audience. For example, in the automotive survival group we continuously emphasized how much money could be saved by completing these tasks on your own versus paying someone to do it. This is when the students “bought in” to the project. As always, PLANNING is a huge part. Make sure you have an action plan for each lesson.

**Any important additional information not addressed previously?**

Link below demonstrates (**Project-Based Evidence**) a snap-shot as to what we are trying to implement in our group.

<https://cbs12.com/news/local/new-program-gives-students-attending-alternative-school-hands-on-learning-in-martin-county>