

American Village Educational Project

THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN VILLAGE CENTERS

It started in 1957 with two English professors. Passionate about learning languages, they became convinced that school learning must be accompanied by prolonged contact with native speakers. They started organizing trips abroad for their students, year after year, until NACEL SA was created in 1967. Today, Nacel is an international company sending thousands of young people all over the world every year and offering a variety of language-learning programs.

The best way to learn a foreign language is to go where it is spoken. That said, as traveling is not an option for everyone, American Village camps were created by Nacel in 1994.

OUR EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

American Villages are places of discovery, creation, communication and socialization. The main objective of youth going to an American Village camp is to improve their English language skills. We attempt to do this by combining the three components of bilingualism :

1. **Duration:** several days or weeks is more effective than just classroom time
2. **No access to your mother tongue:** efforts in the foreign language are required, naturally boosting language comprehension and oral expression, and even building self-confidence.
3. **Personal involvement:** real-life situations and active participation help the language take root

As soon as young people arrive at our camp, they step into an all-English environment that encourages them to speak the language as often as possible in a natural and fun way. Our staff members use both, specific techniques and a program that is specific to our educational approach.

OUR EDUCATIONAL VALUES

The American Village project is built around both social and educational values. It teaches democratic principles and contributes to youth development. Today's society is in perpetual motion. It shifts and grows constantly through international exchange. Youth need relevant skills sets and specific knowledge in order to grow into responsible future adults within this global culture.

Each American Village is organized according to a collective-living model. By living together and being a part of a group, young people develop both good decision-making skills and respect for others. They learn independence and strengthen their personal identity.

The core values that guide our educational approach are:

1. Equality
2. Language and culture
3. Personal implication and Imagination
4. Positive reinforcement and caring
5. Respect and mutual aid

⇒ Equality

The diversity of the group contributes to the learning process. By respecting this value, our staff promote awareness of and respect for individual freedom of conscience and individual expression. As the group is a microcosm of our society, everyone present has equal standing. All forms of discrimination are forbidden.

⇒ Language and culture

Real-life situations in English present opportunities to learn the language naturally and test out different ways of communicating. It is entirely possible to understand the meaning of a sentence without understanding every word within it, just as it is entirely possible to communicate effectively regardless of a few mistakes. This approach encourages each program participant to try to speak the language. It provides access into the language and culture.

⇒ Personal implication and imagination

To learn a new language, personal involvement is essential. It is obviously impossible to learn a language without practicing it. In order to encourage participation, the American Village program appeals to the creativity and imagination of its participants. Our techniques include teaching through games and fun activities. Imagination is a resource that everyone possesses. It is especially useful for motivating youth to express themselves with ease.

⇒ Positive reinforcement and caring

Learning can be enjoyable. By identifying the needs of each language-learner, the lessons and activities can be adapted to their level. This facilitates access to understanding and preserves participant self-esteem. Language errors are not counted, as to ensure that each young person can communicate without fear of making mistakes. The correction of errors is done in a manner that is both constructive and non-judgmental. This approach is used to reduce the learner's hesitation to speak, encouraging him/her to speak spontaneously in the new language throughout the day.

⇒ Respect and mutual aid

The American Village centers promote a collective living model. Mutual aid in language learning is encouraged. Maintaining an atmosphere of non-competition and acceptance of all levels is essential. This atmosphere reduces the apprehension of speaking the foreign language in front of others. Respect for each individual also plays a part in language-learning. By setting clear rights and responsibilities, our program encourages youth to participate within the group.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Nacel places itself in the educational sector. Its goal is individual development and self-actualization by offering numerous techniques for learning, communication and expression. This pedagogical aim takes into account the developmental needs of the child, as well as the particularities of our democratic society, in which the individual must learn to make good choices.

This revolves around the following objectives:

1. Propose a practice of the English language in a group setting, to promote living a collective living model.
2. Promote the enjoyment of learning and make young people want to speak English.
3. Emphasize everyone's progress, for every language-level.
4. Listen and take into account the needs, rhythms and expectations of young people.
5. Guide learners towards an independent and thoughtful use of the language.

FROM EDUCATIONAL PROJECT TO PEDAGOGICAL PROJECT

A pedagogical project is prepared for each American Village camp session. It details the technical, implementation of the educational values set forth in this document. The teaching approaches to be used are different from those of the school, as our educational approach differs in many ways from traditional school approaches. In simulating a trip abroad, participants will leave engaged and curious about the world. Every day is organized in a way as to promote English-language comprehension or production, from morning to night. The children participate in different activities and lessons. The games, sports, meals and evening programs provide a playful context necessary for learning English according to our methods.

EVALUATION

The educational project is in constant evolution. Regular evaluation helps to promote its development and ensure its relevance. It allows us to determine obstacles and potential points of improvement. Evaluation is important in supporting us in achieving our objectives, in obtaining useful information for the evolution of our actions, for building new relationships with youth. It also allows us to position ourselves in terms of program expansion and partnership development.