

• CASE STUDY •

CAAEL **IGNITES** STUDENT SUCCESS

Discover how NewHope Academy uses CAAEL to improve student attendance, academic performance, and behavior as well as help kids develop social, emotional, and leadership skills



"CAAEL is an investment in your students that ultimately helps them become better humans. They learn how to be kind, how to be supportive of other people, and how to act appropriately. Most of our kids wouldn't be a part of a team sport if they were in a regular school. They wouldn't have things to participate in and they would just withdraw. CAAEL gives them the chance to be a part of a team and learn all of the skills that come with it. Having CAAEL in our school sets our kids up for success."

DAVE LARRANCE

Owner and Business Manager,
NewHope Academy

JOHN MARTIN SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD

When NewHope Academy first considered becoming a CAAEL Member School in the spring of 2016, they were looking for a way to expand their physical education (P.E.) programming to include more competition for their students.

A therapeutic day school, NewHope serves kids facing challenges such as anxiety, depression, school refusal, and social withdrawal.

P.E. teachers Russ Tripple and Lindsay Murchie knew that P.E. — and competition in general — held lots of opportunities to help their students build emotional resilience and broaden social skills, **yet those very features made P.E. one elective most NewHope students chose to avoid.**

“When kids interview to come to NewHope, one of the most common

things their parents tell us is, ‘My kid doesn’t like P.E.’” Russ said. “They’ve been in a mainstream school where there are a lot of kids in P.E. and it’s run a lot differently. **Most of our students come to us lacking in confidence and social skills, so P.E. feels really difficult for them.** Even for athletic kids, navigating the social atmosphere of P.E. can feel confusing and overwhelming.”

Russ and Lindsay had already begun a competitive P.E. program inside of NewHope to provide richer growth opportunities for the P.E. students they did have, but thought it would be even better if they could find other schools to compete with, too.

They’d heard that CAAEL provided that competition — and were solely focused on delivering athletic and educational programming for alternative schools during the school day.



So, NewHope Business Manager Dave Larrance looked into CAAEL more closely and discovered a number of things that made the program attractive to their school – the first being its focus on sportsmanship.

“I loved that CAAEL’s values aligned with our school’s values,” Dave said. “That it’s not about how good you are at something; it’s about your character. That it’s not just about winning, but how you treat someone whether you’re winning or losing.”

He also loved the opportunity it gave students to be on a team, and experience the development and growth that comes through teamwork.

“I played sports beginning at five years old, so I know the value of being on a team and being a good teammate, but many of our students have never had that opportunity,” Dave said. “There are certain things you simply cannot learn about teamwork unless you are on a team. **CAAEL allows them to be a part of something bigger than themselves.**”

An additional selling point was the student accountability that CAAEL provides. In order to be eligible to participate in CAAEL events, students need to attend school, complete assignments, and keep their behavior in check.

Convinced, NewHope decided to give CAAEL a try and started with a spring softball tournament.

Lindsay and Russ said that tournament turned out to be a smashing success, and quickly led them to jump all-in with CAAEL.

“The kids absolutely loved the softball tournament,” Russ said. “They loved that we weren’t just competing with ourselves but that we could see where we stood among other schools.”

Lindsay agreed.

“That first softball team was a tight-knit group of kids and it was an awesome way to start. They





loved feeling a part of a team. It just steamrolled from there, and now we do everything that CAAEL offers.”

That includes a wide range of sports like basketball, softball, volleyball, and bowling as well as educational programming like a spelling bee, art show, chess tournament, and academic bowl.

NewHope Principal Becky McClaney said she appreciates how CAAEL’s programming resonates with a variety of students and abilities, giving them many different ways to participate and work through their social/emotional challenges.

“CAAEL isn’t just for kids who play sports,” Becky said. “There are all kinds of ways for our kids to be a part of a team. One of the things that sets NewHope apart is our academic rigor,

and I like that CAAEL gives our kids with academic strengths a way to shine, while also allowing them to work through their anxiety. The kids we selected to go to the academic bowl were so excited to leave school to participate, and had such excitement on their faces when they came home with a trophy.

“The bowling tournament, too, has been great for the kids who don’t feel they can run and keep up in a faster paced sport, but they can go to the bowling alley and compete.”

In the many years that NewHope Academy has been a CAAEL Member School, they’ve not only participated in a ton of activities, they’ve also seen an exciting range of results — starting with a **heightened level of excitement, motivation, and engagement in their students.**

“For schools, the biggest motivator is the kids wanting to be eligible,” Lindsay said. “We have kids who historically don’t come to school for weeks at a time, and now they’re coming to school every day for the entire quarter so that they can be eligible for CAAEL.”

“With kids who aren’t doing their work,” Russ added, “Lindsay or I will go up to them on Monday and say, ‘Hey, you’re missing assignments and we really need you on the team this Friday,’ and that kid will get their work done because they don’t want to let the team down.

They see how much they’re needed.”

That motivation has been seen by teachers and administrators alike.

“We had a kid who started with us and he absolutely refused to comply with directions,” Becky said. “He talked about how smart he was and how great at chess he was, so I told him I’d personally go with him to the CAAEL chess tournament.

“That hooked him; it was what he needed to connect. Now he’s in college at DePaul University and has totally turned himself around.”

Another benefit of CAAEL is the way NewHope students are able to face and work through the challenges they face.

“There’s a lot of anxiety-provoking things that happen in both P.E. and CAAEL,” Russ said. “You can see it in the kids’ faces when we start playing a volleyball game or a basketball game — our kids are so

nervous and anxious — but it’s really rewarding to see them successfully work through that anxiety, over and over again.

“Also, for some of our kids, CAAEL gets them to start socializing, or is the highlight of their social life. It makes them want to hang out, and **you see kids come out of their shells and show their personalities.** CAAEL helps them feel comfortable doing that, and we’ve had parents tell us their kids have changed and that they’re so happy now.”

CAAEL has also created a big rise in the numbers of NewHope students who want to do P.E.

“Our P.E. numbers have risen incredibly since CAAEL, and now our P.E. classes are at capacity,” Lindsay said. “For CAAEL activities, we’re cutting our roster down every week for every sport because so many kids want to do it. Today we had 26 kids signed up for basketball. We wish we could take every kid, but it’s great that so many



of our kids are motivated by CAAEL.”

Becky said the interest in participating in CAAEL has been a pleasant surprise for many parents whose kids have never liked sports.

“One parent wrote in our ‘Kudos Book’ this week: ‘CAAEL is also a great surprise. My son traditionally avoids physical activity and PE, does not like to sweat, but loves playing in the CAAEL sports. Keep working your magic.’ That was a cool thing to read, and I love that our kids are enjoying new things.”

Yet another great result is the opportunity students have to develop leadership skills.

“CAAEL gives kids a nice chance to learn how to lead,” Lindsay said. “They’re put into situations where they can recognize they can run the ball in for a touchdown or they can give someone else the chance to do it. **Also, after every activity they get into a circle and give a ribbon to someone on the other team,** which helps them acknowledge someone else’s



accomplishments whether it’s for skill or sportsmanship or something else.

“The kids learn how to support each other and lift each other up,” Russ added.

“If someone drops a pass or misses a first down, it doesn’t matter because the focus is on having fun and being a part of the team. It really helps the kids feel safe.”

Russ said the leadership opportunities that exist with CAAEL create some of the best memories for their students.

“We had a really good athlete — a quarterback — who was great at getting people involved. When he was getting ready to graduate, he was asked what his favorite memory was about CAAEL, and he said it was throwing a touchdown pass to this girl, who was not very talented but who had worked hard to be eligible to come to the game. She caught the touchdown pass, and he was

so excited for her. He said it made his day to make her day. It was such a cool thing to hear, especially as a teacher.”

Finally, CAAEL has played a large part in increasing students’ self-confidence,

which has helped some of NewHope’s kids transition back to mainstream schooling or successfully go to college.

“I remember one student who started at NewHope and everything was ‘I can’t,’” Dave said. “When she first got involved in CAAEL, every time someone would pass her the ball she would literally pass it off and say, ‘I can’t.’”

“Over time, she progressed into taking shots and then making shots, and eventually she became competitive. In her senior year she was in the CAAEL basketball tournament and was full of confidence. The change in her was unbelievable to see. Her confidence flowed over into the classroom, too, and she was able to reintegrate into her regular ed school. She’s now in college and an advisor to other students.”



Becky said she loves that CAAEL allows NewHope to offer expanded opportunities for their students, as well as additional ways they can apply what they’re learning in school in many areas of their lives.

“CAAEL gives our kids a level of teamwork that we can’t build naturally within the building,” Becky said. “Sure,

we can have a chess tournament or a bags tournament in our building, but there’s something about getting on the bus, riding together to an alternate location, playing against a team from another school, and coming back with a trophy that makes the experience so much deeper. You can’t create that organically without having someone to compete against.

“CAEL helps our kids build deeper, stronger relationships because they are on a team together competing as teammates. It also allows them to take the lessons we teach here at NewHope and expand them outside our school walls, so kids can see how to use these lessons in other places and other

areas of life — like how they can build camaraderie with people when they start a new job, or how to work together with their siblings or a future spouse.

“The value of CAEL goes far beyond sports. It’s setting kids up to be successful human beings.” ☾



CAEL can help *your* school's students thrive, too.
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