

FOCUS ON | A.K. SMITH CAREER CENTER

Located in Michigan City, Ind., serving all LaPorte County students, the A.K. Smith Career Center employs educational technology to provide high school students with a hands-on, real-world learning experience. Students earn credits transferrable to a two- or four-year college as well as industry certifications that qualify them for employment.



The Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO), like many companies, faces a “Silver Tsunami.” More than half of their current employees are set to retire by 2020. To build a pipeline of future employees, NIPSCO approached three school districts in Northern Indiana with the offer of a \$100,000 grant to establish an Energy Academy.

One of those was the A.K. Smith Career Center. Its director, Audra Peterson, enlisted Aidex to help conceptualize and ultimately create Indiana’s first Energy Academy. Aidex’s Laura Coard suggested not one, but three learning systems from different manufacturers. The approach was novel, complicated and ultimately, highly successful.

Today, the A.K. Smith Career Center’s Energy Academy boasts a number of community partners: NIPSCO, Ivy Tech Community College in Valparaiso and the local electricians union. Aidex is proud of its role in powering northern Indiana’s new energy industry workforce.

“While working on the NIPSCO grant, our Aidex representative, Laura Coard, came to us with an idea that combined three energy technology learning systems—one that was not on our radar—that progressively increase students’ knowledge and skill level. It also complements the learning technology at Ivy Tech Valparaiso. Laura made sure the curriculum met Indiana teaching standards for science, which our teachers love! And our students? They don’t get bored with the Energy Academy!”



Aidex’s Integrated Energy Learning Solution Includes



Amatrol’s Solar & Wind Alternative Energy Training System teaches key skills students use to secure certifications, land a job or continue their education.



LJ Create’s Green Energy in Buildings Trainer lets students dive into the inner workings of a building’s energy use and includes software-enabled group projects.



Progressive Ed’s Grid Tie/Smart Meter Training System teaches students job-ready skills such as wiring and installing solar panels.



Audra Peterson

Director La Porte County Career & Technical Education
A.K. Smith Career Center
Michigan City, IN

“ This is a win for students who have another compelling reason to **stay in school** and lay the foundation for a future, **well-paying career**. ”

– Audra Peterson, Director, A.K. Smith Career Center



At the ribbon cutting for the Energy Academy, then Governor Mike Pence said, “The Energy Academy’s career and technical education curriculum will serve as the model for future educational partnerships in Indiana.” The Energy Academy is powered by educational technology supplied by Aidex.



NIPSCO’s NEED

A pipeline for future employees experienced in energy technologies. Offered a grant for the creation of an Energy Academy.



AIDEX SOLUTION

Designed comprehensive, integrated learning system with technology from three top manufacturers and approved STEM curriculum for 9-12 students.



SCHOOL + STUDENT SUCCESS

A.K. Smith Career Center students now learn skills for in-demand careers, earn college credits, and secure professional certifications.



MONEY MATTERS

The A.K. Smith Career Center won a \$100,000 Energy Academy Grant from NIPSCO, a public utility company. The Career Center then secured a \$235,000 Innovative Curriculum Grant from the State of Indiana. These funds were used to purchase energy industry-related educational technology from Aidex for the Career Center and for K-12 students across the county.

“ The A.K. Smith Career Center wanted a solution that not only introduced high school students to energy industry careers, but also gave them the option of continuing their education, entering an apprenticeship program or heading straight into the workforce. Aidex found the best technologies, assisted with the grant process, handled installation, and helped teachers become comfortable using the technologies. When students have positive experiences with learning technology, they are more likely to pursue careers in STEM. ”



Laura Coard

Aidex Technical Sales
Representative for Indiana