

STIMULATING “ECONOMICS EDUCATION” EXPERIENCES

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(1.) RESEARCH A SOCIAL STUDIES THEMATIC UNIT’S ECONOMIC HERITAGE

For any “Thematic Social Studies Unit Topic” such as the American Civil War or an Illinois Native American Culture, have students investigate its heritage and related “Economic Concepts.” Each student’s conceptual growth and development depends on every Social Studies Unit’s treatment of such related Economic perspectives as its Natural Resources, jobs and occupations; Business Institutions & Products; Trade and Coinage; Exports and Imports; Monetary Statistics; Transport & Distribution activities; Economic Communications; Agricultural products; Economic Needs & Scarcity; Economic Innovations & Inventions, etc. Teachers should include this information along with student research topics that investigate Economic Issues, Responsibilities, et al.

(2.) UTILIZE OUTSTANDING “ECONOMICS EDUCATION” RESOURCES

As a responsible Social Studies classroom educator, invest academic time and money with those effectively written Economics Education workbooks, portfolio activities, skill-worksheet activities, puzzles, games, etc., that really help students understand Economics! From Economic “role-playing” games like “STAR POWER” to board games like “MONOPOLY” and so many others, students in the classroom should be able to have multiple opportunities for learning special critical thinking and problem-solving skills that relate to different lessons of fiscal literacy.

Other wonderful classroom resources of learning “economic concepts, lessons, and perspectives” should also include those “very new” computer-based programs that “Build Empires,” “go on the Oregon Trail,” and “play with Lemon Aide Stands!” There are so many others! Great classroom experiences in Economics Education generally integrate a student’s “new-found” fiscal literacy with lessons in reading comprehension, quantitative information, using graphs, valuing money, working with statistics and connections with other subject areas. For additional information on this topic, please link to our NCSS National Webpage for Social Studies resources or those shared by the National Council for Economics Education.

(3.) PLAY AMERICA’S “STOCK MARKET!”

Although there are many versions of Stock Market games, this Economics Education activity has students examine specific businesses and their related markets, commodities, demographics, resources, jobs, trade, “questions about the future,” investments, the banking system, et al. By having students “role play” their investments in stocks at the beginning of the school year (many school classrooms use “Monopoly Game money or balance sheets), they

activate their values by including business-related information, the Wall Street Journal, and other related materials. Special moments like “playing the Stock Market” can have students research

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their individualized investment decisions and tally their profits and losses, talk about the language of our free market, and formulate their own philosophy about being a member in a capitalistic system! Finally, please note the “Stock Market” games that are currently featured on the web.

(4.) CONTACT YOUR LOCAL “JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT” ORGANIZATION!

By contacting this highly effective Economics Education organization, teachers should be able to take their students on a particular “Economics Field Trip!” JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT OR J.A. invites students to “see and experience” the business-world and its relationships with trade, profits and losses, finance, accounting, business administration, and the overall economic welfare of their community, nation and world. Organizations such as the National Council on Economic Education also avail students and teachers of a myriad of Economic Education lesson plans, classroom resources, online software, ideas, catalogues, materials, games, puzzles, scholarships, tournaments, etc., that promote fiscal literacy.

(5.) SUPPORT ECONOMICS EDUCATION FIELD TRIPS

Organize stimulating classroom “Field Trips” to local banks, businesses, and other economics-based institutions! Not only will students learn “first-hand” Economics and Social Studies lessons, they will see how a “unique product” or service is created in the actual “work-place,” “assembly line,” or trade. Quite honestly, students will undoubtedly ask multiple questions about Economics such as the company or institution’s related jobs, roles, careers, responsibilities, education requirements, specialized concepts, issues, tasks, etc. For example, a quick trip to a McDonalds store will allow students to note the organization of each job, its responsibilities, and how each employee must relate to its overall. Additionally, Social Studies related Field Trips should be able to provide an authentic forum for stimulating the overall study of Economics!

(6.) UTILIZE “COIN SHOP” RESOURCES!

By visiting a local area’s Coin Shop or Bank or having its proprietor “Guest Speak” to a Social Studies class, students will be able to explore the vast array of coins and monies used throughout the world. Studying “historically-based” money or “internationally-based” coinage should have students ask questions about monetary value, international coinage, the usage of money and credit, denominations of coins, etc. Many Social Studies teachers have their students begin their own collection of coins by researching those that are available at local Coin Shops. Although many inexpensive coins can be used to begin student collections, there are those teachers who also “behaviorally reinforce” successful completion of academic work in the

classroom by rewarding students with coins! Additionally, many teachers integrate the discussion of coinage with their specific Social Studies Thematic Unit topic.

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(7.) PLAY ECONOMICS-BASED COMPUTER-BASED SOFTWARE & GAMES!

Today, many Social Studies teachers have their students learn Economics-based concepts and skills by integrating exciting Economics Education computer software programs and games. With these Social Studies-related educational experiences, Economic Education “lessons come alive” while playing Monopoly, Careers, Life, Made for Trade, Cargo, Harvest Time, Geo-Safari, Global Pursuit, STAR POWER, etc. So many current Economic computer games and other resources are “jammed” with stimulating Economic perspectives that compel each student to fiscally “pass judgment” and make Economic critical-thinking observations and decisions, create values, and challenge players to “economically succeed.” Additionally, there new variations of computer-based Economics Education software programs and games today like “Sym-City,” “Lemonade Stand,” “Oregon Trail,” and many others that students might ask questions about “old and new version” or “Social Studies Thematic Unit” creations of the same Economics Game!

(8.) EXPERIENCE “HANDS-ON” BUSINESS ACTIVITIES!

With the help of Business Education or Economics teachers at a local college or university, have students learn about “authentic” bank accounts, the world of “balance sheets and tax accounts,” research financial records of a small company, examine the marketing of newspaper, magazine, radio and television commercials and advertisements; create and videotape commercials and advertisements; design a newspaper ads; interview tax accountants and other business leaders; investigate business research techniques; address business management responsibilities and career opportunities; explore our local, national and global marketplaces, etc. By integrating Economics Education lessons in the classroom with authentic examples in the “real world,” students will be able to see how they play their role as citizens.

(9.) INVENT “ECONOMICS EDUCATION” GAMES & BUSINESSES!

University graduate students have noted the wonderful “pedagogical phenomenon” of Social Studies teachers that have their students create new Economics games and businesses, based on a specific thematic unit being studied. For example, a nearby class invented a board game that utilized play-money, maps, and the grand variety of social studies textbook “trivia questions” that helped them formulate a “Pirate Treasure Hunt Game.” After this student group completed their new “Economic Game” creation, they had it “field-tested” with their school’s primary classrooms! It was a wonderful success! Another creative Social Studies teacher had her students “invent” a local business organization that could earn monies for different

“Children’s Charities”; they created their own “Radio Station for Kids!” that shared school news, district programs, events, and calendars, student choirs productions, student viewpoints, local business support, and advertisements and “other perspectives for the elementary education market!”

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(10.) PLAY “STUDENT PAY-CHECK GAMES!”

Throughout our annual Social Studies Conferences here in Illinois and at the NCSS National Conferences, many teachers have reported about “those” Elementary and Middle School teachers who behaviorally reinforce their students with “Classroom & School Money!” Behaviors that are reinforced with “school money” include “good classroom behavior,” “on-time daily work and homework” submissions, successful work, etc. The idea of integrating “classroom money” with “student pay-checks” does link Classroom Management with Economics Education. On an ongoing basis, students are able to exchange their “classroom money” for valued classroom privileges, candy, toys, student materials, books, games, puzzles, stickers, etc. Additionally, entire Social Studies classrooms have been “paid” with Field Trips, parties, guest speakers, movies, assemblies, et al. Please address this idea with colleagues!

(11.) ORGANIZE “CAREER DAYS” & “GUEST SPEAKER” PROGRAMS

Many school programs have “Career Days” and “Guest Speaker” Programs that invite representatives from different occupations, places of employment, etc., to student assemblies for presentations and workshops. Social Studies educators who strongly believe in the overall effectiveness of these endeavors will also claim that they are very powerful “teachable moments!” “Guest Speakers” have become “role models” for students and, in particular, each child can directly ask questions about a particular career, profession, or citizenship role. Students have cited the fact that these events are most successful and that they do “dream” about what they “wish to be” in the future. Such “Career Day” and “Guest Speaker” events are quite varied in their administrative approaches; however, they are quite successful for stimulating students to reflect about their own careers and value questions about work, responsibility, and Economics!

(12.) CREATE CITIZEN EDUCATION & COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS!

Social Studies teachers who engage their students and parents with valuable “Community Service” and “Citizenship Education” projects that integrate local-area charities, causes, and social issues with Economics find their efforts greatly rewarded. By having teachers, students and parents work together to contribute to an area service project such as organizing “Community Clean-Up Days,” “Conservation Work,” planting trees with the DNR, filling sand-bags for flood relief, cleaning local roadways, et al., excites Civic Growth while students also learn Economics. In the past, Social Studies teachers begin “penny collections” and other “money-making” projects for student-selected charities. By generating these “first-hand and

first-touch” experiences with their community, students will be able to personally reflect about “those important” Civic questions which relate Citizenship with Economics the overall general welfare of their world!

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(13.) INVESTIGATION OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES

For school and community education programs that support Economics Education, foster online information for students and parents that features local “job opportunities,” internships, scholarships, fellowships, calendar events like “Job Fairs,” college and university “Open Houses,” et al. There are many wonderful economic and employment possibilities that offer job and career growth!

(14.) STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

Akin to “Science Fair” comparisons, many Social Studies programs across America offer annual calendar events that have students share their research studies of a chosen Economic Corporation/Institution. After choosing a company like McDonalds, a student will directly contact and research this institution for needed heritage perspectives, gather significant information that defines their “place in the economy,” and create a “Presentation Display Case.” The Michigan Council for the Social Studies offers an Annual “Social Studies Fair” that requires students to present “primary source data” about a chosen company along with a research paper and display case (note this information online); other states have similar competitions.

Here in Illinois, many Social Studies teachers have student research projects that are connected to each NCSS Social Studies Standard; Economics “Research Projects” are most successful with students! For additional information, please contact the Illinois Council for the Social Studies!

(15.) ILLINOIS & NCSS NATIONAL SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARD LESSONS

To meet established Social Studies Standards at the State and National Levels, address teaching and learning experiences that review basic concepts in Economics; guides for investigating the studies of Production, Distribution, and Consumption. **Please see handout attachment example.*

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