

Finding the Extraordinary in Every Child



LEARNING BY DOING

Students in a *MicroSociety* school create a microcosm of the real world inside their school. They create a currency, establish a government, and basic skills become relevant to their lives. Each student has a role in running that world. Young entrepreneurs produce goods and services, and elected officials establish laws. Peace Keepers stop crime and misbehavior. Judges arbitrate disputes, and reporters track down stories. All citizens earn wages in the school's Micro Currency, invest in product ideas, deposit and borrow money from the Micro Bank, and pay taxes, tuition, and rent.



A TYPICAL STUDENT'S DAY

Students attend regular classes until the period of the day when the classroom doors open and the students' society springs into action. From legislature to local business, every student is engaged in work that requires them to apply their reading, writing, and math knowledge and skills. Every business and public agency begins with planning time—setting goals and objectives for the day, talking about problems and successes, ordering supplies, and managing workloads. At the end of the Micro day, an hour later, the citizens again gather in their agencies and businesses to review their progress, problems, successes, and plans. One period each week is usually devoted to a journaling and reflection on the accomplishments and problems of the week and another to bookkeeping and routine paperwork.



MICRO STUDENTS BECOME SCHOOL LEADERS

Students are empowered when they make the rules that govern behavior in their miniature society. They play an active role in maintaining order and in solving community problems. Peer culture becomes a positive force for social development. As primary stakeholders in ventures and organizations, students discover the benefit of a secure, cooperative environment where all students can flourish. Micro graduates credit their experience with helping them avoid trouble long after graduation from the program.

READING AND WRITING TO SUCCEED

A modern economy depends on a literate work force, as well as literate consumers. *MicroSociety* provides a context that makes reading functional and fun. In the courtroom, marketplace, and newsroom: reading, writing, and communication skills spell the difference between success and failure. With *MicroSociety's* reading program, The Reading Industry, students create an entire industry of literacy-related businesses and services.

MATH AS A SURVIVAL SKILL

Hundreds of transactions occur during "Micro" time each day. Math is elevated to a survival skill. Students need arithmetic to buy and sell, create budgets, maintain a checkbook, and calculate taxes. They need geometry to measure floor plans or design jewelry. They apply algebra and statistics to financial reports and spreadsheets.

SCIENCE IN ACTION

Science lessons come to life when student architects and engineers erect new storefronts, and when entrepreneurs use technology to invent or manufacture products to take to market. "Micro" government researchers apply biology to cutting-edge recycling campaigns, healthcare policies, and public green spaces.

LIVING SOCIAL STUDIES

Social studies into a living lesson in citizenship and government, world culture, and geography. Students forge a social contract in a Constitutional Convention. They learn how government works in legislature and debate social issues in town meetings. Coached by teachers, children learn to resolve conflicts, negotiate, persuade, and defend their actions in court.

PREPARATION FOR THEIR FUTURE

The *MicroSociety* program helps students find meaning and purpose in their education. Hundreds of times each day they apply math, reading, and writing on the job. As members of an interdependent society, they grapple with ethical issues and hone problem solving and analytical skills. From bankruptcies to court decisions, they develop interpersonal skills such as respect for authority, work ethic, and collegiality and they learn that honesty and responsibility are key to personal fulfillment. They learn that their academic education and its application in their miniature society is preparation for life.

"*MicroSociety* is an example of applying real learning theory—that we understand to work in the real world—to kids' lives. It's authentic. It's real. It not only mimics, but prepares them for the real tasks they'll have to do when middle grade students leave school: to work for other people, to solve problems, to use resources. That's what we want!"

— Linda Darling-Hammond, Stanford University Teachers College

IMPACT ON TEST SCORES

The most recent study of students test scores in *MicroSociety* schools was completed in 2004 by Arete Consulting, New York, New York. The following are quotes from their study.

English and Language Arts

- Two-thirds (69%) of all schools receiving MSI training had increases in English and language arts (ELA) in the first year of their participation compared to the year before their participation.
- When we averaged the ELA scores of all grades in all schools, including those that increased and those that decreased, the ELA scores increased 7% in the first year of the program and another 7% in the second year.
- When only schools that increased their ELA scores were considered, and we believe these to be schools with better *MicroSociety* implementations, the average score increase in the first year was 22% and additional 13% in the second year.

Math

- More than half, 57%, of all schools receiving MSI training showed improvement in math in the first year. In the second year when we believe there is more impact on math, 73% of these schools showed improvement.
- When we averaged the math scores of all grades in all schools, we found a 7% increase in the first year of the program and a 14% increase in the second.
- When only schools that increased their math scores were considered, these schools showed an average 30% increase in the first year and an additional 17% in the second.

