

FUN, GAMES, & OTHER LEARNING



Web start



Imagine that your class is starting a Web page to offer students some sort of service. What kind of service would that be? How could it make money?

EXAMPLES

1. Reviews: CD reviews, concert reviews (from those who saw it earlier on the tour), student movie reviews.
2. Student study help: best book reports on file, online Cliff Notes, homework hot line.
3. Tips: game-winning formulas and tips, product ratings (mountain bikes).

Many choices



Have your students bring car ads to class from the Sunday newspaper. Discuss the many choices of cars that are available on the market. Then have students rate their top five favorite cars—price is no object. Then give them a fictitious bank account with a specified, limited balance. Now ask them to rate their top five cars that they can afford. Next, browse through the ads for the students' favorite cars. Ask students to imagine what the price would be if there were only one choice: their top choice. Would there be any advertising? Would the product continue to be high quality if there wasn't competition? Are opportunities for buyers as important as opportunities for car makers? (See Chinese bike example.)

Pooling funds



Have your students keep track of the amount of change in their pockets each day. After several weeks, total up this spare change. Now suggest that these funds be pooled over a school year (a little multiplication is required) and given to the student with the best idea for a new business. This is known as "seed capital" and should help a clever student who has to tailor his venture to the available funds. Now the students are capitalists and stake or equity holders in the venture. How do the students treat the class entrepreneur in whom they've invested their spare change? Do they now regard this venture as their business? Do they miss their spare change? (Note: Many a business has been started on collective spare money from a number of people.)

Opportunity Monopoly



The game of Monopoly® is an enjoyable way to learn some basic facts about economics—capital investment, interest and return, for example. With some preparation, you and your class can reengineer the classic board game and create Opportunity Monopoly.

Note: This exercise can be difficult and frustrating—just like creating opportunity in a community. But there's an important lesson in discovering how every change in a feedback loop (like a neighborhood or a board game) creates unintended consequences.

Here are some things to consider in designing Opportunity Monopoly:

First, take a look at the bank. Could you make it into a credit union, like the Hip Hop Bank, where all the players owned shares?

Second, think of the board as a neighborhood or even a city block. How will you redesign it to be a healthy mix of residences and businesses?

Third, look at the Community Chest and Chance cards and write your own. Here are some ideas: The credit union pays dividends. Every player collects \$25. You start a new business on one of your spaces. The credit union gives you a loan of \$500. You're going back to school to learn computer skills. Pay \$50. Taxes are up. Every business pays \$5.

Fourth, tinker with the basics. Use houses as residences and hotels as businesses. Collect \$200 as you pass Go. Then pay a \$5 tax for every residence and a \$10 tax for every business. Create jobs by building businesses. For every job you create, you earn a \$100 interest-free loan from the credit union. Charge \$5 rent for every residence you build and \$10 rent for every business.

Give students one class period to design the new game and another period to play it. Then talk about students' aims and expectations and the realities of play. What changes would they make if they had the time to refine the game further?