
F O C U S

MIDDLE SCHOOL
ECONOMICS

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EconomicsAmerica

National Council on
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FOREWORD

Focus: Middle School Economics, a core volume in a new generation of National Council publications, is dedicated to increasing the economic literacy of *all* students. The *Focus* publications, the new centerpiece of EconomicsAmerica, build on almost five decades of success in delivering economic education to America's students.

The *Focus* series is both new and innovative, using economics primarily to enhance learning in subjects such as history, geography, civics, and personal finance. Activities are interactive, reflecting the belief that students learn best through active, highly personalized experiences with economics. Applications of economic understanding to real world situations and contexts dominate the lessons. In addition, the lessons explicitly teach the voluntary national standards in economics, outlined in the National Council's *A Framework for Teaching the Basic Economic Concepts*.

In *Focus: Middle School Economics*, the authors look at how social studies education can contribute to the development of effective participation in society. The focus in this publication is on six societal roles emphasized in

EconomicsAmerica: lifelong decision maker, knowledgeable consumer, productive worker, responsible citizen, prudent saver, and global participant. Middle school students may not yet perform all roles, but they will in the future. How they fill these roles will change as they grow and mature. The lessons emphasize that decision making is part of each of the societal roles that students will play, and students and teachers discover the economic content that is relevant to each role.

Michael Watts, Professor of Economics, Purdue University, and Senior Fellow, National Council on Economic Education, reviewed the manuscript and offered many valuable suggestions. The authors and the publisher are responsible for the final publication.

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Joan Sullivan Baranski
Publisher

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

The authors believe that social studies education in middle schools must focus on how people participate in society. Superka and Hawke, in an article in *Social Education*, state that, “If social education is to contribute more fully to the development of effective participants in our society, it must be refocused on how most people participate in that society—how they spend their time and where they put their energy.” They further suggest that social studies education should focus on the roles common to members of society. The authors agree and, therefore, focus on six societal roles emphasized in *EconomicsAmerica*: lifelong decision maker, knowledgeable consumer, productive worker, responsible citizen, prudent saver, and global participant.

Middle school students may not yet perform all of the roles, but they will in the future. How they fill these roles will change as they grow and mature. The roles overlap in many ways. For example, decision making is part of each of the other roles, and prudent saver and global participant overlap with responsible citizen.

Focus: Middle School Economics includes an introduction, 19 lessons, a glossary, and a bibliography. The introduction includes a grid that correlates the lessons with related content areas and a grid that correlates the economic content with the lessons. An introductory lesson helps students understand the six roles emphasized in the program and the concept of an economic system.

Each unit has one of these six roles as a theme. The introduction to each unit focuses on the role featured in the unit and outlines the lessons in the unit. The lessons within each unit teach economic content relevant to a role students have or will have in the future. Each lesson has an introduction, a list of economic concepts, a list of related content areas, a set of objectives, a brief lesson description, an estimate of time required for the lesson, a list of materials required, procedure, closure, sug-

gested evaluation, and list of extension activities that connect the lesson with other curricular content areas. In the last lesson of each unit, the evaluation section includes a journal writing activity to help students focus on their changing roles and the connection among roles by responding to the following questions:

- Is this one of your roles now? If so, how?
- How will you fill this role in the future?
- How will being a(n) _____ (insert role) benefit you?
- How is your role as decision maker related to being a(n) _____ (insert role) ?

The final lesson reviews the economics taught through a game and reviews the roles of individuals in the economic system. Also in the back matter are a glossary of economic terms and a bibliography listing fiction and nonfiction titles appropriate for teaching economics.

ABILITY GUIDELINES AND FLEXIBILITY OF TEXT

Focus: Middle School Economics is suitable for a wide variety of curriculum needs and teaching strategies. The program allows for great flexibility in teaching and learning—offering ample support for students of different ability levels. As there is no single approach or method adequate in all situations, the authors suggest many approaches for teachers to choose from to best suit the needs of their individual courses and to match the abilities, interests, and backgrounds of students. In general, the lessons are for all students.

KEY TO ABILITY LEVELS

The following coding system identifies activities suitable for students of various ability levels:

- ★ all students—basic course material
- average and above average students
- average and below average students

INTRODUCTORY LESSON

ECONOMIC ROLE CALL

INTRODUCTION

An economic system is the institutional framework that a society uses to allocate its resources to produce and distribute goods and services. In a predominantly market economic system, the major decisions about production and distribution are made in a decentralized manner by individual households and business firms.

As they participate in the economic system, members of society have a number of common roles: decision maker, consumer, worker, citizen, saver, and global participant. This lesson connects people's day-to-day activities to these roles and the economic system. Each of these six roles is a theme for a section of this publication. The lessons in each section will develop economic understanding related to the role.

ECONOMIC CONCEPTS

Economic system

RELATED CONTENT AREAS

Language arts
Critical thinking

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Define economic system.
- ◆ Identify roles people have in the economy.
- ◆ Identify activities in which people engage that are related to their roles in the economy.
- ◆ Predict activities they will undertake in the future and relate them to the broad roles.

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Students participate in a game to identify six roles individuals have in our society. They learn that these roles are part of the economic system.

TIME REQUIRED

- ◆ Two class periods

MATERIALS

- Dictionary
- ★ Activity 1, *Economy Role Call*, one per student
- ★ Activity 2, *Economy Role Call Cards*, cut apart
- Chart paper
- Markers

PROCEDURE

1. Explain that there are many things people do that are related to the roles they play in life. For example, teachers teach, shop, vote, pay taxes, and make choices in their roles as teachers, parents, and citizens.
2. Write **economic system** on the board. Ask students to suggest meanings for the term and/or to find the two words in the dictionary. Record their responses on the board. (Economic: related to the economy or money; the science that deals with the production, distribution, and consumption of commodities. System: a way of doing things; an organizational form; a group of interacting, interdependent elements forming a complex whole.)
3. Combine and develop students' responses into a definition such as this: An

INTRODUCTION

- economic system is the framework that a society uses to allocate its resources to produce and distribute goods and services.
4. Explain that many things people do in their lives are related to the roles they have in the economic system.
 5. Divide the class into groups and distribute Activity 1, *Economy Role Call*, to each student. Point out there are six sections on the page. Only a few letters are provided for each section heading.
 6. Select a student to represent the role on *Economy Role Call Card #1*. Explain that there are three clues to help the class decide what role is being described. As the clues are announced, students write them under the corresponding section on the activity (for example, Section 1 for Card 1). Have students use the clues to determine the role and complete the section heading.
 7. After the first role has been determined, ask the student with *Economy Role Call Card #1* to write “Productive Worker” on the board and select a student to give the clues from *Role Call Card # 2*. Continue the process until all 6 roles have been determined. (Note: Upon completion there should be 6 columns on the board.)
 8. After students have identified all of the roles, review the characteristics described by the clues. Discuss:
 - As a citizen, how does a person participate in the economy? (voting, paying taxes, obeying laws)
 - As a consumer, how does a person participate in the economy? (using and buying goods and services)
 - As a worker, how does a person participate in the economy? (helping to make goods or services in jobs or in their own households)
 9. Ask students how someone participates in the economy as a decision maker. (Answers will vary. Point out that being a decision maker is part of every role. People make decisions as workers, consumers, citizens, savers, and global participants.)
 10. Ask students to think about activities related to one of the six roles. As students make suggestions, ask them to come forward and write them under the role to which the activity is related. (Student does homework: worker; student chooses how to spend allowance: consumer, decision maker; student has a savings account: saver; student obeys the laws of the community and the school: citizen; learns about other cultures, learns about rain forests: global participant.)
 11. Ask students to predict activities they might perform as adults that are related to these roles. (Engineer: worker; tax payer, voter: citizen; bank customer: saver; becomes informed about a trade issue: global participant; chooses a college, job, car, and so on: decision maker.) As students answer, they write their suggestions in the correct column on the board.

CLOSURE

1. Have students construct a poster, write a poem, draw a picture, or in some creative way express the various roles they perform now or may perform in the future.

EVALUATION

1. Divide the class into groups of six. Distribute a sheet of chart paper to each group and a different colored marker to each student in the group. Instruct students to write their names on one side of the paper. On the other side, have them draw a circle in the center of the paper, write “economic system” inside the circle, and draw six lines out from the center circle. Next, they draw a circle at the end of each line and write one of the roles

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inside each circle. Each student begins at one “role circle” writing ideas, words, and characteristics that suggest how this role is involved in the economic system. After two minutes, students move to the “role circle” on their left, look at the connections that have been made, and add some ideas of their own. Students continue moving every two minutes until each student has had a turn at each “role circle.” Collect and keep the group webs. This activity can be conducted again in *Concluding Lesson, Role Call Quiz*, and the two webs can be compared for an evaluation. (Some possible connections: decision maker: voter, consumer; citizen: votes, pay taxes, uses public goods and services; consumer: buys goods, uses services.)

2. Instruct students to keep a journal for a week. Each day they enter activities of household members and identify the roles to which these activities are related.

EXTENSION

1. In their reading, ask students to identify ways characters in the books are involved in the economic system and to identify the roles to which the characters’ activities might be related.

Examples:

Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls (New York: Bantam, 1974): Billy

and his parents work, save, and consume and in so doing make many decisions.

The Great Wheel by Robert Lawson (New York: Walker, 1985): Conn Kilroy decides to leave his small village in Ireland for a new life in the United States. Conn’s roles in the economic system include saver, citizen, worker, and decision maker.

2. In mathematics, ask students to solve problems related to consuming and saving (for example, calculating interest).
3. In social studies, introduce and review concepts related to the work and responsibilities of being a citizen.
4. Use *The International News Journal, Inc.* (New York: National Council on Economic Education, 1992), to expand student understanding of economics and student roles as global participants and productive workers.
5. Invite members of the community such as a government official or a childcare worker to speak to the class regarding their roles in the economy.
6. Divide the class into pairs of threes. Ask each group to write a script for a short play. Explain that the play must include examples of people participating in each of the six roles identified. Allow groups to

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Name _____

ACTIVITY 1 ECONOMY ROLL CALL

1. _ _ R _ _ R

2. C _ N _ _ _ _ _

3. C _ _ _ Z _ _

4. G L _ _ _ _

P _ _ T I _ I P _ _ _

5. _ _ V E _

6. D _ _ _ _ _ _ _

M _ _ _ _

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ACTIVITY 2 ROLE CALL CLUE CARDS

<p style="text-align: center;">1. WORKER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Owns a business or works for someone else.b. Helps produce goods or services.c. Performs mental and/or physical work.	<p style="text-align: center;">2. CONSUMER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Decides what goods and services to buy.b. Spends money on goods and services.c. Uses goods and services.
<p style="text-align: center;">3. CITIZEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Pays taxes.b. Obeys laws and acts responsibly.c. Becomes informed about issues and candidates and votes.	<p style="text-align: center;">4. GLOBAL PARTICIPANT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Tries to understand international trade issues.b. Learns about other cultures and civilizations.c. Seeks to understand the economics of environmental issues.
<p style="text-align: center;">5. SAVER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Gives up buying some goods and services now in order to buy goods and services in the future.b. Doesn't spend all of his or her income.c. Sometimes stores money in the bank and receives interest.	<p style="text-align: center;">6. DECISION MAKER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Determines his or her alternatives.b. Considers important factors about each alternative.c. Makes choices.

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Correlations of Lessons with Related Content Area (Including Extension Activities)

	Language Arts	Mathematics	Critical Thinking	Geography	History	Civics
Introduction	●	●	●			●
1	●		●		●	
2	●	●				
3	●	●		●		
4	●	●				
5	●	●				
6	●					
7	●	●	●			
8	●	●				
9	●	●				
10	●	●				●
11	●	●	●			●
12	●	●				●
13	●					●
14	●		●			●
15	●		●			
16	●	●			●	
17	●				●	
Concluding	●		●			●

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ECONOMIC CONCEPT/LESSON GRID										
CONCEPT	LESSON NUMBER									
	Intro	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Scarcity		●						●		
Opportunity Cost and Trade-Offs		●	●							
Productivity								●		
Economic Systems	●									
Economic Institutions and Incentives										●
Exchange, Money, and Interdependence										
Markets and Prices				●	●					
Supply and Demand					●	●			●	
Competition and Market Structure										
Income Distribution										
Market Failures										
Role of Government										
Gross Domestic Product										
Unemployment										
Inflation							●			
Fiscal Policy										
Absolute and Comparative Advantage and Barriers to Trade										
Exchange Rates										
Tables								●		●
Charts and Graphs		●	●		●	●			●	
Ratios and Percentages			●							

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ECONOMIC CONCEPT/LESSON GRID (continued)									
CONCEPT	LESSON NUMBER								
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Concluding
Scarcity									
Opportunity Cost and Trade-Offs					●				
Productivity									
Economic Systems									●
Economic Institutions and Incentives						●			
Exchange, Money, and Interdependence							●		
Markets and Prices									
Supply and Demand									
Competition and Market Structure									
Income Distribution									
Market Failures	●								
Role of Government	●	●			●				
Gross Domestic Product			●	●					
Unemployment									
Inflation									
Fiscal Policy									
Absolute and Comparative Advantage and Barriers to Trade							●	●	
Exchange Rates									
Tables	●	●	●						
Charts and Graphs					●				
Ratios and Percentages	●	●	●						