

## EXCHANGING GIFTS THROUGH LIFE-SKILL GAMES, COMBINED WITH OTHER INVESTIGATIVE, INTERACTIVE, DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING DESIGNED TO MEET BOYS' NEEDS.

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### MY MODUS OPERANDI

- 1) To gift each pupil, every day, with opportunities to feel pleased with himself - boosting his self-esteem. (In return, he will gift me.)
- 2) To present the day's activities and guide them in such a way that they play a role in allowing the pupil to enjoy being at school, especially during lesson time. (Future pupils will, hopefully, because of the outcomes consequently achieved, want to be in my class.)
- 3) To present the day's activities in a way that will induce people to comment that time flew.
- 4) To inspire each pupil to achieve relative personal greatness.
- 5) To seek inspiration for myself from the comments and achievements of my pupils and other teaching staff.
- 6) To promote creative activities outside of the classroom. (e.g. Through "creativity weeks - x pupils a week bring in work not requested by any other teacher or organisation which involves creative expression - painting, pottery, woodwork, paper work, model building, story writing, photography, musical solo, poetry composition. Entirely voluntary activity but these "gifts" are photographed and added to their portfolios.) Thereby, pupils are gifted with an additional opportunity to showcase their talents.
- 7) To promote an interest in improving the environment by any possible means.

## MY TOOLS

- 1) At my last three schools I have been fortunate to be allowed input into the design, positioning and furnishing of learning areas and formal classrooms. I do not work in the ideal physical environment, however. (For that, a school would have to be designed and built from scratch.) This term I replaced the old single desks with trapezoid tables. I have a few scatter cushions on the floor.
- 2) I use a PC (with speakers and a range of my own music CD's and DVD's), a printer, a Promethean Interactive Board, a set of CPS remotes, my own digital camera, a scanner and the usual wall charts, books and magazines - all stationed in my classroom. The PC is linked to the school network and the Internet.
- 3) I have a school-issue personal laptop, another scanner (my own) specifically for OCR, in my office, and access to a network of other printers in various locations in the school.
- 4) In the senior part of the school we can presently take the children into two desktop venues/labs for ICT purposes, a section of the library with desktops and a fourth venue - a lecture/work station combination (of my own conception) is under construction. All computer stations are linked to a network, so pupils may continue specific tasks in any venue. We propose, in the next eighteen months, to introduce hand-held palm-tops and/or some laptops to supplement the more than hundred computers to which our 440 pupils currently have daily access.
- 5) Our library renovation, to meet more modern needs, is currently nearing completion.
- 6) During the second of the year's three terms, I have a board placed in my classroom for the purposes of guiding the Life Game's development. (After extending the concept to two other grades - travel game for grade 4 and farm game for grade 5 - thus far, I intend to pioneer other "game activities" into my class during the other terms too.)

## MY PUPILS

- 1) At my present post, I am usually given a disproportionate percentage of academic strugglers, pupils with attention deficits and pupils whose behaviour makes them unpopular with other teachers.
- 2) Most classes in the school are not streamed academically, except for **m**athematics and Afrikaans (from year four upwards). In **m**athematics I am assigned the majority of those who struggle most.
- 3) They are all talented lads, with particular strengths, capable of being extended and doing better in various ways.

## THE SUBJECTS I OFFICIALLY TEACH (Into which the game is integrated.)

- 1) English
- 2) Mathematics
- 3) Natural, Social and Economic Sciences

ASPECTS OF FORMAL EDUCATION INTO WHICH THE LIFE GAME INTEGRATES. (The other games will be given some lesser exposure during the actual presentation.)

### Mathematics and Business Sciences

- 1) Shape and Space: easily tied in to issues of scale / units of measurement.
- 2) Shape and space: design 3D nets for the construction of buildings.
- 3) Shape and space: plot purchases and building floor sizes involve area.
- 4) Shape and space: perimeter may be involved in fencing contracts.
- 5) Shape and space: **B**uilding costs may be per square cm.
- 6) Shape and space: **M**ap production to scale.
- 7) Arithmetic: **L**otto owners operate on a percentage of turnover.
- 8) Arithmetic: **C**alculating projected earnings when tendering for a business and evaluating the estimates when compared with one's personal goals and time/effort required.

- 9) Arithmetic: Balance sheets involve the use the concepts of debit and credit; running totals; percentages - banks pay 10% per week; properties, properly cared for, appreciate at 15% - and profit/loss; income tax and the like.
- 10) Sequences: projecting future earnings.
- 11) Data Handling: the preparation and generation of graphs reflecting weekly earnings, property appreciation, overall asset totals, and the like.
- 12) Business sciences - concepts of contracts, tenders, obligations, supply and demand, factors affecting property evaluations.
- 13) Etc..

## English

- 1) Weekly diary entries.
- 2) Composing articles/contributions for the newspaper.
- 3) Essays - "What I learned during the game."; "How participation affected other aspects of school activity and my attitude". Preparing legal arguments and documents.
- 4) Committee or residential area discussions and debates. Issues such as "Greening the energy supply", "The desirability of the death penalty", "maintaining parklands".
- 5) Designing advertisements.
- 6) Scripting a radio station's activities.
- 7) Designing a CPS quiz on civics.
- 8) Writing a letter on a civic issue - "Unsightly, potentially harmful, electrical tower to be erected in prime suburb".
- 9) Role-playing activities.
- 10) Public speaking.
- 11) Written proposal for the introduction of a new business activity in the game.
- 12) Writing lines about the game for the school magazine and weekly School newsletters.
- 13) Vocabulary relating to all aspects - commercial, the courts, civic departments etc.
- 14) Etc..

### Science and technology.

- 1) Bridge design and construction competition.
- 2) Design of all facilities, taking cognisance of environmental issues.
- 3) Research on Energy supply alternatives and plant design.
- 4) Green and environmental issues - aesthetic and survival.
- 5) Etc..

### Life Skills

- 1) Broad issues of law and government,
- 2) Justice processes.
- 3) Licensing,
- 4) Budgeting and book-keeping.
- 5) Record-keeping.
- 6) Meeting contractual obligations.
- 7) Issues of conformity, ethics.
- 8) Public speaking - council elections.
- 9) Leadership styles and skills.
- 10) Rules of the road. A "learner driver" test.
- 11) Town planning.
- 12) Staging suburb naming competitions and some for beautiful gardens, the most innovative suburb management and the like.
- 13) Auctioneering.

### Social Sciences

- 1) The histories of trade relating to bartering.
- 2) The development of money and banking,
- 3) Civic issues and the growth/management of towns.

## ROLE PLAYING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LIFE GAME

- 1) Three salaried bankers and four salaried municipal officers are appointed.
- 2) There are normally two lawyers (who must present arguments should any dispute be brought to court), two insurance/assurance brokers, two supermarket owners, a doctor/dentist and/or medical aid scheme and many builders. There is a transport business, a travel agent, lotto operator, newspaper publisher/editor, radio station entrepreneur and many other self-devised businesses.
- 3) Boys tender to build their own designs of municipal and other facilities - school, fire station, police station, hospital, recreation facilities, airport, railways station, dockyard, old age home, power station, restaurant, hotel, golf estate etc..
- 4) All pupils are candidates in the municipal elections. The council eventually elects its own mayor and deputy mayor.
- 5) Weekly nominated policeman, bus manager and postman.

## BROAD BENEFITS OF THE GAMES

- 1) The games are motivational tools. They are also so open-ended that no two teachers use them in exactly the same way, with the same rules; and the different classes of pupils change it, each year, in different ways.
- 2) Reduced absenteeism and time wastage. Pupils want to do their work to the satisfaction of the teacher, in time to advance their game goals.
- 3) Daily opportunities for creative expression - words, actions, model-making, design, graphics etc.
- 4) Daily opportunities for innovation. (The teacher is open to all good suggestions that may affect how pupils act and think.)

- 5) Countless formal and informal leadership opportunities - heading a council, advising on commercial procedures, acting as judge in a court case, suggesting better ways of doing anything, helping someone, forming and managing partnerships.
- 6) Opportunities to affect the curriculum and day's schedule, through carefully presented arguments and suggestions.
- 7) More opportunities to gain peers' respect in new ways. So many opportunities to generate self-esteem. More opportunities to be considerate or to lose respect by being selfish.
- 8) Added opportunities for the teacher to engage more personally with one or more pupils while the others are actively and productively absorbed in their own activities.
- 9) A meaningful release-mechanism for the child with focus issues. Another option for the teacher who varies focal points and activity forms.
- 10) Current news issues are often easily absorbed, in some way, into the game - an election, fraud, financial developments, uncertainties such as accidents and deaths (A plane crash in a suburb, a building burns down, a volcanic eruption / earthquake near a suburb, squatter problems, a convicted murderer executed in another country.) At least one pupil "dies" at the end of the game - issues relating to insurance, estate and inheritance practices.
- 11) Improved assessment scores/results in all subjects through improved work ethic.
- 12) Fewer class behavioural issues.
- 13) Increased dialogue between parents and children on education/school related activities. (A wonderful opportunity for father or mother to further advance the pupil's understanding of financial and civic issues, as he is now more interested in them.)
- 14) More fun (and work) in the day for pupil (and teacher). Greater level of fulfilment too.
- 15) An exciting chance to show how much anyone may benefit and become a winner - succeed in a real world simulation - through greater personal effort and self-development.

## THE GAMES AS AN EXTENSION OF MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

- 1) Time allowing, my presentation will outline other practical ideas, mainly for Mathematics and English/Language teachers, which may be useful in promoting investigative, interactive, differentiated learning practices that both engage more pupils more effectively and allow each pupil a sense of self-improvement and fulfilment. They will emphasize the importance I place on individual ideas and pupil input into content and format decisions.
- 2) I classify **himself** as one of the most old-fashioned teachers you will ever meet, if "old-fashioned" is defined in terms of a desire to inculcate the basics (Good old three R's) as thoroughly as possible (to saturation point). However, I recognise the need to engage pupils in order to be as effective as possible and am continuously trying to promote creativity, higher order thinking skills and innovation in pupil-centred "gift-generation" in all spheres. I am one of the foremost South African exponents of technology-usage in a school but will not comment much on that aspect in this particular presentation. (Teachers from round the country visit my classroom to look at my technology-based work each month.)
- 3) I believe in showcasing pupils' work as often, and in as many ways, as possible and am currently launching a new resource project which will, inter alia, showcase teaching tools and best practices, as well as pupil best practices, for my school and the broader community. I experiment, on and off, with pupil portfolio compilations.
- 4) For more on my "classroom" philosophy, I hope you may find the pages outlining "My life in the classroom - questioning creatively for myself." Entertaining or thought-provoking.



