
*In Dorothy Watts' classroom
students have to pay bills
and purchase their school
supplies. Living in the
State of Education helps prepare
them for the "real world."*

Living in the "State of Education"

A sign on the grades 4-5 classroom at Portland Adventist Elementary School (Oregon) reads: "You are now entering the STATE OF EDUCATION. Population: 21. Drive carefully!"

If you ignore the sign you may receive a speeding ticket for 25 "scholars." A scholar is a school dollar, the currency on which the state operates.

Once you have crossed the state line, you will see that the classroom has been arranged to simulate a miniature state, complete with governor's mansion, general store, bank, post office, public library, newspaper office, science laboratory, computer store, craft factory, stock exchange, jail, and state penitentiary.

In the center of the room the desks form five clusters of four each. Each group represents a city, with a child who serves as mayor.

When the citizens need school sup-

At the time this article was written, Dorothy Eaton Watts was a multigrade specialist at Portland Adventist Elementary School in Gresham, Oregon. This year she is teaching grades 1-8 at St. John's Adventist School in St. John's, Michigan. In October 1985 the Gresham Outlook printed a 40-column-inch feature story about the activities described here. A television crew also filmed a segment about the State of Education for the evening news.

plies, they visit the general store. To stock necessary items, parents contributed \$20 seed money. The storekeeper records all purchases, and keeps accounts of how much money the store has received from its customers. A pencil costs one scholar and 10 sheets of paper sell for one scholar. The children must purchase all necessary items from the store. They may not bring supplies from home or buy them on the black market.

The bank is located next door to the store. Just as in real life, the citizens of the State of Education need money to pay bills and purchase necessary items. The children earn a weekly salary of 50 schol-

ars if they complete their weekly work contract on time. Each contract must be finished before the next one is received. Work completed on the day assigned receives full wages. Late work receives only half pay. Work that is more than two weeks late, unless because of emergency or illness, receives no pay. However, the citizens are eager to get paid, so they usually turn in their work on time. Excused absences allow the student to renegotiate his or her contract.

Payday!

Monday is payday. After receiving a check, each child fills out a deposit slip

BY DOROTHY EATON WATTS

and pays any outstanding bills. Everyone has recurring obligations such as tithe, mortgage payments, utilities, property taxes, and social security taxes. All bills must be paid by check. The children then balance their checkbooks and bank accounts.

When her mother came to visit, Lara pointed out all the bills she had to pay. "It's terrible, Mommy; we have so many bills that it takes all I make."

"Now you know what Daddy and I have to struggle with every month," her mother responded.

On the first day of school Shelley asked if she could put more than one assignment on a sheet of paper.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because now paper costs money!"

You would be surprised how little paper the children use. Pencils aren't sharpened unless they really need it. These youngsters have learned to economize!

After a couple of weeks of writing tithe checks one child asked, "Why do we have to pay tithe?" That gave me an excellent opportunity to discuss the biblical principle of tithing.

What if a child runs out of money? The bank loans money at an interest rate of 10 percent. When the first child discovered that he had to pay back more than he took, he exclaimed, "That's robbery!"

However, having to make weekly payments to the bank has helped the children understand credit and encourages careful budgeting.

A Stock Exchange

"We want to have a stock exchange," Eric and Craig proposed one day.

"But I don't know anything about the stock market," I protested. "If you can figure out how to do it though, I'll let you open one."

A couple of days later the boys came back with a workable plan. Using the prices of shares from the New York Stock Exchange, students may buy stock at the going price. They receive a stock certificate from the stockbroker, who keeps a record of the transaction. Once each quarter the stockholders draw a dividend rate from miscellaneous percentages written on slips of paper drawn from a box. They use a calculator to figure their dividend, and the broker gives them a check.

How to Get Extra Money

Children can earn extra money if their bank account becomes depleted. They may do piecework in the craft factory, type assignments, do filing, read books, work on research projects, or perform experiments.

The State of Education also has a post office. The children may write letters as often as they like, but they must put their notes in envelopes and address them correctly. Each child has an address, complete with zip code. Postal customers must weigh their letters and purchase stamps.

Traffic Control

Like other jurisdictions, the State of Education has traffic lights. Green means that the citizens may talk. Yellow permits whispering as necessary or working with a friend, but the students must be on task. During the red light cycle, no talking or whispering is allowed.

Trial and Punishment

The jail and penitentiary are reserved for those who cannot control themselves. Although no one wants to be sent to jail for misbehavior, students often sign a waiting list to work there. They have found the isolation helps them get a lot of work done quickly. The jail and penitentiary also serve as holiday retreat centers.

As the children live, work, and study in the State of Education, they begin to realize that they can actually make a difference in their lives by the choices they make. Their grades begin to improve, self-esteem soars, and behavior problems decrease.

Not long ago, Rose Snarr, school secretary, asked, "Mrs. Watts, what is going on in your room? We've not had anyone from your room for detention. You aren't sending down problems for the principal to solve."

"The children are learning to manage themselves and solve their own problems," I replied, and then told her about our court system.

Each month the citizens of the State of Education appoint a judge. Three names for jury duty are drawn out of a box. I serve as bailiff, prosecuting attorney, and defense attorney. That way I can

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Children in early grades learn mathematics more effectively when they use physical objects in their lessons.

write letters to friends and relatives, notes, grocery lists.

2. Math—have children help figure the cost of feeding the family for a week, assist in balancing the checkbook, use fractions to double recipes, measure wood for home-improvement projects, calculate the amount of gasoline needed to take a trip.

3. Reading—model the importance of reading by taking time to read books and magazines, and having reading materials available for children to peruse. Parents can set aside quiet time when everyone sits down and enjoys reading. Afterward, they can discuss what was read, and relate the story to daily life.

4. Experiences away from home—take youngsters to parks, libraries, zoos, historical sites.

5. Discipline—help children learn appropriate behavior for a variety of situations. Good behavior is learned, not intuitive.

6. Values—discuss and exhibit important values that you wish your children to develop in their lives, such as responsibility, the importance of education, hard work, persistence, and trust in God.

Conclusion

In summary, when teachers are knowledgeable about the curriculum, involve

students in their own learning through science experiments and homework assignments, use effective techniques for teaching reading and other subjects, communicate high expectations to their pupils, and work with parents; they will be compensated with improved student attitudes and enhanced achievement in the classroom.

The combined efforts of school and home will *make education work*. □

Free copies of the booklet, *What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning*, are available by writing Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81069.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Laurence Feinberg, "The 'Works' on Common Sense," *Washington Post* (March 5, 1986), D5.

² *What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1986), p. 21.

³ Miles V. Zintz and Zeldia R. Maggart, *The Reading Process: The Teacher and the Learner* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co. Publishers, 1984), p. 176.

⁴ *What Works*, p. 22.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁶ Iris McClellan Tiedt and Sidney Willis Tiedt, *Elementary Teacher's New Complete Ideas Handbook* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1983), pp. 144, 145.

⁷ *What Works*, p. 27.

⁸ Tiedt and Tiedt, p. 69.

⁹ *What Works*, p. 23.

¹⁰ Tiedt and Tiedt, p. 180.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹² Feinberg.

¹³ Ronald T. LaConte, *Homework as a Learning Experience: What Research Says to the Teacher* (Washington, D.C.: National Educational Association, 1981).

¹⁴ David A. England and Joannis K. Flatley, *Homework—and Why* (Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1985).

¹⁵ *What Works*, p. 15.

Often the whole class anxiously awaits the verdict. In the cases tried to date the student judge and jurors have imposed fair sentences.

About a week after Marcus appeared in court for losing his temper, a teacher saw him walking around the playground looking very agitated. "What's wrong, Marcus?" she asked.

"I'm trying not to have a court case," Marcus replied.

After Peter had been fined for calling names, he begged, "Please don't print my court case in the newspaper. I don't want the whole world to know what I did."

"Sorry," I said. "We need to live in such a way that we are proud for our actions to be published."

As the children live in the State of Education, they realize they can really make a difference in their lives by the choices they make.

A Special-Privilege Card

Half of the children in the State of Education own an ICMM credit card. This orange plastic card identifies them as members of the I Can Manage Myself club. To get this card, they have to show excellent self-control for two weeks. They must complete all work on time, and must not have any fines or jail sentences.

Cardholders receive certain privileges. These include sitting on the couch, using the typewriter, visiting the listening center, going to the bathroom without permission, and working together with a friend.

In the State of Education I see children developing positive character traits such as self-esteem, tolerance, understanding of others' viewpoints, self-control, dependability, respect for property, the value of money, stewardship, courtesy, time management, good citizenship, economy and conservation, honesty, truthfulness, and obedience.

Isn't that what Christian education is all about? Building character and preparing children for the joy of citizenship in this life and the higher joy of citizenship in the world to come? □

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control the situation by the questions I ask.

We have both civil and criminal cases in our court. Distinction is made between cases that involve a school rule and mere personal grievances. If a situation involves a school regulation, specific fines have already been designated. The judge simply assesses the fine once the defendant has been proved guilty. In cases lacking a formal rule, the judge

may use discretion in meting out punishment. Of approximately 40 cases heard in the Supreme Court of the State of Education, all but three have involved lawsuits between citizens. In the remaining cases the state initiated the trial. Litigants have occasionally settled out of court for a monetary consideration.

While cases are being tried, participants must observe courtroom decorum. The children take the process seriously.