

Curriculum Capsules

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Students Use Role Playing to Understand Islamic Culture

The New York City public schools have developed a mini-unit to help educate American youngsters about Islam's religious, political, economic, and social characteristics. As difficulties involving the Middle East multiply, this knowledge becomes increasingly important.

The unit helps students understand Islam and deal with its assumptions and everyday activities. Parts of the unit contrast and compare characteristics of a theocracy to democracy in the United States. Students also contrast Islam to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Themes deal with how Islamic practice defines and ritualizes individuals' duties and obligations, the relationship of citizens to the government, their compliance with Islamic law, and the differences between Islamic law and that of other nations.

In naturalistic role playing, students synthesize information, examining both cultural and political aspects of contemporary events in nations such as Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen. They decide and act on political, personal, and religious problems in terms of their consistency with Islamic principles.

References

Pellicano, Grace DiSantolo, and Roy R. Pellicano. "A Mini-Unit on Islam." *The Social Studies* 77, 2 (March/April 1986): 88-91.

Junior High Students Use Computers to Develop Quantitative Thinking Skills

Hot Dog, a software simulation program, has motivated Artesia, California's, Faye Ross Junior High students to develop planning, computation, computer, and business skills. Students plan expenses, add and subtract decimals, multiply decimals by whole numbers, and deal with situations

whose outcomes depend on random events. Written at a fifth-grade reading level, this has become one of the most popular programs available for use during unstructured school time.

Hot Dog places users in charge of a simulated refreshment stand at a football stadium for one season. Participants must decide how many hot dogs, buns, soft drinks, and courtesy kits (containing catsup, mustard, and napkins) to purchase and set prices for each item. The simulation is set up for each game depending on the day of the week, time of day, weather forecast, and so on. Random variables involved in the simulation make each season different. Players intuitively decide through trial and error when math is appropriate to the situation. Teachers can observe and listen in on the exchanges among students and gain a sense of which thought processes are flowing and which seem to be blocked.

Teachers use this popular game in class as well. They introduce new variables that lead students to more demanding problem solving. In a framework both exciting and relevant to would-be business success, students progress beyond game-playing to writing their own programs, using word processing programs and graphics to compose reports for other classes.

References

Fuller, Kenneth. "Beyond Drill and Practice: Using Computers to Teach Quantitative Thinking." *Science and Children* 23, 8 (May 1986): 16-19.



Developing Consumer Awareness Among Honor Students

Traditionally, high school consumer math courses are designed to motivate underachievers in mathematics. However, all too often, honor students graduate as consumer illiterates. The math department at North Shore High School in Glen Head, New York, saw the need for advanced placement calculus students to be able to verify a credit card finance charge, and for honor physics students to learn how to compute capital gains on stock transactions.

The consumer math program uses critical thinking activities to deal with the urgent problems these able adolescents will soon face as adults. Using IRS publications, *The Wall Street Journal*, New York Commodities Exchange data, and materials dealing with the Truth in Lending and Fair Credit Billing Acts, students deal with areas such as taxation, stocks and bonds, commodities, borrowing, and banking. Solving consumer problems becomes the central focus for students' use of advanced mathematics skills in a context that better prepares them for adult life. □

References

Gerver, Robert, and Richard Sgroi. "Consumer Mathematics for the Honor Student." *Curriculum Review* 25, 4 (March/April 1986): 53-54.

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