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ECONOMIC EDUCATION IN ARKADELPHIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

for

HONORS SEMINAR

Paper # 5

by

Judy Crumby

In order to learn more about the economic education of Arkadelphia elementary school pupils I was granted interviews with Mrs. Neal, principal of the Arkadelphia Elementary School, Mrs. Goodloe and Mrs. Baber, teachers in the same school.

Extensive economic education, especially in the elementary school, began three years ago in 1962. It began with the Economic workshop held at Ouachita Baptist University where five Arkadelphia teachers and two administrators first learned of the potential for economic education in elementary schools.

In 1963 after many more workshops had been attended and school meetings had taken place a tentative curriculum guide was made. The faculty discussed the most promising places to introduce economic concepts and it was decided to integrate the present curriculum with the already present concepts rather than to teach it as an individual course. Teachers began to experiences which were compiled. About 300 parents and other interested citizens viewed charts and displays prepared by 150 first grade students as a result of their study of economics inside and outside the home during the school's annual open house. In 1964 the Economic Education Guide was completed and edited by the Assistant Superintendent. The third and fourth grade pupils and teachers made room displays of visual aids resulting from their new emphasis on economic education. Different groups made field trips to various businesses and service groups in order to personalize the concepts studied. After more workshops and in school meetings more emphasis on Economic Education was made during American Education Week

with displays in down town store windows. In January of 1965 a P. T. A. program on Edonomic Education with grade level demonstrations on how Edonomic Education is taught in the Arkadelphia Elementary School. In March an Economic Education Fair was held during the annual Elementary School Open House.

The ARKADELPHIA SCHOOL SYSTEM ECONOMIC EDUCATION CIRRICULUM GUIDE states the basic purpose for the entire school system by stating that in a free society it is to develop the problem-solving ability of our children as it relates to personal and social problems basically economic in nature. In order to accomplish this purpose three things must be done: 1. Develop the child's analytical ability. 2. Help the child relate his everyday experiences to the world around him. 3. Begin to equip the child with some understanding of the structure of our economic system and his place in it.

There are more than 40 economic concepts that the ECONOMIC EDUCATION DEMONSTRATION in North Little Rock found to be acceptable for presentation to elementary pupils. Of these 40, the Arkadelphia Elementary School chose to combine and reduce the number to nine important concepts of economics. This is for the over-all program. They are: 1. All people in all nations are confronted with the conflicts between their unlimited wants and limited resources. 2. Man has attempted since the beginning of time to lessen the gap between his unlimited wants and limited resources. His efforts of specialization according to region and occupation and the invention of new machines and productive processes are evidences

of his desire to produce more, better and faster. 3. As a result of specialization people have become interdependent. This creates a need for a market where buyers and sellers can meet and for money which serves as a medium of exchange and store of value. 4. Some of the basic economic questions that must be answered are: What goods and services will be produced? How will they be produced? How much land or raw materials will be used? How much manpower? How many machines should be used to replace labor. 5. Who should receive the goods and services produced and in what proportion. 6. There is free decision of production and consumption in the United States, interaction through markets determine the type and quantity of goods and services produced. 7. Land, labor, capital and management are the factors of production and are purchased from their owners to produce goods and services. The availability of these factors determine who will receive income. 8. Income is spent or saved. The amount of income saved and invested determines how much the economy will produce and how many jobs there will be. 9. It is the policy of the federal, state, and local government to modify the operation of the market system in order to protect the general welfare.

There are several economic understandings that can be introduced on down in the elementary school level. The fact that the need for an economic system arises from scarcity must be a recurring theme. An understanding of the meaning of capitalism is important. Two basic facts about capitalism that should be introduced in the elementary level is that 1. Most productive services are privately owned and controlled, and 2.

Most productive factors, goods, and services are exchanged for money at their respective market places. An understanding of the meaning of the basic feature of the private enterprise system should stress the importance of individual, individual freedom, competition, private ownership of property, laws of contract, personal incentives, profit motive, and stable government by law. Mrs. Goodloe stated that this creates a greater appreciation for our way of life rather than forcing a teacher to merely teach against communism. Also a teacher should strive to bring about an understanding of the use of the factors of production--Resources can satisfy human wants only by being combined and altered--which is what takes place in factories, mines, laboratories, and businesses, in homes, schools, and communities. A teacher can also bring about a realization that people are no longer self-sufficient and explain why we now have division of labor. By showing that division of labor is another name for specialization, the teacher also begins introducing the child to a vocabulary of economic terms. The teacher should stress that interdependence is a direct result of specialization in the home, school, community, all domestic activities, and world trade. The various roles of institutions should be explored. Institutions are necessary because specialization and trade narrow but do not close the gap. Beginning with the home in the first grade, the teacher can proceed with each progressive grade to the school and community, showing that these institutions are necessary to our American way of life.

By the fifth grade one can proceed into the role of financial institutions necessary to our economy such as banks, insurance, savings and loan, and stock exchange. The elementary school can introduce a beginning concept of the meaning of income such as:

1. From what sources it is derived (wages, salaries, profits, interest, and rent).
2. How it affects production (consumer demands).
3. That income determines purchasing power and standard of living.
4. Difference between real income and money income.
5. Meaning of disposable income (after taxes).
6. Income is usually paid by check on demand deposit.
7. Income is earned. We may realize more from it by budgeting and making wise choices. The child can come to a good understanding of the impact of technology which is improved quality of basic needs plus the addition of many luxuries. The child should most of all come to an understanding of the role of government. He should know that:
 1. Government imposes regulations and restrictions to assist growth and stability of the economy.
 2. Government contributes to an environment conducive to profitable individual participation in the economy.
 3. The difference between the government's tax receipts and its spending represents the government's budgetary surplus or deficit.
 4. Through government taxing some things that individuals could not afford can be bought collectively. The intelligent determination of the relative value of taxes and public services is a very important concept for responsible voting in later life.
 5. The term government should be made clear that it does not refer only to the federal government. The children should be made aware of the functions and services of the state and local

governments.

There are numerous ways of getting these concepts across to the children. I visited the first grade and saw some of their visual aids and Mrs. Goodloe recounted some of the earlier activities. The home has long been the one important unit of study in the first grade. But only in the last three years have the teachers made use of the potential for economic education in these units. When a picture of the family is shown it is stated that a family is a group of people living together and who share responsibilities and pleasures. A picture of a child's home is shown while explaining that home is where we grow up. The adults of the family make the home. They provide the family with food, clothing, and shelter. By various pictures one sees that every one in the family has a different job. This is known as division of labor. Division of labor helps get jobs done faster and better and makes people interdependent. This is demonstrated with pictures of the mother and child doing differend chores. Then the concept of consumption is brought up by the statement that consumers are people who use things. Everyone is a consumer. This is illustrated by pictures of people consuming food, electricity, etc. Producers are people who make useful things and do useful work. Pictures of people producing at home can be shown. When people make useful things they produce goods. Goods are things that people need and want. There can be pictures of goods shown. When people do useful work but do not make things they are producers of service. Service is work done to help someone.

The child can be taken outside the home by stating that some members of the family are producers outside the home. They earn income (thus introducing the concept of income). Pictures of a woman or man working can be shown. It can be explained that income is spent for needs. People need food, clothing, and a place to live. Also income is spent for wants. People want many things. They must make a choice of the things they want but do not need. All people should choose to save some of their income. Mrs. Goodloe's first grade made a chart and then made a bulletin board demonstrating the way income should be spent. It was divided into two sections--Needs and Wants. Actual three dimensional objects were put on it to illustrate the divisions. Under needs were placed a pencil, a piece of school paper and a lunch token. Under wants was placed a toy pony, a piece of candy, and a whistle. After much class discussion they decided to buy all their needs (which totaled 40¢). Since they were given 50¢ there was 10¢ left over. They finally decided to save the dime and make a long range savings plan to buy the pony, since they wanted it more than the candy or toy. Thus they were given a practical lesson in the economic theory they had studied in their unit on the home.

The second grade goes from the home and begins studying the economic concepts connected with the school and their neighborhood. The third grade makes a more detailed study of Arkadelphia itself. They study how they get their food, clothes, and homes. Then they study Arkadelphia as compared to Lanikai, Hawaii. In the fourth grade the social studies is based upon the various types of land regions (dry, mountainous, rainy, etc.)

This division quite easily leads to a study of how economics produce a better way of life. The effects of transportation and commerce on our economy are studied. How power helps a man to do work is explored. The effect of conservation and various cultures on economy are looked into. The fifth grade goes on to study the industry of Arkadelphia. The National Gypsum plant. Garment Industry, Aluminum Industry, Degray Dam, and other industries in and around Arkadelphia are studied. The story of money itself and vocational objectives are discussed in the light of economics. The sixth grade gets more theoretical as they learn economics through history. The unit is entitled Economics Yesterday Through Today. They learn how the consumer helps to determine production, all about money and banking, building security, the study of taxes, and the conservation of soil for the future.

Since the study of economics in elementary schools is a comparitavily new thing, I was not at all acquainted with the idea of or the methods used in teaching it. I was quite amazed at how much the children understood (and quite relieved that I would not be forced to match my basic concepts of economics against theirs). They were very enthusiastic over the activities such as the Economic Fair and plainly showed that they understood that economics wasn't just a school discipline-- it is a part of everyday life. Not only is it basically important to every person attempting to be a responsible citizen in a free society but as Mrs. Neal so aptly put it, "It puts a life and spirit in social studies and packs a punch into the teaching of it that it never had before. Why it is like adding an extra deminsion."

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