



Each and Every Child

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This program makes dollars – and sense

Teacher uses business model, expediting her students' learning

MARSHALLTOWN – When Anna Wolverers starts class, she gets down to business. So do her students.

That's because Wolverers, a special education teacher in Rogers Elementary School in the Marshalltown Community School

District, has turned pull-out time to represent a business, complete with pretend salaries, incentives for good work and dings for insufficient work or bad behavior.



Photos by Iowa Department of Education's Deborah Darge

While the program works on math, reading, writing and social skills, bonus lessons are in financial literacy and life skills, all of which put the kindergarten-through-fourth grade students on the path to career and college readiness.

"I model the class as a business where the students are employees," Wolverers said. "We talked about business structures and how it relates to the school structure."

Wolverers, who launched the program just this school year, got the idea from a poster: "Can't-free Zone."

There's more than lessons on the line when it comes to Anna Wolverers' classroom.

"I was working to move the kids away

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from thinking negatively," she said. "One small idea expanded into having students fill out applications just as they would if they were applying for a job."

Upon applying for the job of student, the kids receive a \$100 sign-on bonus, using fake money. That's where the fun starts.

"First of all, I tie it to behavior using the Rogers Pledge: respect, cooperation, doing your best and being responsible," Wolverers said. "They do that each time they are here, they get paid \$5 – just like a paycheck. There are other things tied to making money. For instance, if they go up on their IEP (Individualized Education Programs) goals, they get a bonus \$10. If they pass a level, they get a \$20 bonus."

Conversely, students learn there are consequences for insufficient work or bad behavior.

"It teaches them there are choices and there are consequences," Wolverer said.

At the end of each week, there is the financial reckoning in which bills must be paid (there are rental charges for school equipment such as their table, chair, pencils and erasers).

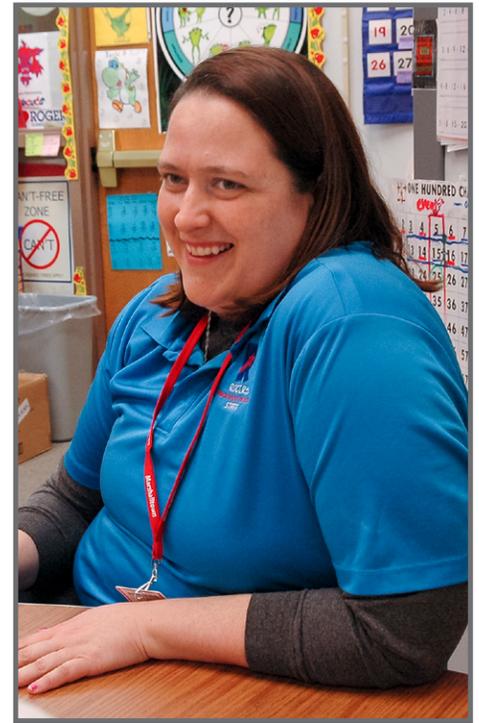
After rent, they have to save 10 percent of their earnings and give another 10 percent to a charity of their choice.

Then there's the shopping.

"We let them shop with the remaining 80 percent," Wolverers said. "They choose from the shopping list. Prizes also are seasonal, such as flowers at Valentine's or pumpkins in the fall."

Students have gravitated to the program, with some earning \$300 or more.

The program teaches math skills, employability skills, needs versus wants and literacy in which Wolverers tries to work in a book that complements one of the available prizes for purchase. The students



Anna Wolverers

also name their businesses, such as LearnerVee with the motto, "Where there is a student in every chair."

Students catch on quickly to the world of being a learner – and being an employee, Wolverers said.

"A third grader asked me about holiday paid vacation," she said. "I told him he was going to be a CEO."

Classroom engagement is through the roof.

"The kids love it," Wolverers said. "I like their excitement and wanting to earn and spend money. They also encourage each other: 'you are going to owe money if you're not working.'"

The students have made academic strides through the program.

"I have seen gains in them knowing what it means to be a student and actively try to learn and grow socially," she said. "Math wise, they know



Students become more engaged when they see themselves as an integral part of their learning.

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what money is and does, and they're learning how to add it, count change, and budget for needs verse wants. My kindergartners can identify 1's and 5's and state they'll get \$1 change from \$10 for the weekly rent. Money is a skill several have had trouble understanding in the past. My very wise third grader makes better connections to money and business. He's been struggling in subtraction. If I relate it to money – 'you have \$7, how many more do you need to get \$10' – he can get it, but saying 10-minus-seven, he struggles."

Getting fined for unexcused absences hasn't gone unnoticed by the students.

"Almost all of them have great overall school attendance," Wolverers said. "Just like at a job, you have to work to be paid. There's a \$5 unexcused absence fine to try to help with that. There's only been one of those so far this year."

The students also are now actively participating in their education.

"We've eliminated 'I can't' and 'I don't



Students in Anna Wolverers' class grow academically and socially – or face "fines."

know' as excuses not to try," Wolverers said. "It's changed the mindset to one of growth."

It's also improved behavior.

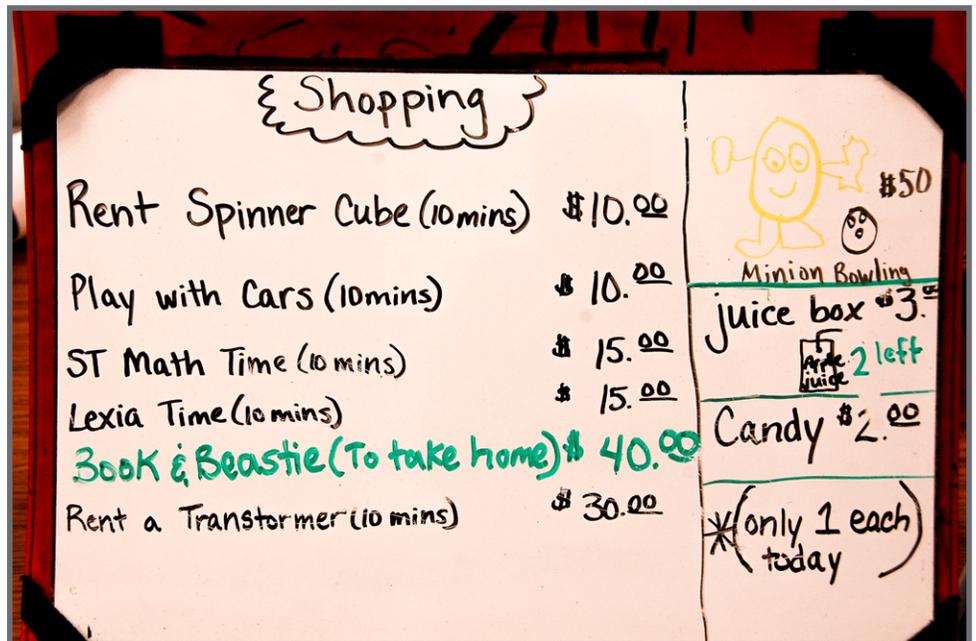
"One kindergartner threw a bunch of cards at me and then said, 'that wasn't very nice. I think I owe you a dollar.'"

She voluntarily paid up.

"I am hoping to teach them life skills, how to manage money and make smart investment choices," Wolverers said. "I want them to know what a learner is and to be learners. It is amazing how this program has grown."

Raises/Bonus		Debts/Fees	
Advance one reading level	\$20	I can't	\$1.00
Beat last week IEP Goal	\$10	Unexcused Absent	\$5.00
Come on-time indep.	\$2 day	Incomplete Assignment	\$2
Salary (math, rdg)	\$5 each	Work refusal	\$3.00 each
Racing in hall & classwork	\$5 each	Table/chair rental	\$5.00 wk
		Pencil Rental	\$2.00 week
		Eraser Rental	\$2.00 week
Spend	Save	Give (10%)	
End of Month Spending Opportunity:			
Computer time	Minion Bowling	Snacks	Extra recess

Some visual cues are evident throughout the classroom, encouraging students to save their "money" for some fun time.



Accentuate the positive...

Teach expectations and focus on positive behaviors! Try to reward or praise students four times as often as correcting them. Catch students displaying expected behaviors and compliment them. This will create a favorable working environment for everyone, staff and students.



Teacher Leader Heather Howland, Janesville CSD

Registration under way for special education conference

Registration is now open for the 2018 Special Education Symposium which will be held June 11-12 at the Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center in Des Moines. There is no fee to register. (A live link to register precedes this newsletter.)

Sessions will include focus on family engagement, secondary transition, significant disabilities, leadership, K-12 literacy, early childhood and behavior.

The symposium is open to Iowa school administrators and educators, Area Education Agency staff, families, and other adults who work with learners with disabilities.

For more information, contact Nancy Hunt at nancy.ankenyhunt@iowa.gov.

Extended School Year Services? Things to consider

Extended School Year Services (ESYS) are special education and related services that are provided beyond the regular school year by the LEA or AEA in accordance to the IEP at no charge to the family.

The IEP team determines if there is a need for ESYS services at least 60 days before the end of the school year.

Four questions for the IEP team to consider when determining if ESYS is necessary for a child to receive FAPE are as follows:

1. Are there Goal Areas of Concern that need to be acquired or maintained without interruption?
2. Has there been or is there potential for Regression during periods of interruption that need to be recouped?

3. Are there Rare and Unusual Circumstances that necessitate continuous instruction or service?
4. Do other factors need to be considered?

The IEP team should also remember:

- services need to be provided in the Least Restrictive Environment that is appropriate;
- multiple data sources must be considered when determining need for ESYS; and
- progress is monitored and documented before, during and after ESYS.

– Courtesy the team at Keystone AEA

Have a tidbit you'd like to share? Send to jim.flansburg@iowa.gov.