

EDUCATION

Students help students take care of business

Working for a living focus of JA program

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THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

As far as Michael Wakefield is concerned, it's never too early for children to learn the financial facts of life:

The value of a buck, the hard work required to earn it and the necessity of giving the government its share.

A professor at the Hasan School of Business at Colorado State University-Pueblo and a Junior Achievement board member, Wakefield and 40 of his Principles of Management students visited South Park Elementary School Thursday to impart economic-based truths through the JA Our Nation curriculum, a hands-on, interactive program that, in the words of President Calvin Coolidge, proves "the business of America is business."

For the little ones, the tutorial was simple: the importance of saving money and the difference between spending on "needs" and "wants."

The roll of a die determined the amount of greenbacks the kindergartners "deposited" — actually colored — into a piggy bank drawing, with an emphasis on keeping as much as possible for a rainy day.

"When you get to the bank you put money in the bank," said Jaden Thomas, 6. "That way,



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JaCobi Jones (center), a Colorado State University-Pueblo student and college wrestler, helps a group of South Park Elementary School third-graders plan and build their own city to teach them about financial literacy.

you can get richer and you can use it to buy things you need, like water and healthy stuff and a house.

"And if you have

enough money, you can get things you want like a car or bike. That's why you need a job. I'm

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going to be a cop ... to get money and catch bad guys.

In a nearby classroom, third-graders learned the ABCs of being a working man or woman—making a product (doughnuts), selling it on the open market and, perhaps most crucially, setting aside a portion for one of life's certainties.

The tax collector: in this scenario, CSU-Pueblo's Joey Gavato.

We're teaching them about jobs, Gavato said. How they will get to make money and spend money to buy goods and services.

And yes, they will have to pay taxes ... but that money will go back into the community. At this age, though, the taxman isn't the bad guy. That comes when they're older.

In an entrepreneurship-themed unit, the creative juices were flowing especially freely. Fourth-graders were charged with coming up

with a business, naming it, forming a marketing slogan and, finally, researching all that goes into making a go of a private venture.

Jack Rodriguez, 9, was envisioning a creamy white, bright future.

My business is dairy, Jack said. Specifically Jack's Dairy. I would like to milk cows and sell cheese and all that. Because I like cheese.

But, as Jack discovered, dairy farming is no casual stroll in the pasture.

You need a cow, and a cow is expensive. Then you have to have a bucket to put underneath it. And someone to pull the udders. That would be me.

Then I'd bottle the milk in my factory and sell it. In fact, I'd like to do this in real life.

After a particularly enlightening session on occupation analysis, Navaeh Chavez, 11, also plans to do things her own way.

I'm going to start a law firm. And I want to

own the law firm so I can make all the money and won't have to be bossed around.

In fact, I'll hire people to work under me.

And while the South Parkers pocketed some essential life and economic lessons—including the importance of continued education—the Hasan business students didn't exactly walk away empty-handed.

I'm trying to get my students interested in volunteering and giving back to the community, Wakefield said. On the first day of class, I told them that they're going to go teach elementary school.

And they looked at me like I was the cruelest teacher on campus. But I did a pretty good job of giving them context—that of giving back to kids, many of whom don't have really good role models.

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