

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

“Welcome to the Real World” teaches youth financial decision-making

AT A GLANCE

Welcome to the Real World budgeting program gives teens hands-on experience making life financial decisions.

The Situation

Money management is an important life skill. Learning by experience in the financial world can be very expensive and frustrating. Area financial institutions report that many high school graduates do not have adequate training in financial management. Less than 10% of high school students have had an organized course in financial management. Even though they may be employed and receive a paycheck, they lack the confidence and knowledge to make important financial decisions.

Our Response

Twenty-three years ago, I and another family and consumer sciences educator received critical issues funds to purchase the financial program “Welcome to the Real World.” We made necessary changes to the program to fit the needs of Idaho youth. Over the past 23 years, the program has been updated regularly to be a viable program in an ever-changing financial world.

Welcome to the Real World is an active, hands-on experience that gives teens a chance to explore career opportunities and make lifestyle and budget choices like those faced by young adults daily. In this simulation, teens assume they are 25 years old, single, on their



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own, and have received the education or training needed for the career they choose from a deck of cards.

Students work through the two-day simulation making choices and learning about the basics of checking and savings account, the various ways to pay bills, how a debit card, check, credit card, PayPal, Venmo and a variety of other payment methods work. Students make choices in the areas of, saving money, housing, transportation, insurance and groceries. They also receive a “chance” card that reflects emergency expenditures that may come up in real life.

Program Outcomes

At the end of the simulation, students are surveyed to measure skills learned, knowledge gained and

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attitudes changed about financial management. Welcome to the Real World has been taught to thousands of students over the past 23 years. Surveys have always indicated a strong knowledge gain, skills learned and attitude change. Because the survey results are very consistent from year to year, this impact statement only includes the 2021 spring semester data collected from the Rigby High School economics classes (See Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: From the 121 surveys students indicated they learned the following information from participating in Welcome to the Real World.

Question	Number of students indicating they learned this concept
How to make spending choices based on income ----	109
The importance of saving money for emergencies and/or future	115
The longer I save money the more interest I earn	111

Table 2: From the 121 surveys, students indicated they will do the following because of participating in Welcome to the Real World.

Question	Students answering "Yes"	Students answering "No"
I will think about my future education plans and career choices	121	0
I will keep track of my checking and saving account balances	110	11
I have a checking account or will open one	118	3

Students were asked, "What is the most important thing you learned from participating in Welcome to the Real World?" Some of their comments were:

- "How much housing and transportation actually cost."
- "How important it is to keep track of my spending."
- "The percentages of my income that is recommended for housing and transportation."
- "How to manage money based on my income."

The Future

Working with the Bank of Commerce, the Welcome to the Real World program will continue to be revised to reflect the change in the financial world. Welcome to the Real World will continue to be taught to high school juniors and seniors at Rigby High School in Jefferson County.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The Bank of Commerce and School District 251.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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