

Minnesota Council on Economic Education

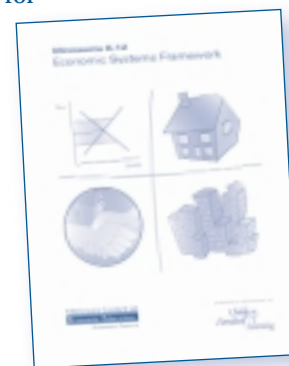
Friends Update • Winter 2002

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2001 FORTY YEARS OF EXCELLENCE IN ECONOMIC EDUCATION

MAJOR FOCUS

More than 300 high school educators have now participated in professional development programs to prepare them to implement the state economics graduation standard. These educators experienced considerable increases in cognitive understanding of economic principles. Significantly, half of the teachers scored less than 50% correct on a pre-test, but achieved an average increase of 34% in a post-test. Additionally:

- More than half of state school districts now require knowledge of economic systems for graduation – impressive progress toward increasing economic literacy in Minnesota.
- In conjunction with the MN Department of Children, Families & Learning, the Council developed *The Minnesota K-12 Economic Systems Framework*, which aligns fundamental concepts of economics to specifications of the Economic Systems graduation standard.



EDUCATOR PROGRAMS AND MATERIALS

Over 500 educators participated in a full complement of professional development opportunities in economics, including workshops based on the following curricula: *Seas, Trees and Economies*, *Mini-Society*, *Civics and Economics*, *Economic Systems*, and *Commodity Challenge*. Additionally, teachers who do not typically teach economic principles were provided the following professional development opportunities:

- Workshops based on *Financial Fitness for Life*, a new, economics-based, personal finance series for K-12 students were presented to 100 teachers. This program will continue to expand as schools implement personal finance graduation standards. This innovative curriculum includes materials for teachers, students, and parents.
- *Enhancing Social Studies Curricula with Economics* workshops were offered to 30 history, civics, and geography teachers to enable them to integrate economics into other social studies curricula.

STUDENT PROGRAMS

- 2,500 students (55% increase) participated in *Commodity Challenge*, a high school learning activity that illustrates the ties between commodity prices and current events.
- 400 students participated in regional *Economics Challenge* contests. Regional winners advanced to a statewide play-off, and the state winner advanced to national competition. This Minnesota-originated program was adopted by the National Council on Economic Education as its flagship program for high school students.



Edina High School *Economics Challenge* team

continued on back →

HONORS FOR MINNESOTA ECONOMICS TEACHERS

Economic education awards for excellence and innovation were presented to three Minnesota teachers for 2001. In addition, Minnesota teachers received national recognition for excellence:

- Sara Paul of Tartan High School, North St. Paul, was the ten-state regional winner and a national finalist in the Nasdaq National Teaching Awards in economic education.
- Minnesota teachers have been selected for every international opportunity offered for U.S. teachers by the National Council on Economic Education. In 2001, three Minnesota educators were chosen to attend an international training of writers program in Lithuania and two participated in an economic education study tour to Ukraine. Three more will tour Russia and Siberia in 2002.



Minneapolis teacher Helene Perry

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ECONOMIC UNDERSTANDING

EDUCATORS – THE KEY TO ECONOMIC UNDERSTANDING

Council emphasis is on the educator. Research shows that teacher training is the most effective way to introduce and maintain economics in the K-12 curriculum. The Minnesota Council is the only organization oriented primarily to improving teacher understanding of economic concepts.

COUNCIL PROGRAMS, TRAINING, AND MATERIALS ALL FEATURE:

- A thorough understanding of economic concepts.
- Standards of performance.
- Nationally normed tests and assessment tools.
- Support for classroom implementation.
- Recognition of success for both educators and students.

UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS PROVIDE THE TRAINING

University professors in the Council's network of Centers for Economic Education deliver programs to teachers and students. Centers are located at:

- University of Minnesota – Duluth
- Minnesota State University – Mankato
- St. Cloud State University – St. Cloud
- Minnesota State University – Moorhead
- University of St. Thomas – St. Paul

The Council is based at the University of Minnesota, Department of Applied Economics.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

The Council endorses the work of other organizations whose programs foster economic understanding and works cooperatively with both Junior Achievement and BestPrep. The Council is unique in relation to these organizations because its emphasis is on “educating teachers.” An economics-literate teacher can validate, reinforce, and interpret the activities provided by other volunteer-based economic education programs. A teacher knowledgeable in economics is more likely to routinely introduce and support these activities, making each organization's efforts more valuable.