



THE REAL GAME™ 2.1 **Digital Edition**

U.S. NATIONAL PILOT REPORT **August, 2008**

[The Real Game 2.1](#) (TRG 2.1) is the first of the second generation of programs in The Real Game Series. Changes over previous editions were so extensive that a national pilot of a prototype (TRG 2.0) was conducted for quality assurance. TRG 2.1 includes even more changes based on pilot feedback, and it has been digitized. It can be used in the traditional hardcopy format, online, or in any combination of the two modes. Over time, all programs in The Real Game Series will be digitized and receive Generation 2 branding.

[The National Work Life Center](#) is a not-for-profit corporation. Its mission is to help prepare people of all ages to find fulfilling work and satisfying lifestyles. Since its founding in 1994, the NLWC has become an international pioneer in career development. NLWC concepts, programs, and tools have been adopted across The United States and Canada, and in The United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Hungary, Germany, and Ireland. [The Real Game Series](#) of six experiential programs for 8 year olds to adults all offer role-playing scenarios in which groups of participants are transformed into virtual communities of working adults. Players imagine and experience, through role-playing, their future lives and livelihoods.

During the game experience, students create their own business cards, purchase homes and cars, settle into neighborhoods, budget money and time, juggle work, home and leisure responsibilities, plan vacations, deal with the unexpected at work and home, and much more. In fact, participants encounter everyday challenges faced by all adults. The game continuously links future adult realities with current school subjects. Students learn how character traits and attitude impact success in all aspects of life. As students play roles as working adults in their 'virtual community', teachers invite real adults (parents, community leaders, members of service clubs, companies, voluntary organizations, etc.) to visit the virtual community and interact with its citizens. The entire program (core, recommended and discretionary sessions) can last 25 hours or more. Core activities take 12-15 hours. Optional activities involve resource people from the community, guest speakers and families or friends of participants.

Thirty-two schools across the U.S. completed the February to June, 2008 pilot and provided in-depth feedback from administrators, facilitators (teachers and counselors), students, and parents. Over 3,200 pages of feedback were analyzed by NLWC.

Many facilitators and administrators noted that because the pilot began in the middle of the second school term, there was insufficient time to complete the entire program and they were forced to omit some sessions. As a result, most students did not experience key program activities. Also, 12 student interactive activities in the “StudentZone” were not available during the pilot. Facilitators consistently reported that student engagement will increase dramatically when they can do more of the game online. Facilitators are also anxious to see more of the program online to simplify logistics for them and to reduce paper consumption. Nonetheless, based on student engagement with the incomplete prototype, pilot sites are unanimous in planning to begin earlier and do more program activities in the coming school year.

Facilitators

42 facilitators from 32 pilot schools in 7 states (Florida, Montana, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Vermont – List of specific schools follows) provided detailed feedback in their experience with the pilot prototype. They rated key learning issues, such as:

- Are the activities easy to implement?
- Are students interested and engaged?
- Does the program have educational value?

When they finished all the activities they had time for, facilitators were asked to rate if they felt students were more:

- *Confidant they can make good decisions in their lives?*
- *Aware that choices they make today will affect them in the future?*
- *Aware of what to expect in adult life?*
- *Knowledgeable about career options available to them?*
- *Able to find information and resources to explore career options?*
- *Prepared to manage their life and career after they leave school?*

Facilitators’ feedback was positive across all key measures, as indicated by the following:

- *I feel this game is more important than the curriculum I teach every day!*
- *Students are hesitant at first but when they finally realize there are no boundaries, it’s fascinating to see their imaginations take off.*
- *I have already begun to see some teamwork amongst students who, if given their choice, would not normally work together.*
- *Gave out wish lists - students really had to be encouraged to dream big! I heard comments like " I’ll just get a used car - it’s all I’ll be able to afford". Once they let go, they really get into it. Many went to the Internet to find things that weren’t listed on the wish list, and the dreaming really started!*
- *Another teacher and I invited each other’s class to see what others do in their communities. They took their Who Are You sheets with them - it was like a visit to another ‘town’.*
- *Students started helping each other balance their budgets! That was a great thing to see!*

- *It's REALLY ideal for students who struggle in school and are more at risk for dropping out.*

Students

A total of 1,696 students completed *Student Feedback Forms*. Their responses mirror those of facilitators. They also felt the game was very worthwhile, and their widespread consensus is impressive given their diversity. They represent a very wide range of geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures. 25 different languages are spoken at home. There was also great diversity in learning capacities and styles of participating students.

The majority of students felt their experience was very positive. They clearly assimilated key lessons from *The Real Game*, such as:

- Imagine the future you want. Trust in your dreams
- Appreciation for the relationship between school and work, money and self-determination
- Hard work and application are essential
- Try harder at school. Learn skills and character as well as academics
- Awareness that choices they make today impact their future
- Increased confidence in their ability to make good life decisions
- Perceived preparedness to manage their life and work after they leave school

The students' feedback reveals profoundly important realizations vis-à-vis life, work, and money.

- Think carefully before choosing and acting
- You can't get everything you want
- Be prepared for the unexpected
- All occupational roles are important in a community and are worthy of respect
- Learning is an ongoing, never-ending process
- Ask less from my parents and to be more grateful for their efforts
- Life isn't easy and you have to have a good job to even survive

Students' feedback also revealed a fascinating interplay between thought and feeling in their reasoning and evaluation process. Those aspects of the game they enjoyed least are also recognized as being the most important lessons learned, such as: balancing budgets; prioritizing time; taxes and deductions; paying bills; being laid off; writing and reflection.

The pilot produced 2,790 pages of student feedback. The following are sample responses to the question, “What did you learn from playing *The Real Game*?”

- *I need to manage my money wisely and buy the needs before the wants.*
- *I'll have to work harder at my goals I set for myself.*
- *About the stuff that happens in the Real World and how difficult it is to grow up.*
- *When you are older, it takes a lot of hard work and there is lots of responsibilities.*
- *As you get older, you have to do everything for your self and make good choices.*
- *You need a good education so you can get a good job and have a good life.*
- *I now have an idea of the real world ... I enjoyed learning all of this.*
- *I learned that the life of our parents isn't as easy as it seems*
- *Education is totally important, tax is a killer and money doesn't grow on trees.*
- *When you lose your job, you don't have to find the same one ... you can take your skills that you already have and start all over, choosing a job you like more.*
- *Life doesn't always go your way, you just have to deal with it.*
- *I need to work harder in school to have a good future and enjoy my job.*

The following is a sample of student responses to the question, “What will you do differently having played the game?”

- *Change the way I think about the future. Follow my heart and do what I really want to do.*
- *Work harder in school so I can become anything I want in the future.*
- *Make really good choices and look for an occupation I'll enjoy that gives me a life.*
- *Study harder because education determines how much I will make in the future and what my job will be.*
- *Ask less from my parents and to be more grateful for their efforts.*
- *Take life more seriously and if I mess up my education now it will affect my future.*
- *I'll do everything differently. I'll start to plan a little more about my career. I'll try harder in school to reach my goals. I'll be better in my schoolwork. I will be more organized. I will set goals and plan my future focusing my education on my interests.*
- *I will definitely work harder and get part time jobs so when I want my real job the boss will think I am more responsible.*

Pilot feedback indicates *The Real Game* is popular with and deemed valuable by administrators, teachers, students and parents. The game transforms the classroom into a temporary interactive community hub. This provides a practical, direct way to engage and share the rich, diverse knowledge and experience of any community's adult work force. *The Real Game* also provides a new way for teachers and students to interact. Students become largely responsible for giving life to their learning. The more actively they imagine, the more engaging the play becomes, the more they learn. Among the key lessons they learn, for themselves, is that their choices and actions today impact their future and that success in school is a precursor to success in life.

2008 National Pilot Schools

FLORIDA

- Bay Haven Charter Academy, Panama City
- Celebration School, Celebration
- Central High School, Milton
- Gateway School, Orlando
- Gotha Middle School, Windermere
- Gulf Breeze Middle School, Gulf Breeze
- Indian Ridge Middle School, Davie
- L.A. Ainger Middle School, Rotonda
- Oasis Middle School, Cape Floral
- Plantation Key School, Tavernier
- Rivendell Academy, Altoona

MONTANA

- Culbertson School, Culbertson
- Heart Butte School, Heart Butte
- Terry Public Schools, Terry

NEW YORK

- Koda Middle School, Clifton Park
- New York State Office of Children and Family Services, New York
- Queen's Borough Public Library (8 Community Libraries)

NORTH CAROLINA

- Lewis Chapel Middle School
- Mac Williams Middle School, Fayetteville
- Western Harnett Middle School, Lillington

TENNESSEE

- E.K. Baker and Rogers Creek Middle School, Athens
- Halls Middle School, Knoxville
- Jackson Careers and Technology Magnet School, Jackson
- Oakhaven Success Academy, Memphis

UTAH

- Cedar Ridge Middle School, West Hyde Park
- Willow Valley Middle School, West Wellsville
- White Pine Middle School, Richmond

VERMONT

- Bellow Falls Middle School, Bellows Falls
- Harwood Union School, South Duxbury
- Kindle Farm Children's Services, Newfane
- Leland and Gray Union Middle/High School, Townshend
- Orleans Elementary School, Orleans