

Virtual Economics

"Virtual Economics" is a resource for use in teaching and/or learning consumer and economic education. The program has multiple uses and applications limited primarily by the creativity of the user. Components of the program are outlined and reviewed. Hardware requirements are listed.

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Purpose

There has never been a resource for teachers committed to economic education like *"Virtual Economics: An Interactive Center for Economic Education."* The purpose of this curriculum showcase was to introduce "Virtual Economics," an interactive CD-ROM which functions like a knowledgeable librarian. It provides teaching strategies, contents, definitions.....everything needed to teach economics (also consumer economics, personal finance, and related issues/courses) or incorporate economic units into lesson plans. Applications are possible from grade K through 12, Advanced Placement, adult/community education programs, and even in university undergraduate coursework.

Overview

The "Virtual Economics" CD-ROM opens with a self-guided tour of the 3-D "Interactive Center for Economics." This includes a "gallery" of exhibition rooms featuring fundamental economic concepts, as well as macro, micro, and international economic issues. Users can take as much or as little time as necessary to explore and learn at exactly the depth desired.

Users of "Virtual Economics" will travel through a range of economic information appropriate for many uses and educational settings. The user determines what they need and in how much detail. The program allows "mix and match" to create individualized lessons or to choose from thousands of the best classroom-tested lessons available. A majority of these (lesson plans, curriculum materials, reference books, economic data, student handouts, tests and more) may then be printed for educational purposes.

Click into the "Resource Library" and there are over 150 documents (30,000 pages) of the newest and best instructional materials. All materials are coded and cross-referenced for easy access to any topic, AND categorized for grades K-4, 5-8, and 9-12.

"Virtual Economics" will run on any computer with at least a double-speed CD-ROM drive, Windows 3.1 or Macintosh II (System 7.0 or later), a 13" color monitor, a sound card and speakers, and at least 8MB of memory. The CD-ROM has voice prompts, icons, and on-screen directions. It is designed with vivid full-color graphics, three dimensional settings, newsreel footage, films, and photographs. Included are actual voices of those who have made economic history, as well as those who have been affected by it!

Implications

The possibilities for utilizing this resource within and among the membership of the American Council on Consumer Interests are multiple and varied. Implications for the following broad issues should be considered: (1) classroom (undergraduate/graduate) teaching; (2) teacher education (preservice); (3) teacher training (inservice); (4) research (e.g. user acceptability of technology-based resources OR format assessment for future resource development); and (5) individualized training, tutorial, and instruction.

[NOTE: This project was developed and published by EconomicsAmerica: The National Council on Economic Education and the Nebraska Council on Economic Education with funding from the National Science Foundation. EconomicsAmerica is a national nonprofit network of over 300 affiliated State Councils and local Centers for Economic Education. Its mission is to insure that every young person in America (1) understands essential economic concepts, (2) is able to use economic ways of thinking and problem solving, and (3) has a solid grasp of the nature and structure of the national and global economy.]

Endnote

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