

MicroSociety Through the Years: A Cyclical Model of Success

The implementation of a MicroSociety learning environment begins with the end in mind. Educators, serving a facilitative role, possess the awareness that instructional decisions need to be data-driven and future-minded. Students need to hone skills as critical thinkers, creative problem solvers, committed community members, and digital citizens, as they progress from one stage of their schooling to the next and ultimately out into the world beyond the schoolhouse doors. In a study of approximately 100,000 students from over 4,000 high schools in 2005 and 2006, the ACT found that, *“The level of academic achievement that students attain by **eighth grade** has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate from high school than anything that happens academically in high school.”*

From **Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 8**, *MicroSociety* offers an innovative learning laboratory in which children take ownership of their learning, experimenting with content-area skills, ways of thinking, and habits of mind that present themselves in increasing degrees of complexity and sophistication to match the student’s developmental needs. Primary administrators, teachers, and students regularly interface with their intermediate counterparts to ensure a seamless transition and mastery of foundational framework necessary to continue a cycle of success. Those from the intermediate school follow suit, meeting with those from the middle school, who in turn, exchange with those at the high school, college, and workplace levels. Isolation is non-existent, for integration and alignment reign.

Primary Years: Soft skills are developed through collaborative work, engagement in problem solving, and practice in articulating emotions. Students become lovers of literacy as they learn to navigate written texts across genres. In mathematics, they ardently practice counting, sorting, classifying, and patterns as they deepen their number sense. These skills transfer to the early stages of scientific inquiry, as such curiosities as the animal kingdom are explored. Students are immersed in what it means to be a community and they start to sense their fit in the greater scheme of things.



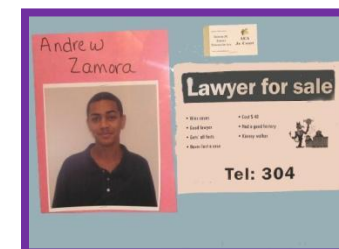
- A **Pre-K** student is hired by a venture called *Merry Melodies* following an open casting call audition. She memorizes and performs singing telegrams to student citizens on their birthdays and other momentous occasions. She is not only immersed in language play and musical appreciation, but soft skill development as well, cultivating such attributes as flexibility, adaptability, and learning from criticism.
- A **kindergarten** student creates his first resume, using drawings, invented spelling, and dictated labels to showcase his skill set and strengths. He is hired by the bank where he practices classifying, counting, and identifying monetary denominations as he cuts and sorts the currency for the tellers.
- A **first grade** student works as a docent at the Kidzonian Museum. She gives tours of the animal life cycle exhibit and demonstrates the development of a butterfly through a hands-on model she created.
- A **second grader** interviews to earn a coveted spot as a Peace Keeper. She enforces the law to keep the Marketplace safe, presents to her peers the dangers of bullying, and tallies the number of hallway fights that have occurred each month, comparing the rates over time and proposing ideas for positive change.

Intermediate Years: Complex situations arise which require synthesis and deliberate application of fundamental skills. School provides the framework for students to analyze and evaluate information with creativity and a discerning eye, to extract meaning from information, and to use knowledge to make change in the community and the world. Content area learning becomes more abstract, moving away from the familiar, with a focus on the world beyond the child's scope. National history is studied as a catalyst for progress.



- A **third grader** manages the travel agency. She oversees a team of employees in creating virtual trips to the South American continent. People of South American heritage make up a large portion of her community's population and she wants her peers to become immersed in the culture. When visitors come to the travel agency, they have a wealth of reading material to choose from and a live puppet show on South American wildlife to view.
- A **fourth grade** student is granted approval of his business proposal by the legislature and opens up his own keychain venture. He offers designs in the shapes of states, which are accompanied by little cards that provide factual information on each member of the union, including the state bird, state flower, and state population.
- A **fifth grade** entrepreneur, running a highly profitable duct tape wallet venture, invites the principal of the school to come work for him. He realizes that he can increase his profit margin if he has the principal design a special line of limited edition merchandise that he can sell for double the price that his regular wallets sell for. He calls upon his MicroSociety's advertising firm to create a campaign.

Middle Years: Increasing demand on social skills and movement away from concrete thinking define these times. The divide between childhood and the teenage years is narrowed by presenting collaborative challenges and nurturing opportunities for identity acquisition. Students are able to rationalize and self-advocate, articulating their own learning gaps and needs. Content area learning invites students to specialize in fields of interest. Exposure to global literature, algebraic math concepts, world events, and physical science extends the child's breadth of knowledge.



- A **sixth grade** owner of the *Amazing Animals* attraction analyzes ticket sales and takes notice that visitors have decreased by 20% over the past two months. She collaborates with her manager to create a survey and discovers that her menagerie of critters needs to diversify its offerings. Citizens are tired of the same old exhibits. She researches local pet shops and produces a 30-second commercial pleading for the donation of geckos for her venture to stay in operation. She engages in Email correspondence with the shop owners.
- A **seventh grader** with an affinity for writing, realizes that her knack is an in-demand one. Although she holds a job as a commentary writer for her MicroSociety's webzine, she branches out and offers consulting services as a side gig, scaffolding her peers through the resume and job application process, as well as helping to write copy for venture and agency webpages. She plants her self-designed business cards and menu of services in ventures throughout the Marketplace. She has a member of the *Geek Squad* help her to design a webpage for her business.
- An **eighth grade** team of young ladies want to reach out and help a shelter for abused women that is in their community. They co-found and direct a non-profit within their *MicroSociety* with a mission of raising awareness on domestic violence. They organize several events to raise funds for the shelter, including a holiday-time dollar sale for gently-used clothing. Mentored by a counselor from the shelter, they deliver a webinar that they call "Girl Talk" to other middle school and high school girls across the nation. During this session, they offer empowerment to other young ladies in the form of strategies for communication, relationship building, and self-advocacy.