

The Real Game Version 2.0

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SEPTEMBER 2007

National Pilot Report

The Real Game Version 2.0 (TRG V2) is the first of a new generation of programs in The Real Game Series (www.realgameonline.ca). Changes over previous editions were so extensive a national pilot was required for quality assurance. TRG V2 incorporates additional 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 Version 2 branding.

The National Work Life Centre (www.lifework.ca) is a not-for-profit corporation based at the Memramcook Institute in New Brunswick. Its mission is to help prepare individuals 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 in every Canadian province and territory, and in The United States, 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 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 neighbourhoods, budget money and time, juggle work, home and leisure responsibilities, plan business travel and vacations, deal with the unexpected at work and home, and much more. The game process continuously links future adult realities with current school subjects.

Students also learn how character traits and attitude impact success in adult roles and work. While 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 the students. The entire program (core, recommended and discretionary sessions) can last 30 hours or more.



Core activities require 15 hours. Optional activities involve resource people from the community, guest speakers and the families or friends of participants.

Forty-four schools across Canada took part in the pilot from March to June, 2007. Participants included administrators, facilitators (teachers and counsellors), students, and parents. 3,700 pages of in-depth feedback were generated. The pilot was facilitated by the *Canada Career Information Partnership* and involved schools in all provinces. Some Industry Sector Councils provided Role Profiles for the pilot prototype, and Human Resources and Social Development Canada contributed materials on Essential Skills.

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Enthusiasm for The Real Game



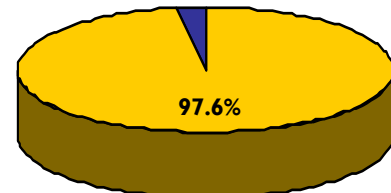
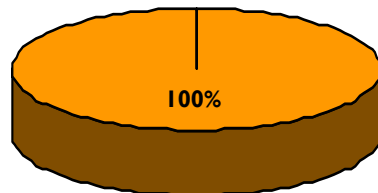
At the heart of NLWC's mission are *The High Five Principles*, conceived by career development leaders across Canada.

- Follow Your Heart
- Focus On The Journey
- Access Your Allies
- Change Is Constant
- Learning Is Lifelong

" I feel this game is more important than the curriculum I teach every day "

Administrators all noted enthusiasm for *The Real Game* among teachers, students and parents. The vast majority of Principals who provided feedback intend to make the program available to as many students as they can. The following charts show the percent of Principals reporting ...

"their teachers and students were enthusiastic about The Real Game."
"they plan to make the new program available to 'all' or 'as many as possible' of their students"



Facilitators were asked to rate key learning issues. Does the game have educational value? Are students interested and engaged? Post-game, are students 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:

"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 to 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."

The following table shows the percent of facilitators (Total=49) that answered "very true" or "somewhat true" to: *"Since my students played The Real Game ..."*

"they are more confident that they can make good decisions in their lives."

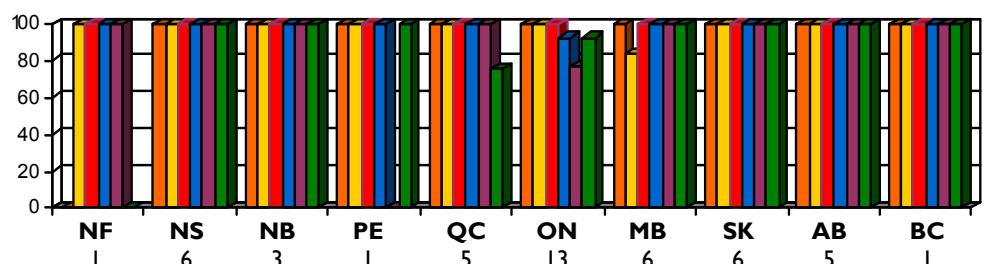
"they are more aware that choices they make today will affect them in the future."

"they have a better idea of what to expect in adult life."

"they know more about career options available to them."

"they know better how to find information and resources to explore career options."

"they are better prepared to manage their life and career after they leave school."



Highly Positive Student Responses

Student 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. Over 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



“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.”

Profoundly Important Realizations

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”

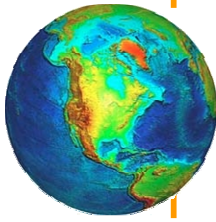
Students’ feedback also revealed a fascinating inter-play between thought and feeling in their reasoning and evaluation process. Those aspects of the game they enjoyed least are also recognized as being the most important lessons learned, such as: balancing budgets; prioritizing time; taxes and deductions;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

2,190 pages of Student Feedback



The pilot produced 2,190 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.”



A Wind of Change

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."

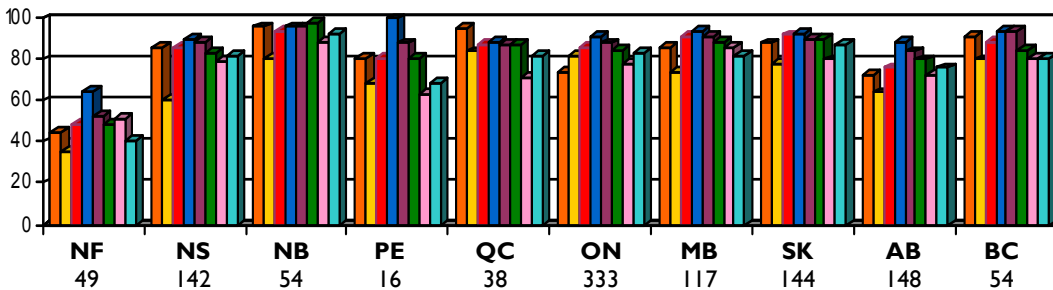
"Ask less from my parents and to be more grateful for their efforts."

"Take life more seriously and if I mess up my education now it will effect my future."

"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."

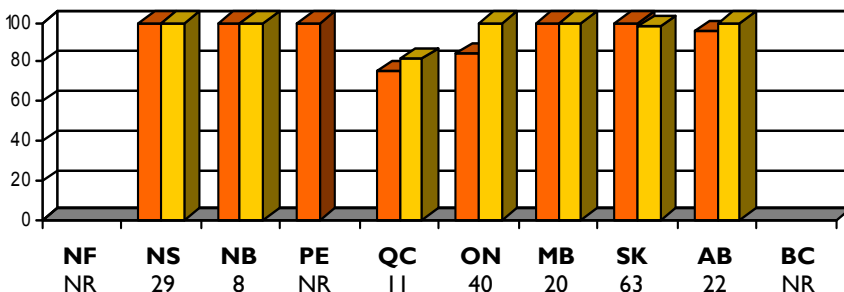
The following table shows the percent of students (Total=1,095) that answered "very true" or "somewhat true" to:

- "Playing The Real Game has made me think about trying harder in School."**
- "I learned new things about skills, knowledge and attitudes."**
- "I feel more confident I can make good decisions about my career and my life."**
- "I see more clearly how the choices I make today can affect my future."**
- "I have a better idea of what to expect in adult life."**
- "I know more about career choices available to me."**
- "I know better how to find information to help me plan my career."**
- "I feel more prepared to take charge of my life and career after I leave school."**



Parents agree that Middle School is an optimal time to begin career planning. Most parents would like the game to be part of regular school programming. The following table shows the percent of parents (Total=193) that:

- "believe it's important for children your child's age to learn about future careers and the world of work as part of their school curriculum."**
- "feel your child has benefited from participation in The Real Game?"**



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.