

## Business

### • School stock program lets students test the market

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For some seventh-graders at Francis Scott Key Technology Magnet School #76 in Baltimore, perfect attendance and earning A's and B's does more than make mom and dad proud — it makes them money.

Once a week, Deneen McDonald teaches Stocks in the Future, an academic enrichment program designed to introduce children to the business world.

Initially, the class focused on the vocabulary needed to understand the stock market.



However, by the second year, students are using an online program to buy and sell their own shares.

With the program, the students go beyond virtual buying and selling of stocks. Perfect attendance and good grades can students up to \$80 a year, which they can use to start their own stock portfolios.

"They put it into an online portfolio and periodically, they can buy publicly traded companies and our promise to them is that when they graduate from high school, the stocks are put in their names," said Pat Bernstein, founder of the Stocks in the Future Foundation.

The children are encouraged to think long term about investments and the software allows them to track out strategies for years to come. Students can select how long they want to hold certain stocks while factoring in the growth rate to calculate what they could earn over the long-term.

"Some of you think 10 years is a long time, or 20, or 60. Long term is when you retire," McDonald said to the class. "You're in middle school, you can't even fathom that."

To illustrate this point, McDonald had each student purchase one share for \$25. She then used the program to track what would happen to that share if left alone for 65 years, factoring in a 10 percent growth rate. Looks of amazement spread across the students' faces as the program calculates that single share would be worth \$1.6 million in 65 years.

"I could turn into a millionaire by the time I'm 65," said student Asacia Fair, who later used her money to buy nine shares.

The goal of encouraging students to think about long-term investing and formulate an investment plan seems to be working. Seventh-grader Timothy Lee, for example, laid out his business plan for buying stocks.

“I want to invest in small companies that I think will get bigger, but I don’t want to go too low,” he said. “But companies like Disney and McDonald’s, they’re smarter stocks to invest in.”

It’s exciting, Timothy said, to watch the red and green arrows move to see how their stocks are doing because it can change any moment.

“On Monday, I might become a millionaire,” said Asia Singleton, who bought four shares.

The program isn’t just beneficial to students; it’s been an educational experience for parents as well.

“The students are given the opportunity to learn about stocks. Some parents have expressed that the students are more knowledgeable than they are,” said Mary L. Booker, the school’s principal. “And many seize the opportunity to learn from their children.”

In addition to Francis Scott Key, the program is in place in 14 Maryland and Washington schools with 780 students in 24 classes, Bernstein said.