

# Teaching life

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One classroom at Zavala Magnet appeared more like a zoo prior to spring break during Market Day, a special event held as part of the after-school MicroSociety magnet program.

Market Day is a time when students can buy and sell goods using fake money they have built up over the month as part of the student world run by kids. Each student has a job from which they earn a salary, such as police officer or business owner. The society even has doctors and elected officials.

"I have to sign any kind of papers," society President Jared Cowen, a sixth-grader, said.

Cowen is in charge of ensuring the society runs smoothly and students are learning. Treasurer Cade Reddell, also a sixth-grader, handles payroll and also gets to collect taxes from the "citizens" every month.

Fourth-grader Bianca Chavez's job is serving as Chief Executive Officer of the petting zoo located in one of the classrooms. The zoo houses multiple animals she must care for every day, including ferrets and chinchillas.

"It helps me learn to be a good leader while caring for animals," Chavez said. "We make sure the animals are OK."

Fifth-grader Dillon Dalton, the chief financial officer of the petting zoo, said students can volunteer to take the animals home during periods like spring break.

"It's so exciting to work here," he said.

The magnet program even has a wood shop where students assemble pushcarts, bulletin boards and even race cars. The shop includes a variety of saws and other equipment. The teacher cuts the wood, while the students get to put the rest together.

The warehouse is another store allowing students to purchase school supplies like pencils, staples and crayons. By the end of Market Day, the warehouse made \$97 in less than an hour.

"The whole experience is fun, but it teaches me what to expect later in life with taxes and how to use money," Cowen said.

The society even includes the police, and students can get tickets for "crimes" like stealing, running in the hall, littering, not wearing an identification badge and arguing. Fines run either \$10 or \$15, which for many of the workers would take a full day's pay.

Students also have to go to the post office every month to send a letter to another student. They also are required to visit the health clinic to get height and weight checked, perform a balance test and check strength.

Various stores like a massage shop, nail shop and bracelet store give students plenty of things on which to spend money. For those who would like to keep some cash, the bank is available to deposit paychecks.



Kevin Buehler (Odessa American Kindergartner Cailin Neal, right), checks the heartbeat of first-grader Deeann Ramos Wednesday afternoon during the MicroSociety Market Day at Zavala Magnet Elementary School in Odessa. All students who participate in the program are required to visit the Health Clinic once a month. The MicroSociety is a program where students have different jobs and roles. Students abide by laws, exchange currency and pay taxes much like the real world.

For Assistant Principal Tanya Galindo, who is in charge of the magnet program, the experience teaches students life lessons like how to be careful with money. In addition, they have to serve a function in the society to get that paycheck. Counting money and other skills taught reinforce basic math and social abilities.

"This really is about learning; it helps them learn how the world works while applying what we learn with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills," Galindo said. "At the same time, it's fun."