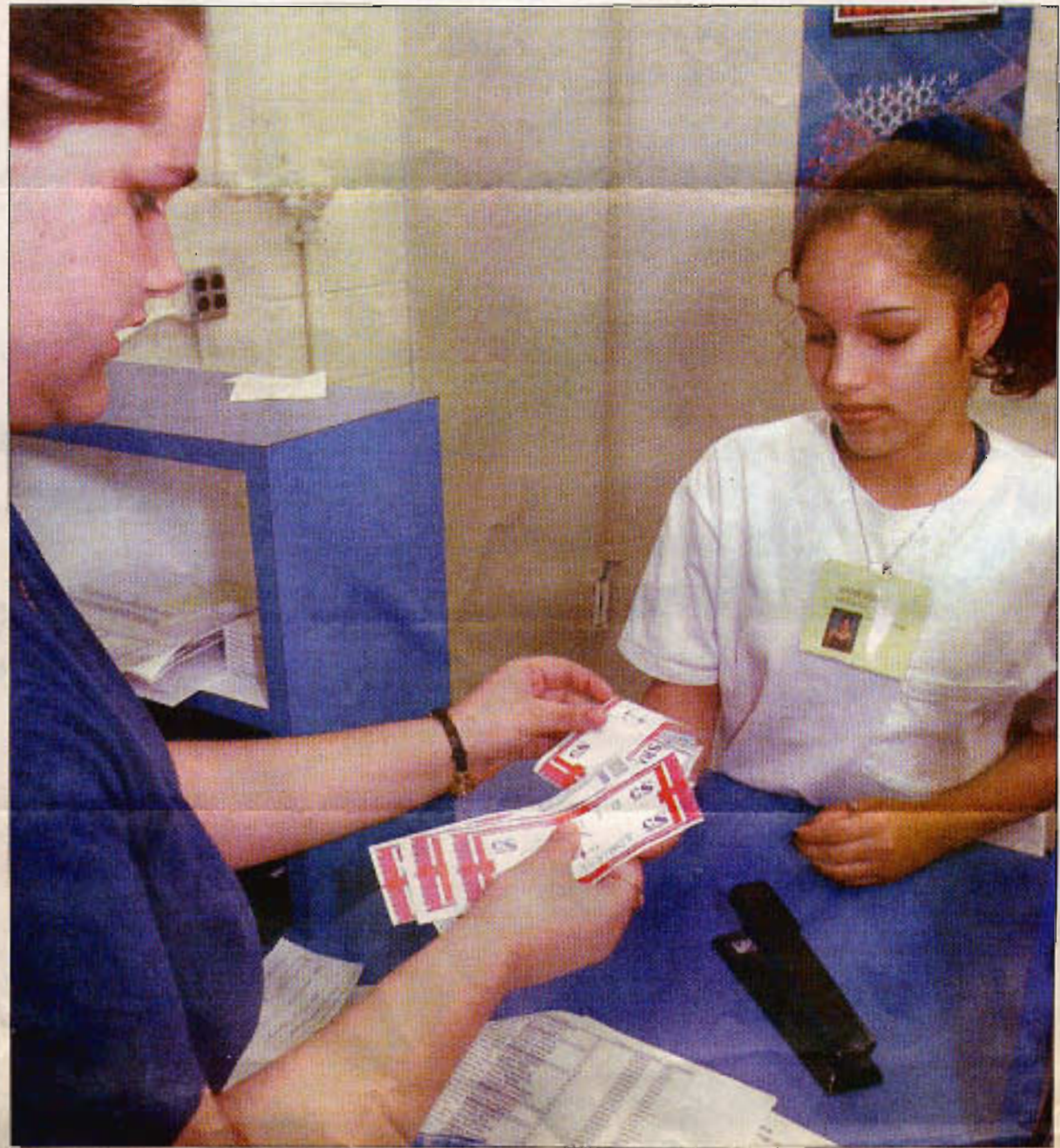


Metro



JOE IVERSON / Tulsa World

Lindsay LeBlanc, 13, counts Admiral bucks out to 14-year-old Vanessa Vasquez at the Admiral City bank in Nimitz Middle School. The school's MicroSociety town lets students sell products or buy them with money from their school checking accounts.

Up town

Nimitz model city among top 10 in U.S.

BY ASHLEY PARRISH
World Staff Writer

Alice Black always knew her little city would be renowned.

How could it not be?

At the far end of Nimitz Middle School — behind large doors that don't even hint at what's inside — is a quaint town square lined with shops, a bank, a police force and a courtroom where Black has her own pint-sized lawyer.

But when Principal Black got the fax this week naming Nimitz as one of the top 10

MicroSociety schools in the country, she still let out a delighted shriek.

"It's an honor," said Black, who hasn't stopped grinning since. After all, it was Black who helped introduce Tulsa to the MicroSociety concept, which lets students write a constitution and see it come to fruition as they build their own community.

Every student has a job in the society. For their last school period — three times a week — students make things to sell, work in the bank exchanging money for the stu-

'We're called pigs. Kids oink at us. And they like to go to jail.'

Seventh-grader Ramsey Wilson

on her position as a detective in the model city

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TULSA WORLD

TOWN:

The model city even has litigation involving the principal.

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dents who have the day off to shop, or patrol the streets as police.

It's also the time when court is in session. The society has a supreme court, district judges and an executive council to represent the student body.

After visiting several of the 200 schools across the country that use the program that is supposed to teach life skills, "I was just really gung-ho about it," Black said.

It's easy to see why. Nimitz's government and history test scores have risen 20 points since the program began two years ago.

And now, Nimitz is the place that other school officials want to visit and model their programs after.

Those visitors are seeing his-

tory in the making, because Nimitz is having its very own constitutional crisis.

Apparently no one is bigger than the Micro laws — not even principals.

In the courtroom, with its handsome wooden bench and jury box, Black has been sitting at the defendant's table with 12-year-old Leslie Briggs as her lawyer.

Black decided several months ago that the Commerce Department stopped being effective, so she closed it.

The citizens of Admiral City were outraged.

"We feel that the decision should have been up to the students who participate in MicroSociety," the plaintiff's attorney told the Nimitz Navigator, the student-run newspaper.

So they took her to court.

She decided on Leslie as her attorney when the 12-year-old came into her office with a briefcase full of evidence.

"She was very serious and stuck to the point," Black said. And as for the evidence, apparently the plaintiff's attorney and the judge are boyfriend and girlfriend.

"She had dug up the dirt,"

Black said with a delighted laugh.

Alas, the evidence was ruled inadmissible by the judge.

"The judge ruled we had to mediate," Black said, so the two parties are trying to reach a settlement. Next year, the school will add an official mediation component to the society.

But Leslie is already considering her next legal move.

"It will be fun to have an appeal," she said.

And then she will move on to bigger things. She's aiming for a seat on the executive council. Seventh-grader Ramsey Wilson wants to be the president.

With these two at the helm, the MicroSociety can only get better, Black knows.

Ramsey is a detective right now. "We're called pigs. Kids oink at us. And they like to go to jail."

Going to jail means sitting in the cafeteria, and the punishment just isn't enough like the real world, Ramsey said.

"Next year, they're going to write sentences or work or something," she said.

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