



Welcome to Developing Your Human Capital

The Last Newspaper Boy in America

By Marsha Masters, Economics Arkansas and
Jennifer Taunton, Master Economics Teacher, Springdale School



Lesson Description

In the book *The Last Newspaper Boy in America*, 12-year-old Wil David fights a publisher's decision to stop home delivery of the daily paper, *The Cooper County Caller*, to his small, out-of-the-way hometown. Wil ends up the local hero who preserves his paper route and unmasks a fraudster at the annual county fair at the same time. In this lesson, students will join the David family and develop their human capital as newspaper flingers, based on this text passage:

"The Davids had been playing the Welcome Mat since Junior could walk. When most babies turn one, they get a stuffed bunny or one of those pretend lawn mowers with the plastic balls that pop as it's pushed. Junior's present was a Frisbee. Frisbees were new back then. Doc immediately saw their potential as a training tool for a newspaper flinger." (p. 46)

Grades 3-4

Concepts

- **Human Capital** — the package of talents, skills, education, experience, health habits and attitudes each person has that enables them to be a productive worker

Standards

Arkansas Economics Standards

- E.1.3.3 Explain the relationship between knowledge, skills, education, and experience (i.e., human capital) to productivity.
- E.1.4.3 Analyze how knowledge, skills, education, and experience (i.e., human capital) can impact productivity, career advancement, and potential income

Arkansas English Language Arts Standards

Grade 3

- 3.W.1.S: Write an opinion to convince the reader to take an action or adopt a position with logical reasons supported by evidence from various sources.

Grade 4

- 4.W.1.S: Write an opinion (argument) to convince the reader to take action or adopt a position, including logical reasons supported by evidence from relevant sources.

Objectives

Students will be able to

- define the concept of “human capital”
- describe three ways in which they developed their human capital

Time required

1 class period; students will need to have read through p. 50 of the book.

Materials required

- *The Last Newspaper Boy in America*, by Sue Corbett, 1 copy per student for home reading OR 1 copy for a class read-aloud
- 1 Welcome Mat (doormat)
- rolled newspaper

Procedure

1. **Prior to class**, instruct students to read through page 50 of the book.
2. **In class**, re-read page 46, starting with the last paragraph on the page, through page 49.
3. Challenge the students to play the Welcome Mat. Allow volunteers to come up and try to land the newspaper on the Welcome Mat.
4. Ask:
 - a. Did you do as well as you thought you would?
 - b. How do you think you could improve your newspaper flinging skills? (*more practice, moving closer to the mat, etc.*)
5. Allow the students more time to practice. Ask if anyone’s ability improved.
6. Explain that as they learn something new and practice that skill they are “training their brain.” Tell the students that economists call “training your brain” developing your human capital. Ask the students for other examples of ways they are developing their human capital or “training their brain.” (*Learning multiplication tables, learning to read, etc.*)

Closure

Instruct the students to write a letter to their parents that explains what human capital is and that describes how the students performed three things that day to “train their brain.”

Assessment

Students were able to describe in their parent letters three ways they developed their human capital.

Extension

Challenge the students to describe a career of interest. Instruct them to do research on websites such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov) to identify three ways to develop their human capital to be prepared for that career.