

Valentine's Day Candy Grams

Purpose:

To foster entrepreneurial skills among our students

Vocabulary:

Capital resources, choice, consumers, cost, demand, entrepreneurship, goods and services, human resources, natural resources, producers, profit, specialization, supply

Project:

We devised a Valentine project in which a small group of enterprising students made holiday-themed gifts for other students to purchase.

Process:

Candy grams are a great way to celebrate the holiday, teach students about economics, and even make a little extra money for the school as well.

I usually start with some preliminary advertising, just to make the student body aware of the project. Flyers that say something like, "Candy grams, coming soon!" work perfectly. Creating the flyers also gives students experience with Microsoft Publisher, which is the program I usually use for this type of project. Make sure you spell check the flyers before printing them out, and also talk with the students about symmetry and color, if necessary.

The next step is to decide what types of candy you are going to buy. I usually buy from the Oriental Trading Company, which sells theme candy in bulk. I bring in a catalogue and let the students browse through it, circling anything they might be interested in selling. We usually sell a couple different types of candy grams; for example, a regular version and a "deluxe" version. What is actually sold has varied from year to year, but has included candy hearts, heart shaped lollipops, stuffed animals, cards, etc.

After deciding what the candy grams will include, I have the students calculate how much it will cost to make one candy gram of each type, based solely on the price of the materials. Then, from there, we raise the price. I explain that, although we want to make a profit, if we raise the price too much, fewer people are likely to buy our product, and we will, in the long run, actually make less money. The trick is to charge the highest price that we think the **majority** of our consumers will be willing to spend. (Since our consumers are other students, that price is fairly low. I don't recommend this project as a means of fundraising. The profit you will make, at least at a small school, is minimal.)

Once we set our prices, we go back to the computer lab and make new flyers, this time listing the prices, and post them around the school. We also type up order forms, which simply ask for the sender, recipient, and a message. We then go around to each class, usually a few days after the flyers have been posted, and take the orders, keeping things organized of course, with one person in charge of the money envelope/box, one person in charge of the order forms, etc.

We collect the order forms and figure out how much candy we need to buy based on the number of orders. When the candy arrives, we set about making the candy grams. The concept of specialization comes in handy for this, as we divide up the work assembly line fashion, with each student in charge of one aspect of the final product. We deliver the candy grams on Valentine's Day.

This project can be easily adapted to your schedule and needs, and the students really enjoy it. This very basic project easily could be expanded, allowing you and the class to go much more in depth with the economic concepts.

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