

The statistics on kids graduating from high school and who cannot balance a check book are appalling! With adulthood comes adult responsibilities and if you can't balance your check books, your level of education may likely be at minimum wage status. Those two factors spell trouble ahead. It's a shame that this is the case, since we owe it to our children to prepare them for life as an adult.

Some innovative teachers have devised classes which cover these everyday chores of budgeting your income and balancing check books. Teachers have found that students short on math skills quickly develop an interest in brushing up. Math skills improve and the student comes out of the class with a realistic sense of earning, saving and budgeting money and the ability to balance their check books. With the high success rates these classes produce, this type of class should be in every school's curriculum.

The teachers who developed these courses for middle school students, some of whom had spending money of their own, earned through newspaper routes or baby sitting. The teachers guessed that a little hands on experience with handling money would serve as a real eye opener for the students. They were right.

Each student was assigned a fixed income and "paid" weekly. The assignment of monthly expenses such as housing, food, transportation costs and utilities brought a little reality check to the student's consciousness. Another requirement of the class was that each student had to set aside some of their "income" for savings. They were issued "check books" and registers to record their expenditures, and were required to reconcile their check books weekly.

The kids sure felt great "depositing" their income to their account, but as soon as rent and utilities were paid, they immediately realized this wasn't going to be a get-rich scheme as they'd hoped. By the time groceries were purchased and the car insurance was paid, there might be very little to go into their savings, much less fun!

Some students lacking in math skills were motivated to improve not only math skills but their entire academic record. This was because they realized how far a minimum wage job would not take them!

By the end of the class, all of the students had a much firmer grip on the realities of adulthood and managing their own money. No wonder. It could have been real money. These kids are now equipped to avoid many a financial pitfall.

This idea can be adapted to a home study course that parents can give their children, should your school not provide such a course. After all, it simply doesn't make sense to let a child go out in the world without the skills to

balance their check books. That's like sending a babe-in-the-woods out to the wolf's lair of finances!