



**The Real Game™ Version 2.0
CANADA**

2007 National Pilot Report

August 2007

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THE REAL GAME™ Version 2.0 National Pilot Report

FOREWORD

The Real Game Version 2.0 is the first of a new generation of programs in The Real Game Series. Changes over previous editions were so extensive that a national pilot was required for quality assurance purposes. The version piloted (Working Title: *The Real Game – Next Generation*) was a hardcopy edition with a CD containing all student handouts. The Real Game Version 2.0 incorporates extensive additional changes based on pilot feedback, and it has been digitized. Pilot sites were advised that a web-based edition would be launched in Fall 2007 that could be used in the traditional hardcopy format, online, or in any combination of the two modes. Over time, all programs in The Real Game Series will be digitized and receive Version 2 branding.

An invitation to pilot *The Real Game – Next Generation* was extended to schools across Canada through the Canada Career Information Partnership (www.ccip-picc.org). 70 schools submitted applications (with signed Statements of Commitment outlining the expectations of pilot partners), 54 were accepted and trained by NLWC or RGI in every province, and a total of 44 schools (see list on Page 4 below) completed the pilot and submitted detailed feedback.

The first provincial training session for the national pilot took place in Quebec on March 26th and the last was in New Brunswick on April 23rd. All pilot sites were expected to complete the program and submit complete feedback from facilitators, students, parents and administrators no later than June 29th. This timeframe proved extremely challenging for all pilot sites (many of skipped a varying number of sessions) and impossible for some. Most facilitators and administrators noted that time pressures adversely affected the results.

The Real Game is intended for middle/junior high school students aged 12-14 in grades 7 and 8. Some schools piloted the program at higher and lower grade levels. The results remained positive, but less so the farther students were from the target grades/ages. Other programs in *The Real Game Series* are more appropriate for these students.

NLWC contracted with Dr. Howard Esbin, President of Heliotrope in Toronto to collate and analyze pilot feedback and to write this National Pilot Report. Clearly identified comments from The Real Game Version 2.0 writing team have been inserted in Dr. Esbin's Recommendations (Page 17), so readers can see how pilot feedback has influenced final program content. NLWC and RGI are grateful to Dr. Esbin for his diligence in analyzing over 3,700 pages of feedback from facilitators, students, parents and administrators under tight time constraints, and for the insights he shares.

Sincere thanks are extended to over 2,000 administrators, teachers, students and parents in the 44 pilot schools below. Their feedback has been incorporated in this new edition and they qualified for a complimentary two-year site license for *The Real Game Version 2.0*. An additional 18 schools applied to pilot during the April-June, 2007 national pilot period but had insufficient time. The 2007 National Pilot Report is available at: www.realgamecanadaonline.ca.

NOTE: A great deal of applied research has been undertaken in the past decade on The Real Game Series. For example, the pilot reported in this paper is the 40th national pilot of a program in The Real Game Series globally. The cumulative data is a virtual gold mine of feedback from

over 50,000 pilot participants. NLWC intends to a current archive of all scientific and applied research on The Real Game Series globally, with contact information for the primary researchers and direct links to available documentation. (See Appendix E, p 72 for a summary of research on The Real Game Series globally)

For further information on *The Real Game Version 2.0* or any other program *in The Real Game Series*, or on this National Pilot Report please contact NLWC at:

Toll-free: 888 533-5683
Email: info@lifework.ca

We hope many students, teachers and parents will benefit from this new generation of the world's most popular experiential career preparation program.

Phil Jarvis

The Real Game Version 2.0 Project Leader
Vice-President, Partnership Development
National Life/Work Centre
Memramcook Institute
488 Centrale Street
Memramcook, New Brunswick E4K 3S6
Tel: 506 758-0306
Email: psjarvis@lifework.ca
Web: www.lifework.ca

National Pilot Schools

Newfoundland and Labrador

1. O'Donel High School, Mount Pearl

Nova Scotia

1. West Pictou Consolidated School, Pictou
2. Shannon Park School, Dartmouth
3. Riverside Education Centre, Milford
4. Northeast Kings Education Centre, Canning
5. St. Joseph Elementary School, Sydney Mines

New Brunswick

1. Riverview Middle School, Riverview
2. Fredericton High School, Fredericton
3. Woodstock Middle School, Woodstock

Prince Edward Island

1. East Wiltshire Intermediate School, Cornwall

Quebec

1. Laval Junior High School, Laval
2. Dr. Wilbert Keon School, Chapeau
3. Kahnawake Survival School, Kahnawake
4. Lindsay Place High School, Pointe-Claire
5. Lakeside Academy, Pointe-Claire

Ontario

1. Smooth Rock Falls Elementary, Smooth Rock Falls
2. St. Thomas Aquinas High School, Kenora
3. Camilla Road Senior Public School, Mississauga
4. David Leeder Middle School, Mississauga
5. Hazel McCallion Senior Public, Mississauga
6. St. Gabriel School, Halton (HIEC Career Centre)
7. Halton District Public School, Halton (HIEC Career Centre)
8. Turner Fenton Secondary School, Brampton
9. Robert H. Lagerquist Senior Public, Brampton
10. Our Lady of the Lake Catholic College School, Keswick
11. Queen Mary Public School, Peterborough (Employment Planning and Counselling)
12. Calvin Park Public School, Kingston
13. Mackenzie Glen Public School, Maple

Manitoba

1. Elmwood High School, Winnipeg
2. Margaret Barbour Collegiate Institute, The Pas
3. Stanley Knowles School, Winnipeg
4. Souris School, Souris
5. Wapanohk Community School, Thompson
6. Elm Creek School, Elm Creek

Saskatchewan

1. Tisdale Middle and Secondary School, Tisdale
2. Valley Manor School, Martensville
3. Wolseley High School, Wolseley
4. St. Mary School, Moose Jaw
5. St. John School, Saskatoon

Alberta

1. Strathcona Christian Academy, Sherwood Park
2. Terrace Ridge School, Lacombe
3. Mother Teresa School, Sylvan Lake
4. Gus Wetter School, Castor

British Columbia

1. Rutland Middle School, Kelowna

INTRODUCTION

The National Work Life Centre is a not-for-profit corporation based at the Memramcook Institute in New Brunswick. Its mission is to help prepare individuals of all ages to find fulfilling work and create balanced, satisfying lifestyles. NLWC offers a proven portfolio of innovative life career management programs and tools.

At the heart of NLWC's mission are *The High Five Principles*, conceived by career development leaders across Canada.

- *Follow Your Heart*
- *Focus On The Journey*
- *Access Your Allies*
- *Change Is Constant*
- *Learning Is Lifelong*



These principles are timeless in their profundity. They provide a simple way to remember what's important in learning a living. They've also never been more relevant than now. Discovering our dreams and keeping faith with what impassions us is key to success in work, life, and community. The ripple effect of such an approach is beneficial at all levels of society.

Since it's founding in 1994, the NLWC has become an international pioneer in career development. The following countries have adopted NLWC concepts, programs, and tools – *The United States, The United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Hungary, Germany, and Ireland*. That so many international partners have embraced NLWC's philosophy and resources is testament to this innovative Canadian social enterprise. Tens of thousands of teachers, counsellors, administrators, parents, and students help ensure the concepts, programs, and tools remain responsive to evolving needs.

NLWC offers two principal life-career management programs - *The Blueprint For Life-Work Designs* and *The Real Game Series* – and a number of complementary learning and career exploration resources. The first is an easy-to-use framework that correlates core career and life management competencies with associated performance indicators across the lifespan. Like the building codes that assure quality and safety in construction across Canada, the Blueprint helps educators and career practitioners teach youth and adults across Canada to design and manage their careers. The Real Game Series of six experiential programs for 8 year olds to adults all offer role-playing scenarios in which groups of participants are transformed into communities of working adults. This enables players to imagine and experience through role-playing ('test drive') their future lives and livelihoods while learning and practising the Blueprint career building competencies.

During the game experience, students create their own business cards, purchase homes and cars, settle into neighbourhoods, budget money and time, juggle work, home and leisure responsibilities, plan business travel and vacations, deal with the unexpected at work and home, and much more. The game process continuously links future adult realities with current school subjects. Students also learn how character traits and attitude impact on the success of their new roles and work. They see, for example, what happens when their character demonstrates honesty, courage, respect, empathy, perseverance, integrity, etc., or lack thereof. As community members, players also learn the value of cooperation and pooling resources. Through a simulated disaster, they learn what it can mean when a multi-cultural community works together for the good of all. While students' role-play being working adults in their 'virtual community',

teachers also engage adults from the 'real community' (parents, community organizations, leaders, service clubs, companies, etc.).

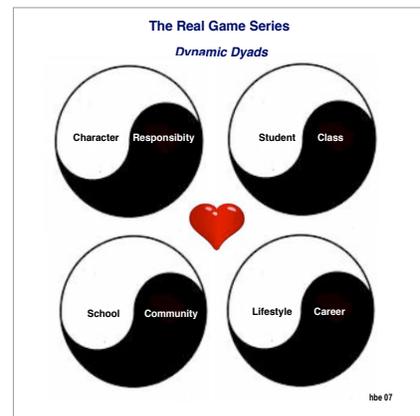
The entire program (core, recommended and discretionary sessions) can last 30 hours or more. It takes about 15 hours to complete the core activities of the program. Optional activities are included which complement the core activities and create opportunities to involve resource people from the community, guest speakers and the families or friends of participants. The program can be completed in a week or, if blended with other interventions and resources, extend for weeks or months.

There are five Real Game Series programs available for students in Grade's 3 through 12, and a program for adults.

- The Play Real Game (Grades 3/4 plus - Ages 8 plus)
- The Make It Real Game (Grades 5/6 plus - Ages 10 plus)
- The Real Game (Grades 7/8 plus - Ages 12 plus)
- The Be Real Game (Grades 9/10 plus - Ages 14 plus)
- The Get Real Game (Grades 11 and 12 - Ages 16-18)
- Real Times, Real Life (Adults - Ages 18 plus)

Note: Future developments include a new online U.S. edition to be piloted in late 2007 and released in 2008.

As Proust observed "*The voyage of discovery is not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.*" Post-game, students tend generally to look at schoolwork, money, work, and even their parents in a new light. They also share a heightened awareness of the importance of doing one's best inside and outside of school. Overall, students generally become more purposeful and attentive. They also have a better sense of the wide range of occupations available, what appeals to them and how to access related life/work information, resources and services. They've also learned to collaborate on a large, complex, creative project. Perhaps the most important lesson of all is there's a practical way to make their future dreams real, starting here and now.



One of the most compelling of the NLWC pioneering concepts is the *1% Change Factor*. Simply put, when just 1% more citizens become more intentional and purposeful *life span career managers* the social and economic benefits will be enormous. When just 1 in a hundred people now out of work or in jobs they dislike and in which they are underproductive find jobs they like, the economic and human ripple effect will be felt in communities across the country. A 1% increase in Canadian productivity translates to an annual increase of more than \$11 billion in goods and services. The Real Game Series is now in half of Canada's schools, and in over 50,000 schools around the world. In all, over a million students play these games annually. The positive social impact of all these youth 'visiting their futures' is helping to tip the needed 1%.

A growing body of international research helps explain why *The Real Game* is such a valuable learning tool. For example, *The Real Game: Evaluation Results* published by America's Career Resource Network shows that students who played *The Real Game* experienced positive long-term learning outcomes. The 2004 OECD Report *Career Guidance Policies in 36 Countries: Contrasts and Common Themes* cites the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* and *The Real Game*

Series among the most promising practices in the 36 countries studied. See Appendix E (p 72) for a summary of research on The Real Game to date.

THE NATIONAL PILOT

Overview and Methodology

The following discusses the results of a recent national pilot of the newest edition in *The Real Game Series*. *The Real Game Version 2.0* was developed especially for middle school students. It draws upon the latest developments in NLWC's international network, most recently those in California. This is the third major revision to Canadian edition since its initial launch in 1996.

Forty-four schools across Canada took part in the pilot from March to June, 2007. Participants included administrators, facilitators (teachers and counselors), students, and parents. Their written feedback was extensive and in depth. This collective record provides a fascinating glimpse into Canadian middle school life in communities small and large, from east to west, and from south to north.

The pilot was facilitated by the *Canada Career Information Partnership* and involved pilot sites in all provinces. Several Industry Sector Councils provided Role Profiles for the pilot prototype, and Human Resources and Social Development Canada contributed content on Essential Skills.

Why Middle School now?

- *Early adolescents (ages 10-14) in middle school are undergoing rapid physical growth and experiencing many new emotions. They are moving from concrete to abstract thinking as they progress in their studies. They are acquiring a self-concept and social skills. They are developing lasting attitudes about learning, work, and other adult values. Finally, they are learning to take responsibility for their education. Unfortunately, many youth have already limited their career aspirations by the time they reach middle school, based on false information and beliefs.* Preparing Middle School Students For A Career: Wendy Schwartz. [www.kidsource.com]
- *A program designed for middle school ... allow the students to explore multiple careers and be deliberately structured to widen their concepts of future possibilities.* Gender, Diversities & Technology Institute EDC: S. Nair-Pillai [www2.edc.org/gdi/CaREN.htm]

What's New About This Edition?

- Expanded set of 60 Role Profiles [30 based on direct input from Industry Sector Councils]
- Increased emphasis on career opportunities in *Trades and Technologies*
- Inclusion of direct links between Learning Objectives, Performance Indicators, and Academic Subjects in all Sessions
- Addition of *Essential Workplace Skills* (Employability Skills)
- Highlighting of *Character* traits as critical "soft skills"
- Explicit recognition of *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs Competencies*
- Revised and updated *Labour Market, Lifestyle, and Learning Information*

For the 2007 national pilot the National Life Work Centre employed a new survey protocol adapted from *The Real Game California*. There was a different feedback form, with both multiple choice and open-ended questions for each participant group - administrators, facilitators, students, and parents. The facilitators feedback form provided opportunity to comment on every Unit (4) and Session (20) as well as the game experience overall. In several

instances, facilitators also provided supplemental inputs. Over 3,700 pages of feedback were received.

The goal of this pilot report is to present a simple, coherent encapsulation of the data, both quantitative and qualitative. A simple but exacting system was developed to digitally process and organize the paper data pool. This involved designing composite tables to aggregate the answers from each individual feedback form from each school. The result is a Pilot Summary for each Province. These can be scanned for general response patterns and critical mass of opinion. Please see Appendix B (p 24).

Transcription Editing

All written commentary was transcribed. This includes the misspelled words and poor grammar. Many of the students are learning English as a second language. Many others have been identified as learning challenged. However, the evident impact of *The Real Game* on their thinking and intentions could not be clearer.

There were two types of commentary omitted. The first type of content omitted was illegible, rude, or didn't answer the question i.e. 'this sucks' and 'I don't know'. This only concerns student feedback forms. The second type of omission largely concerns commentary from administrators and facilitators about time challenges related to the spring scheduling of the pilot. NLWC managers knew that time pressures late in the school year would be a problem. However, the alternative meant a one-year delay for the new edition launch. NLWC recognizes the tremendous effort and extra pressures all pilot participants therefore faced in the 'spring crunch.'

It should also be noted that often the actual number of Student Feedback Forms in the package is larger than the teachers' reported count. As well, not every total of a particular multiple-choice question adds up because not every participant (administrator, facilitator, student, and/or parent) answered every question. Many facilitators were unable to do all sessions in the program. Thus, feedback from facilitators and students is silent on these components.

Methodology Outline

- Organize raw data by province and school
 - Pilot Application Forms and Statements of Commitment
 - Administrators Feedback Forms
 - Facilitators Feedback Forms
 - Students Feedback Forms
 - Parents Feedback Forms
- Create Master Table adapted from Feedback Forms as template for each Province
- Review, break down, transcribe, and aggregate raw data for each school and participant:
 - Quantitative - summarize multiple choices
 - Qualitative - transcribe written reports verbatim
- Review and summarize Pilot Applications [provides baseline for comparison with feedback post game]
- Scan all relevant attachments for permanent digital record of pilot

Feedback Summary

Each Provincial Pilot Summary features composite tables for each participant group - *administrators, facilitators, students, and parents*. Those who directly experienced the game - facilitators and students - contributed the most in-depth feedback. That from administrators and parents is proportionally lighter.

When the summaries are reviewed as a whole, certain basic patterns and themes emerge. Indeed, one gets an immediate sense of the critical weight of opinion in regards to every question raised in the Feedback Forms. These patterns and themes are highlighted below. However, there's no more eloquent testimonial to the educational value of *The Real Game* than in the actual words of the participants. Clearly, the pilot game experience was successful with all participant groups. Please see Appendix B (p 24) for summary feedback by province. See Appendix C (p 64) for sample written comments from facilitators and Appendix D (p 67) for sample written comments from students.

Administrators

Every administrator who provided feedback noted the participating teachers'/facilitators' enthusiasm for *The Real Game Version 2.0*. All reporting administrators intend to make this learning program available to all, or as many students as possible. Practical recommendations include: *a short cut version for some sessions, role-play characters on disability and welfare, and having a worker move to another community [to learn the financial and human costs associated with change]*. There were also recommendations about adapting the game to particular student groups including *ESL, Special Ed and different reading levels*.

The following table shows the percentage of Principals (Total=36), by province, that ...
[“sensed their teachers and students were enthusiastic about The Real Game.”](#)

NF N=0	NS N=4	NB N=3	PE N=1	QC N=2	ON N=9	MB N=9	SK N=4	AB N=3	BC N=1
NR	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

[“plan to make the new edition of The Real Game available to ‘all’ or ‘as many as possible’ of their students”](#)

NR	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	78%	100%	100%	100%
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NR= No response

Facilitators

The Facilitator Feedback Form asked facilitators to rate key learning issues on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is the most positive response. Does the game have educational value? Are students interested and engaged? Do facilitators believe that, post-game, students are more:

- *Confidant they can make good decisions in their lives?*
- *Aware that choices they make today will affect them in the future?*
- *Aware of what to expect in adult life?*
- *Knowledgeable about career options available to them?*
- *Able to find information and resources to explore career options?*
- *Prepared to manage their life and career after they leave school?*

In general, the facilitators' feedback was highly positive across all key measures. To illustrate, a 'before and after' exercise is helpful. The following are extracts from the Pilot Applications:

- *We need more real life experiences for many of our students.*
- *My students need to know about the real world in a safe, fun setting.*
- *Our students need to be encouraged to look outside of their communities and see what opportunities are available to them.*
- *Many of our students don't have much knowledge in the area of career development*
- *We have noticed that some parents in our community are pushing their children to go on to university or college because of a belief that these institutions will guarantee a better life for them. The problem that we are beginning to recognize is that students plan to go away [and it is usually far away], but have no idea what they want to do or even what they like.*

The following are extracts from the post-game Facilitator Feedback Forms.

- *I feel this game is more important than the curriculum I teach every day!*
- *Students are hesitant at first but when they finally realize there are no boundaries, it's fascinating to see their imaginations take off.*
- *I have already begun to see some teamwork amongst students who, if given their choice, would not normally work together.*
- *Gave out wish lists - students really had to be encouraged to dream big! I heard comments like " I'll just get a used car - it's all I'll be able to afford". Once they let go, they really to into it. Many went to the Internet to find things that weren't listed on the wish list, and the dreaming really started!*
- *Another teacher and I invited each other's class to see what others do in their communities. They took their Who Are You sheets with them - it was like a visit to another 'town'.*
- *Students started helping each other balance their budgets! That was a great thing to see!*
- *This game was REALLY ideal for our students who struggle in school and are probably more at risk for dropping out.*
- *We found that role-play was one of the best ways for our students to experience TRG. This activity also provided us with the following strands - ENGLISH and DRAMA.*
- *This was an excellent opportunity for our students! The kids loved playing The Real Game and looked forward to future lessons.*
- *I thought the content was extremely valuable and that TRG taught our students' skills and concepts they wouldn't have learned apart from future 'life experience'.*
- *The lessons were easy to follow and very 'user-friendly'. I loved the handouts. Looking forward to playing this with more classes next year.*
- *The new program looks great. The photos of the real estate are much more realistic and the packaging is much slicker.*
- *The new careers are excellent. I liked being able to pick and chose a selection from the CD and only print out the ones that are suitable for my students.*
- *The parents I spoke to were pleased and felt it brought a lot of discussion at home.*
- *I was invited into the classroom for the month of June, with the last workshop three days before school's end. The teacher was surprised with the positive interest of her students given the time of year. The teacher was very impressed with the REAL GAME and looks forward to the fall.*
- *Overall an amazing experience that my students thoroughly enjoyed.*
- *Very interested in purchasing copies for our school when the final version is ready. We are considering running it throughout our school in either one or both [Grade 7 & 8] grade levels for the whole year. Thanks for this opportunity to pilot the game.*
- *Overall it was a very positive experience within our school and I can see how we could do a lot more with it. Cannot wait to begin it in September.*

Note: For more facilitator feedback, refer to Appendix C (p 64).

The following table shows the percentage of facilitators (Total=49), by province, that answered “very true” or “somewhat true” to the following:

“Since my students played The Real Game ...

they are more confident that they can make good decisions in their lives.”

NF N=1	NS N=6	NB N=3	PE N=1	QC N=5	ON N=13	MB N=6	SK N=6	AB N=5	BC N=1
0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	10%	100%	100%	100%

they are more aware that choices they make today will affect them in the future.”

100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	83%	100%	100%	100%
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they have a better idea of what to expect in adult life.”

100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
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they know more about career options available to them.”

100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	92%	100%	100%	100%	100%
------	------	------	------	------	-----	------	------	------	------

they know better how to find information and resources to explore career options.”

100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	77%	100%	100%	100%	100%
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they are better prepared to manage their life and career after they leave school.”

0%	100%	100%	100%	75%	92%	100%	100%	100%	100%
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Students

The two-page Student Feedback Forms constitute the single largest data pool (N=1,095). All students in participating classes completed their own questionnaire. An overall scan reveals widespread agreement in terms of what students had to say about the game and what they learned. On the whole, their response mirrors that of facilitators. That is, they too felt the game was very worthwhile. This wide spread consensus is even more remarkable given the incredible diversity of the participating students, and the time pressures facilitators were under that resulted in a rushed and incomplete game experience for many students.

Diversity

There is tremendous diversity among the students who participated. They represent a very wide range of geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures. Over 25 different languages are spoken at home including: *Arabic, Bengali, Farsi, Cantonese, Croatian, French, German, Gujarati, Hindi, Japanese, Kazak, Korean, Mandarin, Ojibwa, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Sign, Singhalese, Spanish, Tagalong, Tamil, Urdu, Vietnamese.*

There’s also great diversity in the learning capacities and styles of participating students. The following are facilitator descriptions of various classes, presented in no particular order.

- Special needs/youth at risk
- Hands on learners
- Learning disabilities
- Learning, behavioural, and/or communication exceptionalities, lowered academic functioning
- English second language students
- Regular stream students
- High functioning Aspergers Syndrome students
- Enhanced learning program students

Common Threads

The majority of students felt their experience was very positive. Their feedback evinces a strongly shared sense of having assimilated key lessons from The Real Game, such as:

- Trust in your dreams
- Appreciation for relation between school and work, money and self-determination
- Hard work and application are essential
- Motivation to try harder at school
- Awareness that choices they make today impact their future
- Confidence in their ability to make good life decisions
- Perceived preparedness to manage their life and work after they leave school

The students' feedback reveals profoundly important realizations vis-à-vis life, work, and money. Many student comments evoke the stark existential but life affirming proverbs of Ecclesiastes and the Zen Sutras.

- *Thinking before choosing*
- *You can't get everything you want*
- *Be prepared for the unexpected*
- *Use my skills to my advantage*
- *Learning is ongoing and is a never-ending process*
- *To ask less from my parents and to be more grateful for their efforts*
- *Life isn't easy and you have to have a good job to even survive*

The students' feedback also reveals a fascinating interplay between thought and feeling in their reasoning and evaluation process. Those aspects of the game they enjoyed least are also recognized as being the most important lessons learned. The following represent these key dichotomized themes.

- *Balancing budgets and checkbooks*
- *Taxes and deductions*
- *Paying the bills*
- *Coping with being fired*
- *Writing and reflection*

The pilot produced 2,190 pages of student feedback. The following are sample responses to the question, "[What did you learn from playing The Real Game?](#)"

- *I need to manage my money wisely and buy the needs before the wants.*
- *I'll have to work harder at my goals I set for myself.*
- *About the stuff that happens in the Real World and how difficult it is to grow up.*
- *When you are older, it takes a lot of hard work and there is lots of responsibilities.*
- *As you get older, you have to do everything for your self.*
- *You need a good education so you can get a good job and have a good life.*
- *About making good choices for the future.*
- *I now have an idea of the real world ... I enjoyed learning all of this.*
- *I learned that the life of our parents isn't as easy as it seems*
- *About many careers ... learned new vocabulary and budgeting money for the real world.*
- *Education is totally important in your future.*
- *Tax is a killer and money doesn't grow on trees.*
- *What to do when living on your own, how to plan my life, and time management.*
- *Being an adult and calculating money is very hard ... I realized that your parents don't always have money for you to spend.*
- *You have to care about your future.*
- *You can't always get what you want in life, you need to save up and earn it.*

- *I learned so much in this game ... I felt I was adult learning to save my money, make sure I have enough leisure time and everything ... it was really fun.*
- *The game makes you think about what you want to be and to be organized.*
- *What you want and wish for is hard to get. You can't spend all your money on things that aren't central.*
- *How life is when you're older and life is not as easy as it seems.*
- *I learned to make the right choices and how the workforce works.*
- *It's important to plan for the future so we can be prepared. Something unexpected could happen, like losing your job, so be prepared.*
- *How to budget keeping my expenses lower than my net income.*
- *How being an adult feels like.*
- *Not to give up and always try even if someone says I can't.*
- *When you lose your job, you don't have to find the same one ... you can take your skills that you already have and start all over, choosing a job you like more.*
- *Life doesn't always go your way, you just have to deal with it.*
- *What skills are necessary for helping me in life.*
- *Females can do just about any job a male can.*
- *I learned the idea of saving just over 100 dollars a month for ten years and then earning interest on it for when you retire.*
- *How it feels like to work at a job and balance your income to be able to live happily.*
- *I learned the kind of jobs there are - some of them I hadn't heard of.*
- *What to do with my life.*
- *Life can hold a surprise around every corner, some good and some bad.*
- *To think more about my career. It is important to plan for the future.*
- *How real life is, now I see how everything works.*
- *Planning your future around education is important. Learning is ongoing and is a never-ending process.*
- *To get better marks in high school so I can go to university and get a good job.*
- *I need to work harder in school to have a good future and enjoy my job.*

The following is a sample of student responses to the question, “[What will you do differently having played the game?](#)”

- *Take a part-time job in high school to open me to job choices ... It would also give me some starting money.*
- *Change the way I think about the future.*
- *Follow my heart and do what I want to do.*
- *Work harder in school so I can become anything I want in the future.*
- *Make really good choices and concentrate on my future.*
- *Look for an occupation that I will enjoy and still gives me a life.*
- *Study harder and put more time into my school work.*
- *Stop taking things from my parents for granted.*
- *Study harder because education determines how much I will make in the future and what my job will be.*
- *Be careful with my money and make good thoughtful plans for the future.*
- *Ask less from my parents and to be more grateful for their efforts.*
- *Follow my dreams and find out what I am good at.*
- *Study harder ... now I believe that I can be anything I want to be.*
- *Now I know how much education affects your career, I'll work extra hard in school.*
- *Save money in case I need it later on, because now, if I get money right away I spend it.*
- *Save some money when I'm older just in case of an emergency and I will also spend money more smartly.*

- *Think differently on how we should handle our life and jobs.*
- *Take life more seriously and if I mess up my education now it will effect my future.*
- *I'll do everything differently. I'll start to plan a little more about my career. I'll try harder in school to reach my goals. I'll be better in my school work. I will be more organized. I will set goals and plan my future focusing my education on my interests.*
- *Think before I do something since everything I do will affect my life.*
- *Not fool around in school because it will be hard to get a good job.*
- *Consider more job choices and look at necessary skills that will help me.*
- *Work harder and be more responsible to get into a good university since I've seen a relationship between education and a better quality job.*
- *Stay in school, do better in my classes and volunteer for things.*
- *Work harder at my goals I set for myself.*
- *Stay in school longer, work harder, study more, and choose a good job.*
- *I'm not gonna wait for a good job to come ... I'm gonna try to do it on my own.*
- *I will definitely work harder and get part time jobs so when I want my real job the boss will think I am more responsible.*

Note: For more student feedback, refer to Appendix D (p 67).

Common Refrains

Students also shared several common refrains, some quite pointed.

- *Choose jobs rather than be assigned*
- *Include family roles*
- *Make the game more fun*
- *Less writing and more verbal exchange*

A Dissenting Minority

There was a vocal dissenting minority, less than 5%, who simply saw no value to the game and were not moved to view their present lives or futures differently. Many were of ages (16-20) and in grades (10-12) for which The Real Game is not intended. The following table shows the percentage of students (Total=1,095), by province, that answered “very true” or “sort of true” to:

“Playing The Real Game has made me think about trying harder in School.”

NF N=49 [Gr 11/12]	NS N=142	NB N=54	PE N=16	QC N=38	ON N=333	MB N=117	SK N=144	AB N=148	BC N=54
45%	86%	96%	81%	95%	74%	86%	88%	73%	91%

“I learned new things about skills, knowledge and attitudes.”

35%	61%	81%	69%	84%	82%	74%	78%	64%	80%
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“I feel more confident I can make good decisions about my career and my life.”

49%	86%	94%	81%	87%	86%	91%	92%	76%	89%
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“I see more clearly how the choices I make today can affect my future.”

65%	90%	96%	100%	89%	91%	94%	93%	89%	94%
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“I have a better idea of what to expect in adult life.”

53%	89%	96%	88%	87%	88%	91%	90%	84%	94%
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

“I know more about career choices available to me.”

49%	83%	98%	81%	87%	85%	89%	90%	80%	85%
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

“I know better how to find information to help me plan my career.”

51%	79%	89%	63%	71%	78%	86%	80%	73%	81%
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

“I feel more prepared to take charge of my life and career after I leave school.”

41%	82%	93%	69%	82%	83%	82%	87%	76%	81%
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Parents

As indicated above, there was less feedback proportionally from parents. Some facilitators noted that with more time they would have engaged more parents and community members as guest speakers. Those parents who did provide feedback stated they consciously set aside time to discuss their children's school and extra curricular activities as well as the parents' work. In depth discussion also generally takes place about future life and work choices. All agree that Middle School is an optimal time to begin this planning formally. The majority of parents were also aware their children were piloting *The Real Game* and that they benefited accordingly. Again, the majority would like to see the game as part of regular school programming.

The following table shows the percentage of parents (Total=193), by province, that ...

“believe it's important for children your child's age to learn about future careers and the world of work as part of their school curriculum.”

NF	NS	NB	PE	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
N=0	N=29	N=8	N=0	N=11	N=40	N=20	N=63	N=22	N=0
NR	100%	100%	100%	75%	84%	100%	100%	96%	NR

“feel your child has benefited from participation in *The Real Game*?”

NR	100%	100%	NR	82%	100%	100%	98%	100%	NR
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NR= No response

Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the feedback forms of participating administrators, facilitators, students, and parents. The consultant has augmented these further based on his own review of the material and related professional experience. This is by no means a definitive list, but rather a baseline for further consideration.

On Game Fun

One facilitator noted that the term 'game' is somewhat misleading. A significant percentage of students also commented on the lack of 'fun'. It is recommended that a focus group be convened with students who participated in the pilot to determine how more fun could be factored into the game experience.

NLWC: Time pressures took much of the fun out of the program for many facilitators and students. In fact, the experience was incomplete and fragmented for many students. Most facilitators report that they are looking forward to starting earlier in the coming school year and so they can enjoy the full program with their students. However, several engaging new online game activities have been included in *The Real Game Version 2.0* with which students and teachers will have fun.

On The Spin Game

This is such a universally loved game feature; it may be productive to consider ways to capitalize upon it further and in new ways.

NLWC: An all-new, online version of *The Spin Game* has been created for *The Real Game Version 2.0*. It can be projected on an electronic white board (EWB) or screen, it's more competitive with many new questions and answers, and scoring is automated.

On Game Roles

Students would like to pick their own job roles, and there were widespread requests for additional job choices, including *law, medicine, journalism, entertainment, and sport*. In regards

to job self selection, there are two possible recommendations to consider. The first is to create an option whereby students can choose their own role. Perhaps this requires extra responsibilities, so the role is well researched and not chosen lightly. At present, the only program in which students routinely choose their role is *The Get Real Game* (Grades 11/12). This program is intended as a "dress rehearsal" for the transition from school to adult life. Given the growing socio-psychological importance of the Middle School transition, perhaps these two programs can be aligned further. Also, it may be helpful to examine why so many students in their feedback still identify university as the lodestar for success. Does more need to be done to honour and promote other vocational tracks?

There was also consensus among facilitators and students on making the game even more 'real'. The following extract expresses this well. "*Opportunity to make The Real Game more 'real' - dual income households, single parent households ... Two decision makers, children, all change the way people figure money and life.*" There were also recommendations to include role-plays for individuals on welfare or disability support.

The Real Game (Grades 7/8) Facilitators Guide encourages teachers to explore family dimensions with students as they see fit. This additional level of role-play and simulation is offered in *The Be Real Game* (Grades 9/10). Some students will have a spouse with a great job, and a couple of children. Others will have 3 children and no spouse. Others will be single, etc.

NLWC: One objective of the game is to allow grade 7/8 students to "experience" a realistic cross section of roles found in most communities. Students are not expected to make final career choices at this age. Most long-time Real Game facilitators feel that students learn more about more career options when the roles are assigned arbitrarily. Nonetheless, facilitators are encouraged to use their own best judgment in deciding which roles will be available to students and how they are assigned. The number of role profiles in the new program has been increased by 50%, from 40 to 60. Until all occupations in the country are included, users will find gaps. Blank role profiles are included so students who feel strongly can research and create whatever role they would like to play.

On Character & Civics Education

It may be helpful to consider adding more information about character and civics education. What impels this recommendation is the student's universal dislike of the game experience of taxes and deductions. Perhaps more attention might be paid to what would happen to community life the social fabric without taxes. Similarly, it might be helpful if there were relevant examples of philanthropy as an element in the overall message mix. It is important to consider what money can do besides paying for things.

NLWC: Additional optional activities have been included in *The Real Game Version 2.0* on character education and civics.

On Special Student Populations

Given the extensive use of *The Real Game* with students identified as special needs and/or at risk, there may be need for a game version with less and perhaps more engaging text and math.

NLWC: Now that *The Real Game* is digital, thus more easily customizable, the intention is to collaborate with experts across Canada in developing specialized materials to reach learners too challenged to fully benefit from the current programs in *The Real Game Series*.

On Specialized Games

There may be an opportunity for special business editions of the game. In other words, for example, work simulations in a particular industry like mining, big box retail, etc. Perhaps a Northern Communities edition may be helpful similarly. This might also help facilitate strategic partnerships with specialized industry and companies interested in supporting these special editions.

NLWC: NLWC has been reluctant to have *The Real Game* perceived as a recruiting tool for a specific industry sector. Indeed, pains have been taken to ensure the roles in the program represent the full spectrum of career opportunities available to all students. If potential industry partners wish to explore this option, and if the principles upon which the game is built would not be compromised, NLWC would be open to such exploration.

On Shortened Games

Given our time-starved way of life, it may be helpful for NLWC to consider how to enhance the game by shortening the current playtime from 24+ hours. This may help make it more viable for more schools.

NLWC: A new Program-at-a-Glance feature has been included in *The Real Game Version 2.0* that suggest options for facilitators with insufficient time to complete the entire program. It distinguishes between *core* sessions (15 hours), *recommended* sessions (7 more hours) and *discretionary* sessions (5 more hours). For those who have the time and support, many optional activities are suggested throughout the program that extend program duration and increase realism for students.

On Engaging Parents

Parents represent the single most important and under utilized participant base within NLWC. ENGAGE them in their homes and hearts through the organizations and media that speak to them as parents. If they knew about this remarkable learning game, every parent in Canada would demand their elected officials ensure it is part of every curriculum in the country.

NLWC: Agree, but this is easier said than done. Parents are also the single most underutilized participant base within education.

On Part Time Work & Strategic Partnership

A number of Facilitators and Students commented on applying TRG lessons to obtaining part time work to start a savings program. It is recommended that NLWC build further on this creative, constructive impetus in several ways.

- Develop a practical guide and package for students wanting to do part time work.
- Use their TRG skills vis-à-vis business card, resume, and work portfolio.
- Secure partnership of major bank to provide symbolic and tangible support i.e. savings account with \$100 seed capital and opportunity to win Real Game Scholarships.
- Link to other comparable programs such as Junior Achievement [which was mentioned several times in feedback].

NLWC: Great recommendations. NLWC executives met with Junior Achievement executives at JA world headquarters in Colorado Springs, CO. We saw no easy way to link our programs at the time, but both organizations respect each other's values and resources, and encourage their use.

On Longitudinal Studies

It may be helpful for NLWC to establish a longitudinal research project with a university to follow and record longer-term attitudinal and behavioural change over a 5 - 10 year span.

NLWC: NLWC welcomes this discussion with any Canadian university.

On Using Film

The Real Game already recommends showing films to students about life-career challenges, for example *Rudy* and *October Sky*. More than one facilitator followed this recommendation. It may be helpful to expand this list to include films of personal transformation. Two film classics serve as examples. The first, *A Christmas Carol* is about Scrooge, a miserly unlovable fellow. In a dream, he's shown his rather bleak future. He fearfully asks his ghostly guide: 'But is this what *will* be or only what *may* be?' Upon awakening, he realizes he's been given a second chance at life and his heart blossoms. In the film *Back To The Future*, the young hero Marty McFly also discovers his future is far better than what he 'd pictured for himself. He too returns to the present with a fresh perspective on his and life's possibilities.

NLWC: NLWC welcomes and will share all suggestions of appropriate films.

CONCLUSION

The 12-year development arc of *The Real Game Series* parallels the growth and evolution of the Internet and digital revolution (see Appendix F: Summary of Global Trends p 75). With this new pilot, and with each passing year it becomes more evident that *the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* and *The Real Game Series* are uniquely relevant tools. They really do help youth prepare for fulfilling lives and livelihoods in the new global knowledge economy.

This success of this pilot is testimony to the transformative power of a real learning community. This holds true on the macro level. Consider the dynamic network of actors and institutions involved across the country in making it possible. This also holds true on the micro level in the classroom, where students collaborated in new, engaging ways.

The Real Game helps transform the classroom into a temporary interactive community hub. This provides a practical, direct way to engage and share the rich, diverse knowledge and experience of any community's adult work force. *The Real Game* also provides a new way for teachers and students to interact. Students become largely responsible for giving life to their learning. The more actively they imagine, the more engaging the play becomes. This is true with all games, regardless of their purpose. Concurrently, teachers become facilitators and catalysts therefore more fully tapping into their own creativity and life learning.

The root of the term 'game' is the Old German for 'joy' and 'people coming together'. *The Real Game Version 2.0* is the perfect embodiment of this old idea.

Howard Esbin, Ph.D.
President, Heliotrope