



Dominic Savarino '21 works busy duty, one of the more prestigious 4th grade jobs.

THE NATION OF 4TH GRADE – AN ECONOMY OF SCALE

When Alyssa Matzoni '21 opens her wallet, she sees more than George Washington and Abraham Lincoln's faces. Neatly tucked behind the \$1s and \$5s are several bills in the interchangeable currency of Harrisburg Academy's 4th grade teachers — "Bender Bucks" and "Sherman Dollars." Mari Bender and Karla Sherman have developed their own micro-economies in their classrooms this year, and the students are into it. **Really** into it.

"Every student had to apply to a classroom job, and they get paid for it," Sherman said. They go through the process much like an adult would, completing a job application and competing against others interested in the position. And like the "real world," not all jobs are as prestigious, fun, or pay as well as others.

"The banker is one of the most important positions," Bender said. "Six kids applied for the job! We explained to them that to be a good banker, you have to be organized, responsible, and neat, and all applications had to be completed the same way."

The jobs — including Mailbox Filer, Pledge Leader, Closet Monitor, Pencil Sharpener Assistant, Substitute, Librarian, Playground Supervisor, Room Maintenance Worker, Classroom Monitor, Class Messenger, Bus Duty Assistant, Banker, and Whiteboard Cleaner — are done throughout the week and students keep their jobs for several months before they go through the application process again and re-shuffle responsibilities. They get paid weekly for their work, and pay varies

depending on their individual job role — anywhere from \$13 per week to \$1 per week.

And just like in the real world, students are charged for services, including the "rental" of their desks or the purchase price of a new pencil if they lose theirs and need a new one. They can be fined if their desks are messy, if they talk in the hallway, or if they break a classroom rule. And they can even receive pay deductions or be fired if they don't take their jobs seriously.

Every few weeks, students are rewarded for their money management skills with a "store" day, which is completely student-organized. Students can spend Bender Bucks and Sherman Dollars on goods and services being sold by their classmates, including henna tattoos, origami, and pencils.



Fourth grade students host a "store" day. Pictured here (from left): Matthew Burick '21, Alyssa Matzoni '21, Jacob Helm '21, Linsai Jackson '21, and Morgan Butler '21.

"The kids have gotten really creative," Bender said. "They create advertisements, take names, do order forms, and have even offered coupons."

"One student, Catherine [Stalter '21] brought in pencils with flowers on them," she continued. "They were the hot item, and everyone wanted to buy them. Of course, there weren't enough to go around and this gave us the opportunity to talk about supply and demand. The classroom discussions about economics are great! The kids talk about the things they're selling, what sold the most, and what did not sell at all."

With all of these personal credits and debits, the class banker and each student's own records are vital in keeping the "economy" in order.

"This whole project is working because our students have the motivation to earn money," Sherman said. "The true action happens

on the day of the store — there's money flying all around!" she added, laughing.

Each student is required to keep a record of his or her own classroom finances in a checkbook. The students are learning how to make deposits and write a check, and they understand that when they write a check or take money out to go shopping at the store, it's called a withdrawal.

"I think the most helpful thing I have learned is how to do bank deposits," Matzoni shared. "We are learning how to keep track of the money we have... how to use, deposit, and save it. This will help us when we are grown up — and it's really a lot of fun!"

Fourth grade parents, too, give the project rave reviews. "These mini economics lessons tie to all the other lessons we cover

in math, social studies, and all subjects, really, because they mirror the real world," Sherman said. "The parents really love what their children are learning."

"Paige learned about job performance, entrepreneurship, and money management in a fun and creative way," said her mother, Ellen Caldwell '80. "This has been a great hands-on experience that introduced important life skills that will serve her well in the not-so-distant future."

"The students collectively embraced their responsibilities and took great pride in their work," Caldwell continued. "As a parent, it was great to see the 4th grade students' enthusiasm and motivation for this project!"

