

Egg Harbor Township teacher uses football to her advantage

By DIANE D'AMICO Education Writer | Posted: Monday, November 2, 2009

EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP - Mike Morgan and Mike Newell had some tough decisions to make. Should they go with the experienced quarterback or the rookie?

"I think he's too old," Newell said of the veteran player. "Go for the rookie."

"We have to watch our salary cap," Morgan said.

The Egg Harbor Township high school seniors had picked a town for their football franchise; next they had to find sponsors and develop licensing agreements with vendors. They had to calculate how much to charge for tickets based on the seating capacity of their stadium, the income levels of their fans and how much they might be willing to pay for tickets. Morgan and Newell even had to make sure their parking lot is big enough.

Owning a football team isn't all fun and games. At Egg Harbor Township High School it's a business class, "Sports and Entertainment Marketing," taught by Lynne Kesselman. Fridays are "Franchise Fridays" when the students use a program by Knowledge Matters to create and run their own football franchises.

Kesselman found the program while looking for a way to get students more actively engaged in the business class. She had used an online program for a personal-finance class, and she thought the sports management program would capture student interest while teaching them core business skills.

"Even in a bad economy, sports fans are loyal," she said.

The project integrates technology, math and writing skills, important for any job. During a recent lesson on licensing, students calculated royalties based on volume and learned that earning \$1 for an item that will sell 100,000 units is better than earning \$2 for an item that only sells 10,000 units. Newell talked about wanting to get more money up front rather than long-term royalties.

Seniors Brian Welfield and Jim Huntzinger tried to get a company in their town to buy naming rights for their stadium. The computer provided the companies and their advertising budgets. They recruited a sporting goods company, but was told their offer was too much money.

"Naming rights brings in the most money," Welfield said. "And you get four tries to get someone."

Each lesson teaches a skill and students get to compete against each other. Kesselman controls the game, and can monitor each team's progress.

"It's very visual," Kesselman said as team revenues created a bar chart showing profits in blue and losses in red. Later on they'll get into player management, doing trades. "They can really see how they're doing."

Morgan and Newell, both football players, discuss everything from sponsorships to team names and colors.

As in any business, there are pitfalls. If they lose money, they could get fired or have their team bought out.

And since it is a class, there are quizzes on business terms and students earn extra points if they can beat the program's targets.

"I knew it was going to be a simulation, but not as involved as this," Morgan said. "I like it."

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