

- Ask students to keep a journal as they go through the program to keep track of choices they had to make and to rate their own choices. Were the choices effective for them? How did they impact others?

For additional lesson ideas, see Teaching Opportunities by Game Phase, Sample Lessons and Economics in Content Standards Alignment.

Many of the lesson ideas can easily involve two or three subject areas. See Teaching Strategies for ideas on ways to integrate the program into different teaching environments.

English Language Arts

How the Subject Fits

Written and verbal communications are critical to the process of home building, and to the successful completion of this program.

Home building is a complex process that includes a wide variety of professionals, each of whom has an important role to play in the final outcome. The cast of characters that a successful builder must communicate with may include civil engineers, architects, urban planners, local government officials, community leaders, contractors, carpenters, landscapers, real estate professionals, prospective buyers, lawyers, bankers and mortgage lenders. And each of these professionals will be speaking in their own industry “language.”

The builder also must be able to read, comprehend and correctly interpret mortgage applications, credit reports, plat of surveys, blueprints, city codes and zoning ordinances, expert reports on the condition of their property and materials specifications.

To be successful in this program, students will need to absorb and analyze a lot of information that they will gather through observation, reading and listening (There are a number of Quick-Time videos in which neighbors and experts share concerns and knowledge.)

Lesson/Discussion Starters

- Ask students to keep a journal/diary of their experiences as they use the program. Students may be part of a team and each may have a specific job (keeping track of spending, researching codes and zoning, etc.) In that case, students keep journals from their perspective and share them with each other and the class at the end of the project. Students can record what they learned about building a house, about using the actual program and about working as part of a team.
- Explore the nature of information and how it is communicated. How do we get information? How complete or accurate are different sources? Students may be most familiar with mass media and digital media sources—TV, newspapers, the Internet and e-mail, for example. In the program, they will encounter different kinds of sources and different information forms. As they go through the program, ask them to keep track of the different ways information was communicated to them. Discuss and evaluate those forms as a class activity. Compare and contrast the reliability and usefulness of the following: Hints, clues, opinion, facts, research/experiments, expert advice, laws and regulations.
- Ask students to “correspond” with an out-of-town friend or relative about challenges they face and solutions they arrive at as they go through the building process. They should not actually send the cards, e-mails or letters (the writings will be collected for their portfolios), but they should write with a specific person in mind in order to practice writing in a particular style and tone.

- Using the Community Meetings in the program as a guide, set up your own community forum to discuss and debate a real local issue related to land use, property or real estate.
- Print out some of the expert reports to analyze, as students get to that part of the program (lot investigation in The Site Phase). See How to Print Screens in the Getting Started section. The expert reports are generated when students seek solutions to problems they encounter on a particular lot. There are six experts (from a Soil Scientist to a Civil Engineer) and a total of 11 lots within four different regions. For any one lot at least two of the experts will offer a solution. The others will give generic advice. The reports will contain some technical language and some unfamiliar words, so they are perfect for a vocabulary/writing assignment. Students can analyze and paraphrase the advice, defining unfamiliar terms and phrases. See Resources for suggestions on internal, community and education sources students can use. At the conclusion of the exercise, students should be able to explain the report to the class. To conduct the exercise, assign different lots to different student teams. That will give the teams access to different reports. Help them print out the reports and save the programs so they can return to the home building process after going through the report activity.
- Create guides to the various “languages” spoken by different sectors of the building industry – banking, real estate jargon, construction vocabulary, etc. See Pre-Teaching section for more information.
- Have students create a document-based essay answering the question, Is the highest bidder the most qualified buyer? This exercise would be done in the Sale phase of the game when students set a price for the home they have built and run an ad to attract buyers. They will need to review and analyze buyer information to determine who is their best buyer.

For additional lesson ideas, see Teaching Opportunities by Game Phase, Sample Lessons and English Language Arts in Content Standards Alignment.

Many of the lesson ideas can easily involve two or three subject areas. See Teaching Strategies for ideas on ways to integrate the program into different teaching environments.

Family & Consumer Science

How the Subject Fits

The entire home building process – from selecting a location through the sale of the home – focuses on issues, skills and real-world activities that are core teachings in Consumer Science classes.

Lesson/Discussion Starters

- Set up teams to go through the program as families. Assign them jobs, incomes and particular life styles. Their assignment is to work together to build a home that fits their particular situation and budgetary constraints. At the end of the process, students can explain to the class how their home is compatible with their family profile.
- In the first phase of the program, The Site, students select a location, choose a lot and secure a permit to build on that lot. They soon discover that obtaining a permit means satisfying a number of requirements. Use this task as a springboard for a unit on citizenship – rights and responsibilities. Building permits, codes, zoning and community concerns are areas of “citizenship” that students will encounter as home owners, home builders, or even as small business owners. As part of the unit, have student teams visit your town’s codes and zoning web site or office to find out what codes and regulations apply to their neighborhood, and why.