

The Game of Life

Background

The Game of Life is a participatory simulation exercise designed to shine a light on some of the key issues of socio-economic equity. Participants will experience the barriers, trials, and tribulations that many individuals face in life as they strive for the American Dream. This version of The Game of Life has been customized for the:

Montessori Conference on Diversity & Equity
For Montessori Middle School Students
Saturday, October 25, 2014
Inly School, Scituate, MA

Workshop: 1 hour

Part I—Arrival (5 minutes)
Part II—Introduction (1 minute)
Part III—Game (30 minutes)
Part IV—Debrief (24 minutes)

Facilitators

Protector of Packets: Michelle Mathai
Imperial Highness: Liz Knox
Chancellor of Education: Tara Calianos
Minister of Money: Julaine McInnis
Baron of Housing: Tom Sommer
Emperor of Employment: Kaela Conroy
Siren of Stuff: Georgie Gladdys
Lord High Constable: Tschol Slade
His Venerable Eminence: Rick Goulding

Materials List

Name tags for departments
Basket for packets
9x12 envelopes
Play money
Mardi Gras style bead necklaces (gold, green, blue, red)
Net Worth Chart
#10 envelopes
Pens
Chime
Dice
Gavel
“Black marks”
16 baskets for material goods
Other signage, applications, certificates, etc, as outlined below

Stage Directions

Part I—Arrival

Participants arrive at the room and the Protector of Packets is waiting outside the door with a basket of envelopes. The PoP gives each participant an envelope that includes their beads, money, net worth chart (in a smaller sealed envelope marked “do not open until instructed”), and pen. The PoP instructs participants to:

- Don their beads
- Hang on to their envelope throughout the game (they may use the pen to write their name on their envelope)
- Practice their delayed gratification skills and leave the small envelope alone
- Make their way into the room to await the start of the game

Participants will begin with the following materials, based on their socio-economic class (which is unknown to them at the start of the game, but will be discerned or revealed by the end of the game):

Class	Upper	Middle	Lower	Poverty
Beads	Gold	Green	Blue	Red
Money	\$5,000	\$3,000	\$1,000	\$50

If asked, the PoP is to be intentionally reticent about the goal and/or particulars of the game. “I am here to provide you with your envelopes. You will receive further instructions inside the room” is to be your refrain.

Part II—Introduction

Imperial Highness says, with appropriate authority and flair:

Welcome to the Game of Life. In this room, there are seven departments that represent societal institutions:

- There is an Education Department where you can receive a degree.
- A Bank where you can collect salary and apply for loans.
- A Housing Office where you can buy, lease, or find housing.
- An Employment Agency to help you find a job.
- A Material Goods Store to buy fun and exciting things.
- A Jail where you can be imprisoned.
- A Department of Justice where you might have a court hearing.

Your goal in the Game of Life is to achieve the American Dream and succeed based on these conventional measures of success.

To that end, you have each been given a packet of starting money. What you choose to do with it and which department you choose to visit first is up to you. You will be playing a role in this game today that may be easy, or may be hard—you may discover what it is, but we're not going to tell what it is until the very end. The people in charge have all the power and can make up rules. You'll have to figure them out as you go along. Trust the process. You have 30 minutes. [ring chime, indicate that they are welcome to proceed to the tables]

Part III—Game

Department Heads will be seated at their tables during the arrival and introduction. Participants will mill about for a bit and gradually make their way to the tables. Remember to let the participants figure out the rules for themselves. If someone comes to get a house first, let the person know how much it costs. When the person says I don't have that much, then suggest they get a loan. When they go get a loan, ask their occupation. When they say they don't have one, tell them to go get a job and then come back. When they go to get a job, make sure to inquire about their level of education. When they say they don't know, tell them to go to school first.

Department Heads should *not* say, "Well first you need an education, then a job, then a salary, then a loan, etc." An important part of the process is the construction of meaning that will come from the experience.

Department Heads should always ask to see appropriate credentials when applying for various things. So ask to see a player's diploma, employment certificate, etc.

Department Heads should treat each participant differently based on the color of his or her beads.

Upper Class (gold beads)

These participants are to be treated with the utmost respect as the privileged group. Give them immediate access to all institutions without having to wait. Approve and process all their forms quickly. Give them special treatment and encourage them to achieve material success by buying second or third homes, lots of material goods, etc. They can get as many degrees as they want and will receive great jobs with big salaries (and bonuses!). Make the Game of Life very enjoyable for them.

Middle Class (green beads)

Treat this group with respect also. Give them access to institutions after some very small waits. Approve and process their forms quickly. Encourage them to achieve material success. Give some, but not all, of them access to good jobs, decent salaries, fancy houses, etc. Make them wait in lines so they feel the hassle of red tape, but reward a few with random advances to the front. Make the Game of Life enjoyable for them.

Lower Class (blue beads)

Treat this group with suspicion and impatience. Give them very limited access to institutions and make them wait in lines (even when no one else is around). Everything should be a problem for them. Delay their forms, deny their loans or make them re-apply, arrest them for things like skipping child support payments.

Poverty Class (red beads)

Treat this group with complete disregard for their dignity and worth. Ignore them as much as you can. Give them the forms in gibberish. Arrest many of them for drug dealing, stealing, or breaking parole.

If a participant figures out this scheme, then immediately label him/her as a troublemaker and have them hauled off to jail. Remember that the people in charge have all the power and can make up the rules. Push the envelope: some exaggeration will help to make the point to this age group.

More specific instructions for each department can be found later in this packet.

Part IV—Debrief

The primary facilitator (in this case, Her Imperial Highness) will ring the chime and stop the game. She will instruct participants to sit with others wearing the same color beads and complete their Net Worth Charts.

She will then debrief the group on their experience of playing the Game of Life.

If time allows, give the class and poverty awareness quiz. Otherwise send it home with the participants.

Department of Education

When a participant comes to your table, have him or her complete the Education Application Form (see below). There will be a color-coded form for each group. The gold group will have a question about “who referred you.” The Imperial Highness will circulate throughout the room and whisper to each member of the gold group: “Tell them the Imperial Highness referred you.”

Tell players there may be a wait while their form is processed (see chart below for details).

How to Treat the Different Groups

Let the **gold** group know that they were admitted to every school and have their choice, but stress how Exclusive University is the way to go to get ahead. Encourage them to come back for as many graduate degrees as they want. This group does not need financial aid.

Admit one person from the **green** group to Exclusive University (and make a big deal of it), and the rest to State University. Encourage them to work hard and return for a graduate degree. This group is not eligible for financial aid..

Of those in the **blue** group, admit one to State University (make a big deal out of it), funnel most of them into a Trade Program, one of them to High School, and one to a G.E.D. If a participant wants to apply to Exclusive University or State University, tell them their family can't afford it, but they may do so and then roll the dice for financial aid. If they roll an odd number, they get aid; if they roll an even number, they do not get aid.

The **red** group will mostly stay uneducated, but graduate one from high school. Hand out G.E.D. applications, but since these players are mostly illiterate, the form will be in gibberish.

Admission Season

You will have a sign that says “Admission Season Open” and another that says “Admission Season Closed. Return in 5 minutes.” Use this at your discretion, or at the direction of the Imperial Highness, to help control the flow of the game.

Education Chart

Type of School	Tuition	Admit Only	Wait Time to get application	Wait Time to get application processed
Exclusive University	\$2,500	Gold	0 seconds	10 seconds
State University	\$1,500	Gold, Green, Blue	30 seconds	30 seconds
Trade Program	\$500	Gold, Green, Blue	45 seconds	45 seconds
High School	\$0	Gold, Green, Blue, Red	1 minute	1 minute
G.E.D.	\$50	Gold, Green, Blue, Red	2 minutes	2 minutes

Admission
Season
Open.

Accepting
Applications
Now.

Admission
Season
Closed.

Return in
5 minutes.

Education Application Form

Name: _____

D.O.B.: _____

Home address: _____

Program you are applying for (check one):

- Exclusive University
- State University
- Trade Program
- High School
- G.E.D.

In the context of this game, what will your application choice get you?

Who referred you? _____

For Department of Education use only—

C.O.B.:

Lorem Ipsum Dolor Sit

Amet: _____

D.O.B.: _____

Adipisicing Elit: _____

Sed do Eiusmod Tempor (incididunt ut):

- Labore Nisi
- Dolore Nisi
- Magna Aute
- Minim Quis
- Aliqua

Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat

Duis aute irure dolor? _____



Exclusive University

By virtue of the authority granted to me by
the Imperial Highness of The Game of Life,
I hereby confer this diploma upon

For the successful completion of your
college degree

On this 25th day of October in the year 2014

At MCODE

Inly School, Scituate, Massachusetts

This diploma comes with all the rights, privileges, and honors
associated with exclusivity

Chancellor of Education

Exclusive University

By virtue of the authority granted to me by
the Imperial Highness of The Game of Life,
I hereby confer this diploma upon

For the successful completion of your
graduate degree

On this 25th day of October in the year 2014

At MCODE

Inly School, Scituate, Massachusetts

This diploma comes with all the rights, privileges, and honors
associated with exclusivity

Chancellor of Education

State University

By virtue of the authority granted to me by
the Imperial Highness of The Game of Life,
I hereby confer this diploma upon

For the successful completion of your
college degree

On this 25th day of October in the year 2014
At MCODE
Inly School, Scituate, Massachusetts

This diploma comes with all the rights, privileges, and honors
associated with fierce alumni pride

Chancellor of Education

State University

By virtue of the authority granted to me by
the Imperial Highness of The Game of Life,
I hereby confer this diploma upon

For the successful completion of your
graduate degree

On this 25th day of October in the year 2014

At MCODE

Inly School, Scituate, Massachusetts

This diploma comes with all the rights, privileges, and honors
associated with fierce alumni pride

Chancellor of Education

TRADE PROGRAM

By virtue of the authority granted to me by
the Imperial Highness of The Game of Life,
I hereby confer this certificate upon

For the successful completion of
your trade program

On this 25th day of October in the year 2014
At MCODE
Inly School, Scituate, Massachusetts

This diploma comes with all the rights, privileges, and honors
associated with your union

Chancellor of Education

High School

By virtue of the authority granted to me by
the Imperial Highness of The Game of Life,
I hereby confer this diploma upon

For the successful completion of
high school

On this 25th day of October in the year 2014
At MCODE
Inly School, Scituate, Massachusetts

This diploma comes with all the rights, privileges, and honors
associated with K-12 education

Chancellor of Education

G.E.D.

By virtue of the authority granted to me by
the Imperial Highness of The Game of Life,
I hereby confer this general education diploma upon

For the successful completion of
your program

On this 25th day of October in the year 2014

At MCODE

Inly School, Scituate, Massachusetts

This diploma comes with all the rights, privileges, and honors
associated with perseverance

Chancellor of Education

Bank

The Minister of Money will manage investments, loan applications, and payroll.

Investments

Participants are allowed to invest money in \$500 increments. They get dividend payouts every payday according to the investment chart below.

Loan Applications

Participants may apply for loans for education, housing, or material goods. Have participants complete the Loan Application Form.

Payday

The Imperial Highness will ring the chime every 5–10 minutes and declare it payday. There will likely be a rush to your table. Shut down the loan application side to tend to the payday folks. Accommodate the gold group first by telling them they can move to the front of the line. Then pay the green group, the blue group, and finally the red group. Ask each participant to show you his or her employment certificate in order to get paid. The salary chart can be found in the following pages.

Bank Chart

Group	Investment returns per \$500	Wait time to process loan applications	Loan application approval rate	Payday (every 5-10 minutes)
Gold	Double all investments	0 minutes	Approve all	Ask to see employment certificate. Distribute payroll according to salary chart.
Green	Earn 50% on investment	1 minute	Approve all, after their wait	
Blue	Earn 10% on investment	2 minutes	Approve/deny randomly, after their wait	
Red	Not available	3 minutes; give them form in gibberish	Deny all	

Loan Application

Name: _____

D.O.B.: _____

Home address: _____

Loan you are applying for (check one):

Education Loan

- Exclusive University \$2,500
- State University \$1,500
- Trade Program \$500
- G.E.D. \$50

Housing Loan

- Mansion \$100,000
- House \$50,000
- Apartment \$20,000
- Project/Trailer \$5,000
- Temporary shelter \$100

Car Loan

- Luxury car \$50,000
- Mid-range car \$30,000
- Used car \$10,000
- Beater \$500

Employment: _____

For Bank use only—

C.O.B.:

Payroll Chart

Graduate Degree	
Anesthesiologist	\$200,000
Lawyer	\$150,000
CEO	\$175,000
Engineer	\$150,000
College Degree	
Environmental scientist	\$60,000
Teacher	\$30,000
Nurse	\$45,000
Accountant	\$45,000
Trade Certificate	
Police officer	\$30,000
Electrician	\$30,000
Hair stylist	\$25,000
Chef	\$25,000
High School Diploma/G.E.D.	
Waiter	\$15,000
Custodian	\$15,000
Cashier/clerk	\$10,000
No Education	
Sweat shop worker	\$5,000
Maid	\$5,000

Promissory Note

I hereby promise to pay back, in full,
the borrowed amount of _____,
at the end of The Game of Life.

Signature: _____

Promissory Note

I hereby promise to pay back, in full,
the borrowed amount of _____,
at the end of The Game of Life.

Signature: _____

Housing Office

- Have players complete the Housing Application Form (see below). Reds get the form in Latin.
- Ask participants to wait while you process the form (see chart below for approval guidelines and wait times).
- Call players back up as necessary to explain choices of available housing.

How to Treat the Different Groups

Start the **gold** group in houses, but encourage them to upgrade soon to a mansion. Sell them on the idea of a summer home and/or investment property.

The **green** players should start in apartments and eventually be allowed to upgrade to a house. Reward the most respectable of the greens with the opportunity to acquire a summer home.

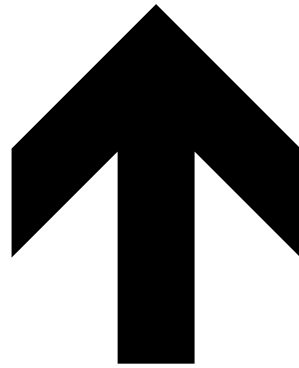
Start half of the **blue** participants in projects or trailers and move them eventually to apartments. Reward the same blue that gets access to higher education with a good job, and then a house.

The **red** players should start in the projects or trailers, but never move up. Some can become homeless.

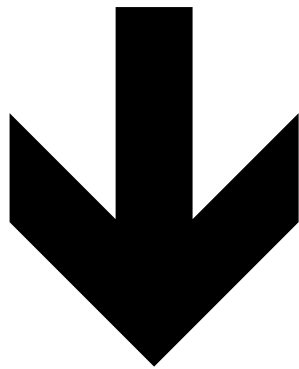
Buying and Selling

Players may sell property if they wish. The Baron of Housing may determine whether the market is up or down. Use the signs (below) to indicate the status.

Housing Market



Housing Market



Housing Chart

Type of Housing	Cost	Approve Only	Wait Time to get application	Wait Time to get application processed
Mansion	\$100,000	Gold	0 seconds	10 seconds
House	\$50,000	Gold, Green, Blue	30 seconds	30 seconds
Apartment	\$20,000	Gold, Green, Blue	45 seconds	45 seconds
Project/Trailer	\$5,000	Gold, Green, Blue, Red	1 minute	1 minute
Shelter	\$50	Gold, Green, Blue, Red	2 minutes	2 minutes

Housing Application

Name: _____

D.O.B.: _____

Current address: _____

Type of housing you are applying for (check one):

- Mansion \$100,000
- House \$50,000
- Apartment \$20,000
- Project/Trailer \$5,000
- Temporary shelter \$100

Current employment: _____

Current salary: _____

For Department of Housing use only—

C.O.B.:

Lorem Ipsum

Dolor: _____

D.O.B.: _____

Amet consectetur: _____

Adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt (ut labore):

- Dolore \$100,000
- Magna \$50,000
- Aliqua \$20,000
- Enim/minim \$5,000
- Veniam quis \$100

Et labore: _____

Et incididunt: _____

Nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi—

C.O.B.:

Housing Deed

Name: _____

Housing type: _____

Cost: _____

Housing Deed

Name: _____

Housing type: _____

Cost: _____

Employment Agency

- Have players complete the Employment Application Form (see below). Reds get the form in Latin.
- When players hand in their application, ask to see their education credentials. Record that information on their application.
- Tell participants to wait while you process the form (see chart below for approval guidelines and wait times).
- Call players back up as necessary to explain available jobs and corresponding salaries.
- Award jobs and deliver certificates based on education level (see chart below).

Job Application

Name: _____

D.O.B.: _____

Current address: _____

Type of job you are applying for (check one):

- Anesthesiologist \$200,000
- Lawyer \$175,000
- CEO \$150,000
- Engineer \$175,000
- Environmental Scientist \$60,000
- Teacher \$30,000
- Nurse \$45,000
- Accountant \$45,000
- Police Officer \$30,000
- Electrician \$30,000
- Hair Stylist \$25,000
- Chef \$25,000
- Waiter \$15,000
- Custodian \$15,000
- Cashier/Clerk \$10,000
- Sweat Shop Worker \$5,000
- Maid \$5,000

Highest level of education achieved: _____

Have you ever been convicted of a crime?

- Yes
- No

For Employment Agency use only—

C.O.B.:

Lorem Ipsum

Dolor: _____

D.O.B.: _____

Amet consectetur: _____

Adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt (ut labore):

- Magna \$200,000
- Aliqua \$175,000
- Enim \$150,000
- Minim \$175,000
- Veniam Quis \$60,000
- Nostrud \$30,000
- Exercitation \$45,000
- Ullamco \$45,000
- Laboris Nisi \$30,000
- Commodore \$30,000
- Consequat Duis \$25,000
- Aute \$25,000
- Irure \$15,000
- Reprehenderit \$15,000
- Voluptate/Velit \$10,000
- Esse Cillum Dolore \$5,000
- Fugiat \$5,000

Veniam commodo dui velit ipsum: _____

Enim magna aute fugiat cillum do ut quis?

- Yes
- No

Nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris—

C.O.B.:

Job Application Chart

		Application wait time	Application approval time
Graduate Degree		0 minutes	10 seconds
Anesthesiologist	\$200,000		
Lawyer	\$150,000		
CEO	\$175,000		
Engineer	\$150,000		
College Degree		30 seconds	30 seconds
Environmental scientist	\$60,000		
Teacher	\$30,000		
Nurse	\$45,000		
Accountant	\$45,000		
Trade Certificate		45 seconds	45 seconds
Police officer	\$30,000		
Electrician	\$30,000		
Hair stylist	\$25,000		
Chef	\$25,000		
High School Diploma/G.E.D.		1 minute	1 minute
Waiter	\$15,000		
Custodian	\$15,000		
Cashier/clerk	\$10,000		
No Education		2 minutes	2 minutes
Sweat shop worker	\$5,000		
Maid	\$5,000		

Employment Contract

Name: _____

Job: _____

Salary: _____

Employment Contract

Name: _____

Job: _____

Salary: _____

Department of Justice—Jail

Trump up charges to hail some players off to jail. The Lord High Constable can throw anyone in jail for any reason.

Other department heads can say that a player is causing trouble in their line and call the Lord High Constable to arrest them.

Overcrowd the jail while waiting for a hearing before His Venerable Eminence. Keep wait times under 5 minutes to keep the game moving.

The Lord High Constable and His Venerable Eminence should work together to clog the system.

How to Treat the Different Groups

Arrest a few **blues** for things like skipping child support payments.

Arrest many of the **reds** for drug dealing, stealing, or breaking parole.

If **blues** and **reds** are just sitting in the room and not waiting in a line, arrest them for loitering. **Golds** and **greens** get off with a warning.

Department of Justice—Court

- Call a player forward out of jail.
- Ask the Lord High Constable to state the charges against the player.
- Ask for a plea.
- Hear the case.
- Decide whether they are guilty or innocent based on their stereotypic identity.

If innocent, let them go.

If guilty, make them pay a fine and let them go.

- Major infraction = \$100
- Minor infraction = \$50

If they can't pay the fine, make them go back to jail. Keep wait times under 5 minutes to keep the game moving.

Material Goods Store

Encourage players to buy, buy, buy! We want them to get swept up in a consumer society that rewards them for hard work and delivers the message that their happiness and self worth is tied to their purchases.

Accept cash on the barrelhead for all goods. Encourage players to go get loans for fancier cars.

Suggest to players that the more stuff they buy, the better chance they have to win the game.

Material Goods Store—Price List

Item	Price
Designer Clothes	\$2,000
Department Store Clothes	\$1,000
Discount Store Clothes	\$500
Thrift Store Clothes	\$100
Designer Furnishings	\$2,000
Department Store Furnishings	\$1,000
Discount Store Furnishings	\$500
Consignment Store Furnishings	\$100
Luxury Car	\$50,000
Mid-Range	\$30,000
Used Car	\$10,000
Beater	\$500
High-End Electronics	\$3,000
Big Box Store Electronics	\$1,500
Generic Brand	\$750
Used Electronics	\$50

Net Worth Chart

Use the following chart to determine your net worth:

Name: _____

Bead color: _____

Department	Point Value	Points
Education	Graduate degree = 10,000 Bachelor's degree = 5,000 Trade certificate = 1,000 High School diploma = 100 G.E.D. = 50	
Employment	Points are equal to your annual income. For example, a \$25,000 salary is worth 25,000 points.	
Housing	Points are equal to the value of your housing. A \$10,000 apartment is worth 10,000 points.	
Material Goods	Points are equal to the value of the good. For example, a \$25,000 car is worth 25,000 points.	
Cash Money	Points are equal to the denomination. A \$100 bill is worth 100 points.	
	Total Assets:	
Loans: points are equal to the value of your loan.	Add up all loans and put total in column to the right	
Taxes	Calculate 1/3 of all your cash and put the total in the column to the right	
	Total Liabilities:	

	Net Worth:	
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The Game of Life—Reflection Sheet

Please read through the following questions. Write down answers to the three questions you have the most to say about.

1. What did you notice about how players were treated during the game?
2. What observations do you have about the way the players acted during the game?
3. What seemed the most realistic to you during the game?
4. What seemed the most far-fetched to you?
5. What was easy for *you* during the game?
6. What was difficult for *you* during the game?
7. What emotions did you experience while playing?
8. What conclusions can you draw about the different bead colors?
9. How might we play this game differently?

10. What questions does this game make you think of?