

# Richmond Times-Dispatch

## Gaining stock market insight

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When Cierra Hobson was deciding which stocks to purchase, one of the companies she chose was Advance Auto Parts.

The reasoning behind her decision?

"A lot of people are saying, should they buy new cars or keep their old cars. The way the stock market is . . . people are deciding to keep their old cars and fixing them up," explained Hobson, a senior at Petersburg High School.

Hobson is one of about 16,000 students across the commonwealth competing in the Stock Market Game, which gives students hypothetical \$100,000 to invest in an online portfolio between Sept. 29 and Dec. 5.

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Since the fall contest began, the stock market has taken the students on a roller coaster ride. In October, the stock market had daily gains of 936 and 889 points and losses of 733 and 777 points.

Stock in Advance Auto Parts was \$38.83 a share when the game began. It closed Wednesday at \$31.15, up \$1.97 for the day. The stock steadily increased throughout November from a low of \$24.17 on Oct. 27.

Brian Carr, a teacher at Atlee High School in Hanover County, described his students' feelings throughout the game as cautious, nervous and seasick.

"We're going into the real world soon, and this is something everyone should be aware of," said Libby Snyder, a senior at Atlee High. "It's definitely taught us the value of a dollar."

Suzanne Gallagher, director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Economic Education, stopped by Petersburg High recently to speak with students in Silvester Harris' business class about their progress with the game.

She praised a team of students that diversified its stock portfolio by buying stocks such as Dell, Toyota, Wal-Mart and Microsoft.

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That's the same approach that New Kent High School finance teacher Vincent Ourso Jr. is stressing to his students.

"You have to be diversified in your investments," he said. "You can't focus on just one company."

Those companies were targeted by the Petersburg High students because they are familiar with them, said Capri Winnegan, a 10th-grade student.

The teachers said their students embraced buying early in the process, but as the market began to decline, nervousness set in.

"One of the things is the fact that because they get some exposure to it now, they have time to recover from that," Harris said. "They can take chances . . . where somebody older can't afford that loss."

For others it's a good head start in what might become a career.

Atlee senior Brian Boggess said the game is a good opportunity to gain knowledge about a possible career.

The game, administered nationally by the nonprofit Foundation for Investor Education and sponsored locally by the Virginia Council on Economic Education, provides a different tool for teachers to reach their students in the classroom.

"The students become fascinated with the changes going on as they watch the stock market during a 10-week period," said S. Buford Scott, chairman of Scott & Stringfellow, a Richmond-based brokerage.