One-half of the states require high school students to complete an economics course before graduating. For most students, this encounter with the dismal science is a frustrating one. Economics is a complex and difficult subject, and students often struggle to make sense of its abstract concepts and laws which seem irrelevant to their lives.

One way to make economic concepts more meaningful to students is to use it to analyze the world they live in. We have developed an example unit that focuses on the fundamental economic concept of "demand," and employs handheld computers to aid students as they interview their peers to determine the actual demand for certain foods and concert tickets. Once the interviews are over, the handhelds are used to graph the results and transfer the data to desktop computers for further calculations and analysis.

This session will describe the project and demonstrate software program developed for the handheld. Attendees that have handhelds will be "beamed" the program so they can try it out by collecting demand data from others in the session (or elsewhere). They will be free to use it in their classes when they return to their schools.

The Buck Institute for Education is working with teachers to integrate handheld computers in to the classroom instructional process. The session will end with a discussion of the ways handhelds can be used by teachers and students and the distribution of relevant text resources and www links.