

Money Matters

In conjunction with the Fayette County Public Schools (FCPS), Junior Achievement of the Bluegrass (JA) made the decision to develop a financial literacy curriculum for the seventh-grade students throughout the school district. Fayette County Public School's Vision 2020 initiative recognized that financial literacy education should become an integral part of the educational programs at all grade levels and across the curriculum. With the endorsement of FCPS Superintendent Stu Silberman, JA's locally produced curriculum was introduced as a pilot program in the fall of 2008 and implemented throughout the district in 2009.

The goal of this six-week financial literacy program is to introduce students to important life skills and concepts such as budgeting, banking, understanding the difference between debt and credit cards, using credit responsibly and financial planning, as well as investments such as stocks, bonds and other securities. The JA curriculum is taught by volunteers from the central Kentucky business community who also share their knowledge and expertise with the students. Because financial literacy education is not mandated in schools today, students will only receive this education by participating in a Junior Achievement program. JA of the Bluegrass is also working to develop a financial literacy curriculum for all ninth-grade students that will build on the concepts introduced during their seventh-grade experience.

Mary Grady

Junior Achievement's Financial Literacy program experience was enriching, educational and informative. I enjoyed having this amazing opportunity to gather new knowledge, which I could tell from the start that I would always remember and use throughout my life.

We learned many different things throughout the six weeks, such as banking, budgeting, saving, taxes, stocks and credit, all of which were incredibly helpful to everyone in the program, including myself. These skills weren't shared with my parents when they were in school, so this is clearly going to make these things in life easier for so many people.

A lot of what people don't understand is budgeting, which is one of the most important things to learn, especially as a young person. Budgeting was the section of the program that I think I took the most away from, just because I know how crucial that one skill is.

Another skill that was taught was banking, a very important skill to broach. Not only is banking important, but also a necessity.

Another topic discussed in detail through the course was taxes and how they work. This is one of the most important skills that we could obtain, because we must use that skill annually. It needs to be planned, so we must be prepared, and now we are. Doing taxes is part of being an active citizen, because it's an obligation for a citizen.

We also discussed stocks, bonds and mutual funds, all of which are crucial to have knowledge about, in order to not only have an organized financial life, but also a stable one. These are all investments that will help us in the long run.

Factors in earning and career planning were two other enriching sections of the program. We learned what kind of income we would have based on our jobs and expenses that are taken from our income — some money that we don't even see.

Decision making is a big part of having an organized and stable financial life, as we will be faced with these problems through time. Spending plans fit into the same category as decision making and budgeting. It's all about deciding where your money is and where it will go.

Long-term and short-term financial goals were also discussed, which I found to be helpful to my personal financial planning and goals for myself.

College and career planning was

helpful, because we got to consider our long-term financial goals for school and our jobs. We all took away a lot from this course, so that we may all be well prepared.

Not only did we gather necessary common knowledge, but also personal knowledge. I think most of us kind of have an idea of where we would like to go for college and what type of job we would like to have and our type of income. Our Junior Achievement volunteer gave us a number that told us how many people would be in our family. Our budget was based on that number, which led us to deciding what kind of house we would have, and our expenses as well. My number was five, and from the kind of career that I chose (forensic scientist), my income was roughly about \$1,725 total per month, in terms of the money that I would actually see. All of the other money would go toward bills or to the government.

We all learned a lot from the JA Financial Literacy program. I learned so much and took away a lot. Without these skills, I wouldn't be able to explain or do any of these things. I am very grateful for this great learning opportunity. **B**

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