

# Show Me the Money Resources: Financial Literacy for 21st-Century Learners

By Karen Gavigan

## INTRODUCTION

Some economists have called the current U.S. economic environment the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression (Hilsenrath, Ng & Paletta, 2008). Many educators and parents believe it is more important than ever for students to master financial literacy skills. To become successful and responsible 21st century citizens, our students need to graduate globally competitive for work and postsecondary education. Yet, as Pam Erwin, president of Wells Fargo Foundation California states, "You can't put a fourth grader behind the wheel of a car and expect him or her to automatically know how to drive. Managing money is a learned skill that comes with education and experience" (Education World, 2007).

Unfortunately, the need to teach 21st-century skills, such as financial literacy, is often overlooked in today's schools. Many educators are reluctant to add one more thing to the core curriculum given this era of high-stakes testing. School librarians can play an instrumental role in infusing financial skills and knowledge in schools and helping to improve financial literacy proficiency for all students.

## WHAT IS FINANCIAL LITERACY AND WHY SHOULD IT BE TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS?

Financial literacy is the ability to make informed judgments and effective decisions regarding the use and management of money (Networks Financial Institute, 2007). Unfortunately, a large number of American adults have not mastered basic economic skills and are considered financially illiterate. When it comes to the financial literacy of America's young people, the news is equally disturbing. Consider the following statistics:

- Former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan stated that our children are financially illiterate and unable to inherit the global economy unless we start to educate them in elementary school (Godfrey, N.S., 2006).
- Seventy percent of U.S. parents say that most children feel a sense of entitlement. "They expect to have whatever it is they want, whenever they want it" (Godfrey, N.S., 2006).
- After surveying more than 46,000 high school students nationwide in May 2008, the Council

on Financial Literacy discovered that the average student's score regarding personal finance issues was 56% (Delisio, 2007).

- More young people filed for bankruptcy than graduated from college in 2001 (Suiter & Meszaros, 2007).
- Forty-five percent of college students today face credit card debt with the average debt totaling over \$3,000 (Delisio, 2007).

The message is clear; there is much work to be done in K-12 schools to help students become financially literate. Even though the majority of

K-12 educators (8 in 10) say it is important to teach financial literacy in U.S. classrooms, only about half currently teach some form of financial literacy (Networks Financial Institute, 2007).

## WHAT CAN SCHOOL LIBRARIANS DO?

School librarians need to be informed of what, if any, the financial literacy standards and guidelines are for their state. The National Council on Economic Education reported in 2007 that 40 states have personal finance standards or guidelines (up from 34 in 2004), 28 states with standards require them to be implemented, 9 states require testing of student knowledge

## TABLE 1 – FINANCIAL LITERACY EDUCATION NATIONAL PROGRAMS AND COMPETITIONS

- **Fed Challenge**—Provides high school students the opportunity to learn about the Federal Reserve and how their policies affect the economy. [www.federalreserveeducation.org/teachers/FedChallenge/fedChallenge\\_intro.htm](http://www.federalreserveeducation.org/teachers/FedChallenge/fedChallenge_intro.htm)
- **Feed the Pig for Tweens**—Hands-on financial literacy program for 4th-6th grade students sponsored by the American Institute for Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and the Ad Council. <http://tweens.feedthepig.org/tweens>
- **Hands-on Banking: Money Skills You Need for Life**—Designed for both self-paced, individual learning and classroom use. Divided into four age groups including kids, teens, young adults, and adults. Provides instructor's guides. Developed by Wells Fargo Bank. [www.handsonbanking.org/en](http://www.handsonbanking.org/en)
- **Money Math: Lessons for Life**—A four-part lesson curriculum for middle school math classes using real-life examples from personal finance. Includes teacher's guide with lesson plans, reproducible activity pages, and teaching tips. Developed by the Center for Entrepreneurship and Economic Education at the University of Missouri-St. Louis in accordance with national school mathematics standards. [www.treasurydirect.gov/indiv/tools/tools\\_moneymath.htm](http://www.treasurydirect.gov/indiv/tools/tools_moneymath.htm)
- **National Economics Challenge**—A competition for high school students sponsored by the Goldman Sachs Foundation. The Challenge encourages students to apply their economics knowledge, work in teams, and is not only fun but offers prizes. <http://economicschallenge.councilforeconed.org>
- **National Endowment for Financial Education**—An award-winning free, noncommercial financial education program for high schools. <http://hsfpp.nefe.org>
- **Stock Market Game**—Gives students in grades 4-12 the opportunity to invest a hypothetical \$100,000 in an online portfolio. Fees vary from state to state. Sponsored by the New York Stock Exchange and other companies across the financial services industry. [www.stockmarketgame.org/index.html](http://www.stockmarketgame.org/index.html)



on personal finance content, and 7 states require students to take a personal finance course to graduate (Young Americans Center for Financial Education, 2009). If your state does not currently have standards and guidelines, or if you want to supplement your own, you can turn to the National Standards in K-12 Personal Finance Education, developed by the JumpStart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy. This document offers a list of the financial skills that K-12 students should possess. These guidelines serve

as a model and the Coalition advises educators to determine their own plan for addressing these topics in their schools. A pdf version is available at [http://pueblo.gsa.gov/cic\\_text/education/jumpstart/k-12.pdf](http://pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/education/jumpstart/k-12.pdf).

Once school librarians familiarize themselves with financial literacy guidelines and standards, they can partner with other educators and administrators to develop ideas on how to integrate financial literacy learning opportunities throughout the curriculum

and across grade levels. As outlined in the AASL's *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*, "school librarians can collaborate with others to provide instruction, learning strategies, and practices in using the essential learning skills needed in the 21st century (AASL, 2007).

School librarians can also provide teachers and students access to the resources necessary for financial literacy learning. One way is by making administrators, teachers, and parents aware of

**TABLE 2 – SHOW ME THE MONEY RESOURCES: A SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY (Continued next page)**

### COUNTING MONEY—FICTION

#### *Counting on a Win*

Aboff, Marcie. Len Epstein, ill. Mankato, MN: Picture Window Books, 2009. Grades 1-3.

After a fun day at the boardwalk, Jody calculates whether she has enough money to play one more game and maybe win a special prize for her brother Max.

### COUNTING MONEY—NONFICTION

#### *Counting Money*

Dalton, Julie. New York: Children's Press, 2005. Grades 1-3.

Simple text and photographs introduce the value of coins and the increasing values of additional coins.

#### *How Much Money?*

Endres, Hollie. J. Bloomington, MN: Yellow Umbrella Books, 2006. Grades K-2.

Simple text and photographs introduce the value of various American coins and how those values increase with more coins.

#### *The Penny Pot*

Murphy, Stuart J. Lynne Cravath, ill. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1998. Grades 2-5.

The face painting booth at the school fair provides plenty of opportunities to count combinations of coins adding up to 50.

#### *Using Money at the Lemonade Stand*

Rauen, Amy. Pleasantville, N.Y.: Weekly Reader Books, 2008. Grades 1-4.

A successful lemonade stand keeps two boys busy counting coins. Also in the series: *Using Money on a Shopping Trip* by Jennifer Marrewa.

#### *The Coin Counting Book*

Williams, Rozanne L. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge Publishing, 2001. Grades K-4.

An introduction to simple math and to the coins we use every day.

### CURRENCY

#### *Money*

Cribb, Joe. An Eyewitness book. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2005. Grades 6-12.

Examines in text and photographs the symbolic and material meaning of money, from shells and beads to gold, silver, checks, and credit cards.

#### *The Dollar Bill in Translation:*

##### *What It Really Means*

Forest, Christopher. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 2009. Grades 4-6.

Presents the dollar bill and explains its meaning and symbolism using everyday language.

Describes the events that led to the creation of currency and its significance through history.

#### *The Big Buck Adventure*

Gill, Shelley and Deborah Tobola. Grace Lin, ill. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge Publishing, 2000. Grades K-2.

Rhyming account of a little girl's quandary as she tries to decide what she can get with her dollar in a candy shop, toy store, deli, and pet store.

#### *Follow the Money*

Leedy, Loreen. New York: Holiday House, 2002. Grades K-3.

A quarter describes all the ways it is used from the time it is minted until it is taken back to a bank.

#### *All about Money*

Roberson, Erin. New York: Children's Press, 2004. Grades 1-3.

Simple text and photographs introduce the concept of money, the history of currency, and the values of currency.

### EARNING MONEY—FICTION

#### *Isabel's Car Wash*

Bair, Sheila. Judy Stead, ill. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Co., 2008. Grades K-4.

To earn money to buy a doll that she wants, Isabel starts a car wash business with money invested by her friends, hoping to make a profit for everyone. Includes information on selling shares in business.

#### *Lunch Money*

Clements, Andrew. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young People, 2005. Grades 4-6.

Twelve-year-old Greg is surprised to find himself teaming up with his rival, Maura, to create a series of comic books to sell.

#### *A Dollar for Penny*

Glass, J. Joy Allen, ill. New York: Random House, 2000. Grades K-1.

Penny sets up a lemonade stand to earn money for her mother's birthday card and learns about currency.

#### *Owen Foote, Money Man*

Greene, Stephanie. New York: Clarion Books, 2000. Grades 2-4.

Ingenious eight-year-old Owen wants to make money for the things he absolutely needs, such as plastic vomit, but he tries to come up with some alternatives to earning an allowance, which sounds like too much work.



**TABLE 2 – SHOW ME THE MONEY RESOURCES: A SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY (Continued)**

**Sweet Potato Pie**

Lindsey, Kathleen D. Charlotte Riley-Webb, ill. New York: Lee & Low Books, 2003. Grades K-3.

During a drought in the early 1900s, a large, loving African-American family finds a delicious way to earn the money they need to save their family farm.

**Pitching in for Eubie**

Nolen, Jerdine. E.B. Lewis, ill. New York: Amistad, 2007. Grades K-3.

Lily tries to find a way to pitch in and help her family make enough money to send her older sister to college.

**Lawn Boy**

Paulsen, Gary. New York: Wendy Lamb Books, 2007. Grades 4-7.

A 12-year-old boy learns valuable lessons about capitalism, commerce, and life when his lawn-mowing business expands beyond his wildest dreams.

**Dear Mr. Rosenwald**

Weatherford, Carole Boston. R. Gregory Christie, ill. New York: Scholastic, 2006. Grades 2-5.

Young Ovella rejoices as her community comes together to raise money to build a much-needed school in the 1920s.

**EARNING MONEY—NONFICTION**

**Money, Money, Money: Where It Comes**

**From, How to Save It, Spend It and Make It** Drobot, Eve. Toronto: Maple Tree Press, 2004. Grades 4-6.

An overview of money and currency facts and stories, with information on the modern world of electronic banking.

**Smart Girl's Guide to Money. One-Hundred One Money Making Ideas, Quizzes, and Tips Help Girls Learn about Money, Saving, and Smart Shopping**

Holyoke, Nancy. Chicago, IL: Pleasant Company, 2006. Grades 5-9.

This new offering in American Girl's A Smart Girl's Guide series offers advice on earning, saving, and spending money.

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

**What Color Is Your Piggy Bank?:**

**Entrepreneurial Ideas for Self-Starting Kids**

Cellini Linecker, Adelia. Montreal: Lobster Press, 2004. Grades 6-8.

Shows kids how to increase their bank balance while doing what they love.

**Vision of Beauty: The Story of Sarah Breedlove Walker**

Lasky, Kathryn. Nneka Bennett, ill. Cambridge: Candlewick Press, 2000. Grades 2-5.

A biography of Sarah Breedlove Walker who, though born in poverty, pioneered in hair and beauty care products for black women, and became a great financial success.

**MICRO LOANS**

**One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big Difference**

Milway, Katie Smith. Eugenie Fernandes, ill. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 2008. Grades 2-6.

This micro-finance tale takes place in Africa and it illustrates how a little help (such as a small loan to buy a hen) can make a big difference to those living in poverty.

**SAVING MONEY**

**Rock, Brock and the Savings Shock**

Bair, Sheila. Barry Gott, ill. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Co., 2006. Grades 2-4.

Gramps teaches his twin grandsons the value of saving money when he pays each a dollar a week to help with summer chores, then matches every dollar each boy saves.

**Less than Zero**

Murphy, Stuart J. Frank Remkiewicz, ill. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2003. Grades 2-5.

While trying to save enough money to buy a new ice scooter, Perry the Penguin learns about managing his money and about negative numbers.

**SERIES BOOKS ABOUT MONEY/FINANCE**

**First Facts: Learning about Money.**

Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 2006.

**Checks, Credits, and Debit Cards**

**Goods and Services**

**History of Money**

**Saving Money**

**Scarcity**

**Spending Money**

**Supply and Demand**

**What Do Banks Do?**

**What is Money?**

**How Economics Works.**

Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications, 2006. Grades 4-8.

**Banking**

**Earning Money**

**Saving Money**

**Let's See Library: Economics.**

Minneapolis, MN: Compass Point Books, 2004. Grades 2-4.

**All about Money**

**Earning Money**

**Saving Money**

**Spending Money**

**Teen Finance.**

Detroit, MI: Ominographics Inc., 2005. Grades 9 -12

**Cash and Credit Information for Teens: Tips for a Successful Financial Life**

**Savings and Investment Information for Teens**

**STOCK MARKET**

**The Stock Market: Understanding and Applying Ratios, Decimals, Fractions, and Percentages**

Zuravicky, Orli. New York: PowerKids Press, 2005. Grades 3-8.

Discusses the understanding and application of ratios, decimals, fractions, and percentages with practical examples from the Stock Market.

**TAXES**

**Paying Taxes**

De Capua, Sarah. New York: Children's Press, 2002. Grades 3-5.

Discusses the understanding and application of ratios, decimals, fractions, and percentages with practical examples from the Stock Market.

**AUDIOVISUAL**

**Schoolhouse Rock: Money**

DVD. Disney Educational Productions, 2008.

Songs like Where the Money Goes and The Check's in the Mail use catchy melodies to teach kids about the national debt and the importance of fiscal responsibility. Includes an interactive assessment activity to reinforce key learnings.



existing literacy programs such as those listed in Table 1. By tapping into these established programs, schools can get students from all grade levels involved in national activities and competitions.

## SHOW ME THE MONEY RESOURCES

In a recent study on financial literacy education, the majority of the teachers surveyed stressed the need for more grade-appropriate, quality financial literacy resources in schools (Networks Financial Institute, 2007). Since school librarians are professionally trained to develop collections that support the curriculum, they are well suited to address this need. Librarians can help promote consumer, economic, and personal finance education by providing support materials for teachers as well as engaging resources for students. These resources can serve as sound investments for a successful financial literacy program.

Table 2 provides a selective bibliography of current materials that can be integrated throughout the curriculum to help students learn about real-life financial issues. For example, the two picture books by Sheila Bair, Chair of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) provide students with helpful ideas about managing their money. Younger children will also enjoy *One Hen* (Milway, 2008) a story about micro loans that takes place in Kenya. A humorous novel for older students is *Lawn Boy* by Gary Paulsen, in which a 12-year-old boy learns valuable lessons about capitalism, commerce, and life.

The bibliography also includes nonfiction series titles on financial issues as well as some informative standalone books. In terms of audiovisual resources,

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the ever-popular Schoolhouse Rock series does an excellent job covering economic matters through its *Schoolhouse Rock: Money Classroom Edition*. Additionally, the websites listed in Table 3 offer hands-on financial literacy lesson plans and activities as well as other resources for teaching basic financial skills. This also reinforces one of the common beliefs of AASL; technology skills are crucial for future employment needs (AASL, 2007).

## CONCLUSION

K-12 students need financial literacy skills now more than ever before. As information specialists, school librarians can serve as school leaders who provide resources and facilitate collaborative learning experiences that help students become proficient in crucial 21st-century financial literacy skills. The news is not all doom and gloom when it comes to the financial literacy of our young people. A 2008 study by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and the Charles Schwab Foundation found that teens who reported learning about saving money were more likely to save regularly (72% vs. 57%) (Boys & Girls Clubs of America and Charles Schwab Foundation). Furthermore,

a JumpStart Coalition survey shows that just 10 hours of financial literacy training has a profound effect on young people (Godfrey, 2007). Working with other administrators and educators, media specialists can develop a school-wide stimulus plan for financial literacy that will help students comprehend how to manage their personal finances intelligently as they prepare for a lifetime of financial security. 🌈

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TABLE 3 – FINANCIAL LITERACY WEBSITES

- **Council for Economic Education.** Among other things, this website provides more than six hundred lesson plans for all grade levels to help kids understand economics and personal finances. [www.councilforeconed.org](http://www.councilforeconed.org). Grades K-12.
- **KidsBank.com.** Colorful characters help young people learn about money management. Developed by a regional bank, Sovereign Bank. [www.kidsbank.com](http://www.kidsbank.com). Grades 3-6.
- **Kiplinger.com: Money Smart Kids.** Sound advice for kids, their parents, and teachers who are interested in learning more about how to manage their money. Includes information about the stock market. <http://www.kiplinger.com/guides/moneysmartkids>. Grades K-12.
- **Practical Money Skills for Life: Financial Literacy for Everyone.** Visa-sponsored website provides information for students, teachers, parents, and others who wish to know more about money management. Also available in Spanish or Chinese. [www.practicalmoneyskills.com](http://www.practicalmoneyskills.com). Grades K-12.
- **YoungBiz.com.** A complete guide to the complexities of starting a business at this site designed for young entrepreneurs. [www.youngbiz.com](http://www.youngbiz.com). Grades 6-12.

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