

Strategies to teach the building blocks of financial capability

Research on the building blocks of financial capability shows that specific instructional strategies and classroom activities may be appropriate for helping youth develop the knowledge, skills, and habits that can lead to adult financial well-being.

Instructional strategies

Explore research-based teaching methods and techniques to engage students and help them understand the objectives of a lesson.

Strategy	 Executive function	 Financial habits and norms	 Financial knowledge and decision-making skills
Blended learning: When learning is structured to include both online and in-person experiences. This strategy allows students to go at their own pace and use the learning styles they prefer.			
Competency-based learning: Student-centered learning that encourages students to progress toward well-defined benchmarks to give them a sense of mastery and ownership over the skills and knowledge they are learning.			
Cooperative learning: Small groups of students work together to build their knowledge and understanding of a subject while developing positive relationships and the ability to work as a team.			

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Direct instruction: A structured, straightforward, teacher-directed approach that focuses on an explicit skill and typically includes a lecture, demonstration, or discussion.			
Gamification: A highly motivating learning strategy that uses game elements, mechanics, and/or game-based thinking (as opposed to playing an entire game).			
Personalized instruction: Teacher assesses each student's needs, then tailors instruction to the individual student, including focusing and differentiating resources, strategies, supports, and pacing on that student's needs.			
Project-based learning: A hands-on strategy in which students actively explore real-world challenges, answer meaningful questions, and accomplish relevant tasks and, in doing so, are encouraged to make their own decisions, perform their own research, overcome obstacles, and present their work to others.			
Simulation: Hands-on learning activities that use real-world scenarios to promote critical thinking and applied learning.			

Learning activities

Consider research-based classroom activities that may help create the conditions that facilitate student learning.

Executive function

- **Intergenerational programs:** Intentional collaborations between adults (parents, volunteers, senior citizens, etc.) and young people that promote learning and growth and allow older adults to mentor youth and/or share their knowledge and experiences in meaningful ways.
- **Planning activities:** Exercises that support students in creating and following a plan, instructions, or recipe to complete a task or accomplish a goal.
- **Pretend play:** Make-believe play where young children use their imaginations to act out stories and take on new roles and personas (related to role playing and simulation activities for older youth).
- **Puzzles and quiet games:** Opportunities to engage and challenge students through problem-solving tasks that help them learn and apply new skills, understand complex concepts, and develop vocabulary.
- **Self-directed exploration:** Active learning experiences that give students choices and allow them to explore and discover new topics, ideas, and skills based on their interests and readiness.
- **Storytelling:** The act of telling a story out loud, while using different voices, dramatic inflections, or other narrative embellishments.

Financial habits and norms

- **Employment opportunities:** Activities that provide a way for students to explore and prepare for job options and make clear connections between school and career.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Opportunities for young people to create their own companies (real or imagined) and, in doing so, apply critical-thinking, innovation, communication, and collaboration skills.
- **Financial simulations:** Educational tools or activities that replicate real-world financial management situations and allow students to develop skills such as budgeting, comparison shopping, and investing by making mock decisions that result in realistic consequences.

- **Understanding financial products:** Activities that allow students to explore financial tools and products used to buy things, save, invest, get insurance, or get a mortgage. This can include field trips to observe places where financial choices are made (e.g., banks, shopping malls, etc.), career days, and career presentations by adults.

Financial knowledge and decision-making skills

- **Financial coaching and mentoring:** Adults engage and encourage students (individually or in small groups) to develop financial capability and work toward financial goals.
- **Financial simulations:** Educational tools or activities that replicate real-world financial management situations and allow students to develop skills such as budgeting, comparison shopping, and investing by making mock decisions that result in realistic consequences.
- **Real-world case studies:** Stories that present realistic situations involving a dilemma, conflict, or problem to be negotiated or resolved by analyzing and evaluating a range of information and weighing the consequences of different decisions.

Tip for differentiating instruction

Helping English language learners learn key financial terms is critical to helping them develop overall literacy skills. Encourage students to draw pictures or icons to help them better understand the meaning of key terms. You can also have students act out the words to help bring the concepts to life.



To learn more, visit the building blocks resources and research webpage at:

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/youth-financial-education/resources-research/>.