

Tips to Choosing Financial Literacy Curriculum

When you set out to teach personal finance, selecting the right curriculum is critically important. This article offers tips to help you choose materials that match your programming goals.

- ❑ **Practical, Action-based Lessons:** Financial education presentations should inspire participants to take actions that will benefit them in real life. For kids, target actions might be working to earn an allowance and saving money; for adults, more complex activities are appropriate – such as planning for retirement and building a qualified team of financial advisors.
- ❑ **Clear Learning Outcomes:** Well-defined learning outcomes make it easier for presenters to select lessons that best meet participant needs, and allow them to set clear educational goals. Clearly-defined objectives also help learners understand the practical applicability of each activity, and encourage them to work toward successfully completing each lesson.
- ❑ **Integrated Testing:** Besides pre- and post-tests, quality financial education materials offer a variety of assessments built into each lesson that allow the course instructor to gauge participant understanding. Qualified presenters can evaluate these data and modify their presentations on the spot to best serve learners' needs.
- ❑ **End-user Alignment:** Lesson plans should be chosen based on the needs of the end user. The presentation leader must understand participant needs, cognitive abilities, motivations, and life stages in order to select the lessons that best serve their students.
- ❑ **Instructional Scaffolding:** Instructors who deliver multi-day or longer courses should find curriculum with suitable scaffolding – so the lessons build upon what students learned in previous classes. Adequate scaffolding challenges participants to expand their thinking and pushes them to deeper stages of understanding.

- **Modular Design:** Select curriculum that is flexible to meet your unique scheduling needs. Having curriculum that is designed in stand-alone modules will help you create unique coursework that aligns with your timeline and learning outcome objectives.
- **Just in Time Learning Components:** Well-designed financial education curriculum groups learning modules to provide training on topics *when* the participants need it. For example, most 15-year olds are excited about buying a car. Leverage this excitement and address the immediate need by sharing lessons that fit under the umbrella of a car purchase: budgeting, credit, insurance, loan qualification, etc.
- **Requires Complex Thinking:** Intellectually engaging lesson plans where students are allowed time to reflect upon their learning and consolidate their understanding produce better results. Higher engagement translates into getting a better handle on the subject matter and long-term adoption of the principles.
- **Well-defined Structure:** Design consistency helps both educators and learners. Instructors can focus their attention on serving the learner, instead of trying to figure out each specific lesson. Well-organized materials also encourage learners to turn back to the materials as reference resources after the class ends.
- **Designed by Multiple Experts:** Presenting curriculum designed by one person or a small group limits perspective. Seek materials that are crowd-sourced or designed by a team of personal finance experts from a variety of backgrounds to offer well-rounded education.
- **Family Involvement:** No matter the participants' ages, including materials for their support group is important. Involving participants' families in instruction helps expand curriculum impact and enlists supporters and partners to build accountability.
- **Blended Learning:** Including online learning components gives students some level of control over the time, place, and pace at which they learn the material, and offers both educators and students flexibility to choose specific lessons or learning pathways.
- **Independent Materials:** Curricula produced by credit card companies, financial institutions, and government organizations have agendas besides education. Ensure that the material you deliver is 100% independent, with no ulterior motive.

We hope these tips help you locate or design financial education materials that continue to empower those you serve in perpetuity.