

Nefe Digest

November/December 2015

My financial education experience was...



While some personal finance educators struggle just to connect to the Internet, others are watching as technology awakens their students to new possibilities — and sometimes to the cold, hard facts of life — through games, apps, websites, simulators, calculators and other tech tools. “They sincerely appreciate the opportunity to make virtual mistakes and avoid some of the same things in the real world,” says Ronald Cross, a financial literacy teacher in Dallas. But good tools are best used by good teachers. As Michigan business teacher Brian Johnson says: “The use of humor, being enthusiastic about the topic, and the ability to communicate with young people is more powerful than the most expensive piece of technology.”



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR
FINANCIAL EDUCATION

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Jason Richmond, Springfield, Mass.

Being a teacher in the Department of Youth Services for the last five years has been rewarding and challenging, but the rewards are so much greater when you see students who have experienced nothing but failure in the classroom enjoy learning again. I use the Internet and Investopedia.com to set each student up with a simulated real-time stock account. I have watched the gang discussions in class change to stock market talk, and each morning, the students are eager to log on and check their portfolios. This is why I teach.

“I have watched the gang discussions in class change to stock market talk ... This is why I teach.”

Mariah Phillips, Murfreesboro, Tenn.

As adults, most of the financial world will be online for our students. My college and career project requires students to research colleges online. They learn to navigate a college website and look at what is required for a college application, now almost exclusively done online. We apply for scholarships through Web-based scholarship match programs. Walking through the FAFSA application online makes it not so scary after all.

Tammy Harper, Mount Vernon, Ark.

I teach all the core subjects to 7th-12th grade students with disabilities. Since none of my students are on the same level in math and many cannot read above a second-grade level, I have used multiple online programs to teach math. I am a big believer in audiobooks and my students use online resources to have text read aloud. I use several apps and programs for autism spectrum disorder support.

Teachers: How Do You Use Technology?

NEFE recently surveyed High School Financial Planning Program (HSFPP) educators to find out how they are (and aren't) using tech tools in their classrooms. Join teachers and their students in tweeting #FinEdTech during the week of November 9 – 13, and follow along on Twitter @ NEFE_ORG.

Christina Ladner, Long Beach, Miss.

We use technology quite a bit in my business vocational class. My students actually run a fully-stocked coffee shop for our teachers and students each morning. They learn how to run a real-world business. We use computers and tablets to keep track of our inventory, budget, income and expenses. We also do weekly advertising using computers.

“They learn how to run a real-world business.”



Laura Bender, Hudson, N.Y.

In my classroom, students explore personal finance by completing a month-long project that integrates technology and their own personal interests to create a unique picture of what their lives will be like in the future. They research a chosen career, understand the requirements of it, and establish a salary. Using this salary, they fill out tax forms online and determine their take-home income. After this, students use typical websites to find a place to live, buy a car, find financing and understand their credit score. In the end, students develop a budget with all of their expenses and reflect on their spending choices.

“Students create a unique picture of what their lives will be like in the future.”



Brian Johnson, Grand Rapids, Mich.

My district, Forest Hills Public Schools, is going to a “bring your own device” philosophy where the kiddos are now being encouraged to learn through technology. Since I’ve been using technology for my students for over 10 years, I’m thrilled about this initiative. However, while the use of technology is a great thing that I’ve been incorporating for many years now, it does not replace quality teaching. The use of humor, being enthusiastic about the topic, and the ability to communicate with young people is more powerful than the most expensive piece of technology!

“Since I’ve been using technology for my students for over 10 years, I’m thrilled about this initiative.”

Oliver Norrell, Richmond, Va.

I am now starting my third year of high school instruction in the Army JROTC program. One of the modules involves personal financial instruction. I crave the use of technology in the classroom as it assists in the instruction process and can be used to capture the attention of our cadets.

Diane Smith, Old Forge, Pa.

Sixteen old desktop computers are in my classroom. Sometimes, these work. On good days, some can reach the Internet. The server is slow, so if the resources I’ve assigned are not too content-dense, my students can use online resources. Don’t doubt that I will get better technology. No one thought I could get personal finance added to this school’s curriculum, and I am now teaching it!



Jeanna Grover, Blanding, Utah

To engage visual learners, I have students demonstrate their subject knowledge by using online cartoon creators to create a cartoon or comic. I have had students who rarely submit assignments, submit amazing work using this type of technology. While technology may never replace the need for one-on-one communication between teachers and students, technology can help teachers engage students in meaningful learning.

“I have had students who rarely submit assignments, submit amazing work using this type of technology.”

James Tietz, Plymouth, Wis.

I am in a correctional facility and am not able to use technology, but only explain its uses. Imagine having been incarcerated since the early ‘80s and now getting close to your release date. A whole new world from what you left awaits you. For some of these inmates, they can only imagine things they have not seen others using. The NEFE materials help to inform my students about technology, but also how to make better choices as their lives move forward.

Mike Kania, Glendale, Wis.

Let’s face it, kids love gaming. If we put nearly the amount of time we engage in playing games into solving a worldwide problem such as hunger or poverty, we’d be a lot closer to solving those problems. At Nicolet High School, we harness that energy and excitement in our Mobile Apps and Game Design course. By searching “Nicolet High School” in the Google Play store, you’ll see some of the apps our kids have programmed/created, including *Route 50, We Want Whale, Pocket Rocket, Galaxy Rush* and more.

Ronald Cross, Dallas, Texas

One of the most efficient things to do is to gamify the lessons. I’ve found that simulations are the most exhilarating activities that a teacher can use, because they make abstract concepts concrete. Students sincerely appreciate the opportunity to make virtual mistakes and avoid some of the same things in the real world. As great as technology is, we also have to find innovative ways to implement and use the resources available.

“As great as technology is, we also have to find innovative ways to implement and use the resources available.”



To read more teachers’ stories, visit the blog at www.hsfpp.org.

The Power of Listening

Tampa, 2008

"We're independently broke."
— Participant on what it's like to grow up as a foster child.

"Who We Serve" tours help NEFE stay connected to mission

By spring 2008, it was clear that the United States was in financial trouble. No one knew the extent of it then, but we knew it was bad. Already that year the Federal Reserve had reduced short-term

interest rates for the fifth time in four months, and President George W. Bush had signed the Economic Stimulus Act, attempting to breathe life into the ailing economy.



San Francisco, 2008

"I just feel stupid in not knowing even what the language is . . . because I'm not a stupid person, but I feel very stupid in that conversation."
— Participant on facing personal finance decisions

NEFE Board Member Jim Kooler with his staff at Friday Night Live and NEFE staff during the 2014 Who We Serve tour in Fresno, Calif.

Minneapolis, 2010

"I had my head in the sand because I didn't know how to handle it."
— Parent who hid job loss and bankruptcy from children for a year after the Great Recession

Rather than guessing what underserved Americans might need to help navigate the impending economic downturn, NEFE decided to go to the source. In May 2008, NEFE set out on its first Who We Serve (WWS) tour to

Tampa, Fla., to better understand and address the financial needs of our audiences..

A small group of NEFE staff facilitated focus groups with low-income families, survivors of domestic violence, retirees, former foster children and homeless or nearly homeless individuals in the Tampa area to discuss the participants' financial fears, challenges, dreams and opportunities.

Within the first few minutes of these conversations, NEFE staff learned that these individuals trusted their case workers more than anyone else to guide them towards better financial knowledge and decisions.

From that point on, NEFE Who We Serve tours always have included talking to caseworkers and program managers — those on the frontlines in the fight to help the underserved.

Fresno, 2014

"Success for me is to have a good car, a nice house and a beautiful wife."
— First-generation college student

Getting to Know Our Audience

The goal of these conversations was not to use the participants' stories in NEFE marketing or educational initiatives, nor was it to give advice or promote NEFE. The sole purpose of the tour was to listen and gain insight to help shape better, more relevant financial education resources.

It was one thing to read stories or analyze data about Americans struggling to make ends meet — it was quite another thing to hear straight from those who were living it. The first Who We Serve tour was so impactful that NEFE did the second WWS tour later that year in San Francisco.

Since then, NEFE staff (with the help of NEFE Board members) has completed three more Who We Serve tours, including Minneapolis, Minn. in 2010; Cincinnati, Ohio in 2013; and Fresno, Calif. in 2014. Earlier this year, we held Who We Serve focus groups in Denver; and in December, we will return to Florida to talk to aging adults and their caretakers about the financial issues facing older Americans.

Shaping Our Message

Over the years, we have met with a wide array of demographic groups ranging from first-generation college students and immigrants to trade workers and single parents.

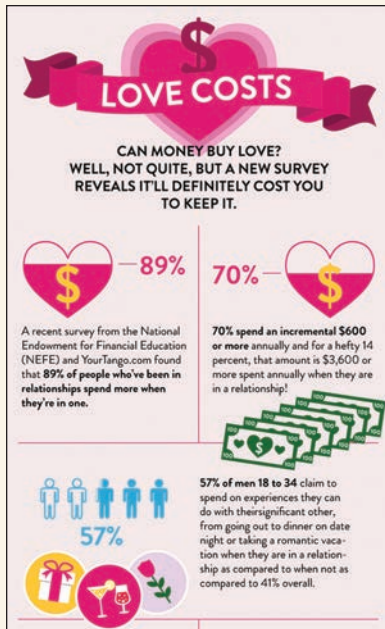
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Cincinnati, 2013

"You need to figure out why you spent money in the first place. Was it a breakup? Are you sad?"
— Work-study student

2015 Year in Review

NEFE sponsored, supported and contributed to a variety of financial capability initiatives in 2015. Here are some of the highlights.



Harris Polls Shed Light on Financial Behaviors

As in prior years, NEFE commissioned several Harris Polls in 2015 to gain insight into Americans' thoughts and behaviors related to money. In a survey to kick off the New Year, we found that nearly 7 in 10 (64 percent) of adults in the top 10 U.S. markets planned to make a financially-focused goal in 2015 and that 1 in 3 (31 percent) rated the quality of their financial life as worse than they expect it to be.

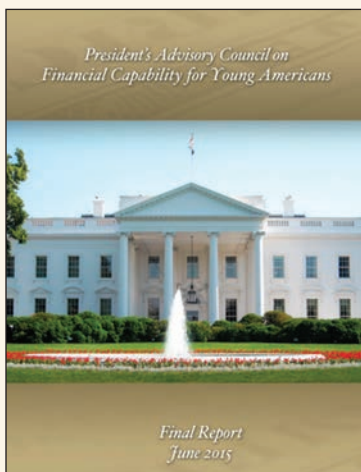
A February Harris Poll on "Love Costs" uncovered that 7 in 10 (69 percent) of Americans say they spend more money while in a

relationship versus when they are single — although married people tend to spend less on gifts than those who are dating. And a summertime poll on technology usage found that 54 percent of Americans have used technology to set or achieve a goal, with 27 percent of those reporting that they've used technology to better manage their finances.

President's Advisory Council Issues Final Report

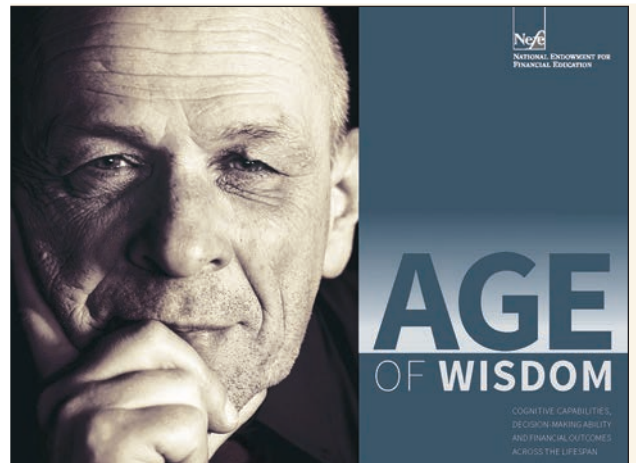
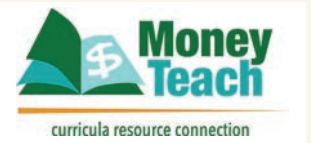
Charged by the U.S. Department of Treasury and the Obama administration to recommend ways to improve the financial skills of young Americans, the President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability issued its final report in June. The report mentioned notable

initiatives currently underway at private sector and nonprofit organizations, including several NEFE projects. The Council included NEFE President and CEO Ted Beck, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Education, the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and 22 nongovernmental members appointed by President Obama.



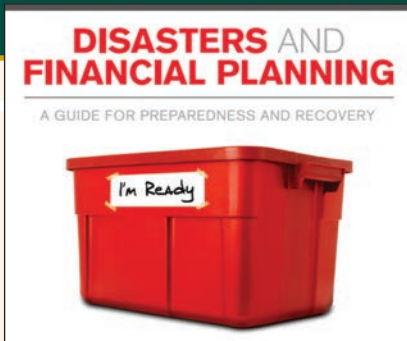
Money Teach Gives Running Start to New Financial Educators

MoneyTeach.org launched with support from NEFE to help instructors with little or no financial education background access vetted resources and insight from experienced financial educators. Jointly developed by the Take Charge America Institute and housed at the University of Arizona, Money Teach is an online portal to noncommercial resources from a variety of providers and a forum to discuss what works and what doesn't in financial education.



Study Finds Financial Challenges Due to Cognitive Decline

Researchers at Columbia University released their final report of a NEFE-funded project that explored real-world financial outcomes for aging adults. The world's 65-and-older population will double by 2035, and declines in cognitive ability due to normal aging raise the specter that older adults may find financial decisions increasingly challenging. This study explores whether knowledge and expertise accumulated from past decisions can offset age-related cognitive declines. Using a unique dataset that combines measures of cognitive ability, knowledge and credit scores, researchers found that cognitive decline does not have to spell doom. Instead, wisdom gained over the years can provide an alternative route to sound financial decisions.



Disasters and Financial Planning

While many adults (32 percent) realize the benefit of an emergency savings account, nearly half (48 percent) of respondents

in a 2014 NEFE-Harris Poll reported living paycheck to paycheck, and 36 percent said they still rely on credit cards when faced with an emergency expense. In 2015, NEFE updated a resource in collaboration with the American Red Cross and the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) called *Disasters and Financial Planning: A Guide for Planning and Recovery*. This comprehensive, interactive guide helps people take proactive steps to minimize the potential impact of disasters on their lives and financial well-being. Search for Disaster Planning at www.SmartAboutMoney.org.

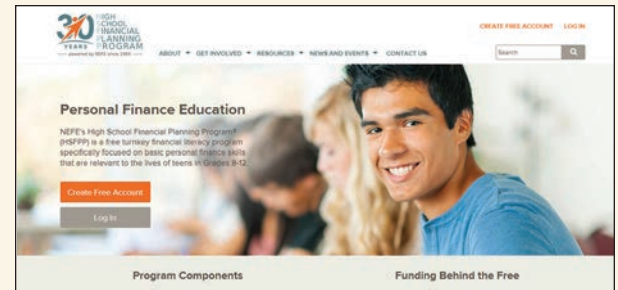
And the Awards Go To ...

NEFE presented its fourth annual financial reporting awards in partnership with the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) at the Excellence in Journalism convention in September. We recognized five winners for their outstanding reporting of consumer financial issues: Blake Ellis and Melanie Hicken of CNNMoney.com won the digital award for their investigative report on “The Secret World of Government Debt Collection”; Michelle Mortensen and Sarita Kichok of KLAS-TV in Las Vegas won the television category for their series titled “8 On Your Side”; and Courtney Collins of KERA-FM in Dallas won the radio category for her ongoing series “One Crisis Away,” looking at families experiencing financial fragility due to events like illness and job loss. “One Crisis Away” also took home the first-ever Excellence in Consumer Finance Reporting Award presented by NEFE and the Public Radio News Directors Incorporated (PRNDI) at the PRNDI annual conference in Salt Lake City in June.

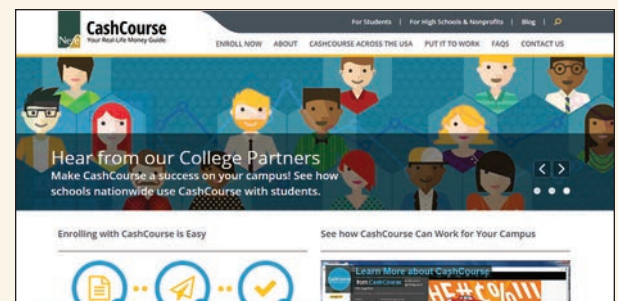


Back Row L-R: Mike Cavender, RTDNA Executive Director; Sarita Kichok and Michelle Mortensen, KLAS-TV Las Vegas; Ted Beck. Front Row L-R: Blake Ellis, CNNMoney.com; Courtney Collins, KERA-FM Dallas; Melanie Hicken, CNNMoney.com

Website redesigns: HSFPP.org and Info.CashCourse.org



NEFE’s High School Financial Planning Program (HSFPP) website and the informational site for our college program, CashCourse, both got fresh new looks in 2015. The HSFPP site redesign makes the site easier to view on mobile devices, allows instructors to toggle between the instructor site and student site, and improves the experience of downloading materials. The new www.HSFPP.org also adds a blog and links to NEFE’s On Your Own young adult blog (www.OnYourOwn.org).



CashCourse’s informational and marketing site, www.Info.CashCourse.org, now has an updated look and feel that better matches the visual style of the main site. In addition, the new site makes it easier to enroll in the program.

CashCourse also unveiled a new blog where users can find news and updates from CashCourse and NEFE, as well as success stories from a few of the more than 900 CashCourse schools across the nation.

*The Power of Listening, continued
from page 5.*

The insights gained influence not only what we do, but how we do it, even down to the language we use.

For example, during the 2013 tour in Cincinnati, many WWS participants said they would never have enough financial cushion to establish an emergency fund. Upon reflection, NEFE staff suggested promoting an emergency “plan” instead, emphasizing the importance of thinking through contingencies, regardless of one’s ability to save a prescribed amount of money that feels out of reach.

Although the American economic climate has changed since the early days of the Great Recession, NEFE’s mission to inspire and empower better financial decision making remains driven by data. Whether through formal research, Harris Polls or informal focus groups, NEFE’s programs and resources are made better by listening to those whom we serve.



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Stop by our booth or look for us at the following conferences:

National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFCS) Annual Session	Nov. 2-5	White Sulphur Springs, W.Va.
JumpStart National Educator Conference	Nov. 6-8	National Harbor, Md.
National College Transition Network (NCTN) Conference	Nov. 9-11	Providence, R.I.
National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) Annual Conference, New Orleans.	Nov. 13-14	New Orleans
Association for Financial Counseling, Planning and Education (AFCPE) Annual Symposium	Nov. 18-20	Jacksonville, Fla.
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Conference	Nov. 18-20	Nashville, Tenn.
Community Colleges League of California Annual Conference	Nov. 19-21	Burlingame, Calif.
Consumer Federation of America Financial Services Conference	Dec. 3-4	Washington, D.C.



HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

NEFE will be closed Nov. 25-26 for Thanksgiving and Dec. 24-28 for Christmas.

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The mission of the National Endowment for Financial Education is to inspire empowered financial decision making for individuals and families through every stage of life.

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All questions regarding *NEFE Digest* may be addressed to the Marketing and Communications department. Editor: Cara Hopkins. NEFE is open Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mountain Time. The main telephone number is 303-741-6333; the fax number is 303-220-0838.