



# Teacher Feature Blog

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## Teacher Feature: Kyle Van Ausdall Helps Make Finances Part of the Dinner Table Conversation

The student debt crisis motivated high school teacher, Kyle Van Ausdall, to bring financial education into his classroom eight years ago. Kyle felt that the crisis revealed an overall lack of financial capacity among today's young people and started his students on the Iowa Financial Literacy Program - a web-based course that allows students to move through self guided lessons on key financial skills & competencies. Eight years later, the Iowa Financial Literacy Program is still a core piece of the curriculum. We talked with Mr. Van Ausdall to learn more about his experience teaching financial skills -- and what students think.

### **1. What continues to drive your commitment to financial education and financial capacity?**

Two primary things continue to drive me. One is that young people today are unaware of the debt they will accrue in college. Even for students that don't go to a 4-year college, they still need to know some fundamentals for their vocational training or other investments they will make in themselves.

The other motivation is simply life. Things like saving, banking, and renting vs. owning are life skills that will recur throughout a person's life. More recently, I've been teaching about credit. Credit cards show the abstraction of money, and can make the concept seem intangible in a world that is increasingly digital. Students need to understand credit.

### **2. How have you implemented the Iowa Financial Literacy program in your classroom?**



A few years ago, we placed in the Iowa Financial Literacy Program in a Computer Apps class. Because the class is required, it was a perfect spot to get all students access to financial skills & capacities. We use the program as a unit within our lessons in the classroom. Then, students who need more time also can take time out of class to complete the course lessons. I have found that access and implementation become easier the more technology that a school is able to offer.

### **3. What is your favorite part of the program?**

The first course lesson on savings is my favorite. My hope is that if the students learn one thing out of the program, they will start saving early. This is both because starting to save early establishes good financial behaviors and because of compounding interest over time. Although, I do think that teaching good financial behavior is more important than the actual money students put into savings.

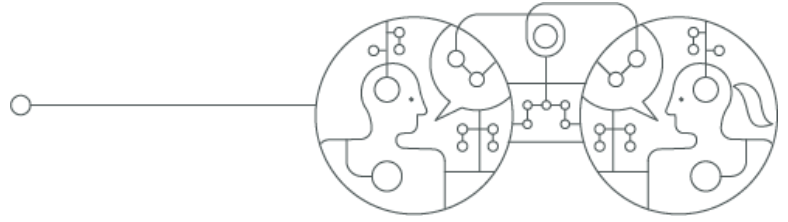
I also really appreciate many of the course administrative features as a teacher. The sidebar features allow you to skip other modules and allows students to retake assessment. I like that my students cannot skip through the course videos with important information - even if my students don't!

### **4. What do you find your students most enjoy learning?**

Students also enjoy the savings lesson. However, the lesson they grow the most from is "Financing Higher Education." The "meat and potatoes" terms like grants, loans, grace period, unsubsidized, etc. allow my students to have a sophisticated conversation with financial advisors, parents, school counselors and other trusted adults. I find that many students want to retake the course assessment to get their scores up to "mastery."

### **5. If you had to give a piece of financial advice to your high school self, what would it be?**

In high school, I would have connected to advice to save and invest early. I would have been shocked to learn some of the financial terms that the Iowa Financial Scholars



program teachers teaches students. Those words were taboo in my house and I thought it might be rude to bring them up at home.

I hear a lot from students that money and finances are not topics that they talk about at home. The reality is that a majority of Americans live paycheck to paycheck, so we can't assume that young people are getting the skills they need at home - or even that parents have enough financial knowledge to offer good advice. I would really appreciate having more financial education tools for parents too.