



Massachusetts Financial Education Collaborative

Building on a Wealth of Knowledge

Summit on Financial Education

October 28, 2009

Notes from Break-Out Group Discussions

Nearly 140 trainers, service providers, and content distributors in financial education were divided into 3 lifespan groups for two hours of deep discussion and brainstorming. The contributions of direct service providers in the field were particularly sought. Seven Summit organizers took notes on these discussions, which are synthesized as follows:

K-16 Group

Question 1: Where do people currently go for financial education?

- Students are getting most financial education from teachers who are able to incorporate it into the curriculum within other subjects like economics or sometimes a social studies class. Basic skills like balancing a checkbook or managing a debit card are offered through various means with no common standard. This curriculum is usually snuck in during April, after the MCAS exam.
- Peer to peer coaching networks.
- Out-of-School Programs, examples: Operation Hope, Certified Financial Planners, Jumpstart, Life Smarts, Money Smart and Citi Curricula, Feed the Pig.

Question 2: How do we reach people who are not receiving any kind of financial education?

- As part of the economics education that some teachers are utilizing, there should be an edition on basic financial education.
- Maybe financial education can be taught once every few years instead of every year.
- Rewrite some of the frameworks and MCAS materials to include topics like compounding interest, basic budgeting, buying used cars, technology, etc.
- Start savings education earlier in order to prevent the pattern of financial education being thinly provided before students go to college.
- Add financial education to summer youth camp programs.
- Expand utilization of after school programs where outside volunteer leaders are sought

Question 3: What are the next steps in achieving our goal of improving financial education?

- Financial education experts and teachers should collaboratively agree on what basic financial education actually is.
- There needs to be a place (virtual and physical) for volunteers, organizations, and teachers to connect effectively.
- Advocate for financial education requirement in K-12 frameworks [SB-299]
- There are barriers that need to be solved in order for progress to be made which includes limited staffing, the ability to get volunteers (and trainers in western MA), language barriers, and improved marketing.

Question 4: What are the specific issues that must be raised for this lifespan group to receive effective and successful financial education?

- MA Prop 2 ½ can be considered a double edged sword. A local mandate means that the State has to pay for every training, materials, or any other costs.
- Schools are teaching for the MCAS, largely because the results are published. The MCAS exam leaves out financial education.
- Teachers are not qualified, comfortable, or don't have time to teach financial education.

Adult Group

Question 1: Where do people currently go for financial education?

- One-to-one connections and word of mouth interactions either from other clients of financial education, or from family and friends.
- Different aspects of media; including, but not limited to: cable channels, television, internet, advertisements (Ex: City of Holyoke uses local access TV to advertise classes and programs), websites.
- People get information through work-site based trainings with staff. e.g. YMCA collaborates with Dana Farber to provide women with breast cancer financial education services through their partnership.
- Referrals and education from community practitioners.
- Bankers find partners/customers who they connect with their employees.
- Information is disseminated in free tax clinics.

Question 2: How do we reach people who are not receiving any kind of financial education?

1. The idea that came up the most in all three sessions was that ***we need to take financial education to where people already are.*** Going to where people already are had various meanings including going to where they are in life (what do they need in a specific period of their lives), physically (place of employment, church, union etc.), mentally, and different mediums (internet, gaming etc.).
2. The second most frequent suggestion that came up was that financial education needed to be ***delivered by a trusted advisor or a trusted source*** that was vetted by someone they trusted.
3. Something that came up very frequently as well in the discussion groups was the ***necessity of collaboration and partnership between different stakeholders*** involved with financial education including nonprofit organizations, funders, government agencies, policy makers etc. Examples:
 - Add budgeting education to other adult education programs like GED and ESOL programs.
 - Multi-lingual advertisements.
 - More financial education classes.
 - A visually based awareness campaign to make people really think about how much financial education is needed.
 - Getting someone with celebrity status to endorse the issue, and participate in an awareness campaign.
 - Offer incentives for adults to participate in financial education.
 - Cell phone app that can disseminate information broadly and quickly.
 - Get a unified message from government officials.
 - Network with corrections officers who are connecting to a network of individuals who need to be connected with resources.
 - Online curricula and the use of social networking tools.
 - Financial Football and other related games.
 - Establish money clubs where people could come together to hold each other accountable and share stories.
 - Capture parent groups in schools who might be thinking about saving for college with the idea of “teach your kids.”
 - Leverage the K-12 programs in schools to reach their parents.

Question 3: What are the next steps in achieving our goal of improving the delivery of financial education?

1. The first and most frequently mentioned incentive idea was that of **material incentives** for participants of financial education including cash gifts, energy assistance, gift cards etc.
2. Another sentiment that came up during the sessions was the facts that maybe it is not always about incentives, but about **helping people reach their goals and creating new social connections for them**.
3. The third idea that came up in many variations was the **idea of branding, PR, and making financial education ‘cool’** so it would be something that people would be attracted to.

Examples:

- Establish a volunteer base
- Integrate financial education into aspects of people’s everyday lives. Identify a self-interest and latch financial ed to it.
- Coordinate our work so people know where to go for information, including “trusted advisors” including shelters, Boston Public Library, advocates, employment venues.
- Get good information/language on the ground to providers of services, reframe to reduce stigma of “illiteracy”. Financial Wellness, Freedom, Fitness, Independence.

Older Adult Group

Question 1: Where do people currently go for financial education?

- Personal interactions with peers and family members.

Question 2: How do we reach people who are not receiving any kind of financial education?

- Centralized clearinghouse to vet materials and provide consumer/fraud alerts prior to distribution to front-line workers.
- Provide a centralized source of information by location.
- Provide assistance for non-English speaking seniors.
- Improve and expand communication and content between programs and among care givers and other intermediaries.
- Improve and expand communication to seniors and intermediaries in order to break through the clutter.
- Provide adequate funding to local groups so that they can provide the proper services.
- Make financial education take the form of one-to-one direct assistance instead of education given in a traditional lecture style.

Question 3: What are the next steps in achieving our goal of improving financial education?

- Build on existing infrastructure like:
 - Local statewide councils on aging in order to disseminate information
 - Massachusetts Money Management Program
 - Executive Office of Elder Affairs
 - Massachusetts Association of Older Americans
- Develop a framework for advice/assistance.

Question 4: What are the specific issues that must be raised for this lifespan group to receive effective and successful financial education?

- Privacy concerns/Fraud protection.
- Embarrassment about ignorance.
- Language and literacy.
- Physical limitations prevent seniors from getting to financial education.
- Lack of assets, asset management, distribution, and declined value.
- Short time frames.
- Estate planning.

- Address and realize that there are different needs for different economic groups.

Coordination; Structural Elements

How should an organized financial education system be structured in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and what should it do?

- It should be a neutral, trusted place to go for reliable information for dissemination.
- There should be no conflict of interest.
- It should be a clearing house for financial information in the form of resources for curriculum, materials, handouts, games, and worksheets.
- Serve as potential matchmaker among potential users and providers of financial education information and programs
- Any web activity to direct the public should include a disclaimer about the credibility of information, educators, and organizations listed - until there are formal updating and vetting process in place.
- The website should offer dynamic visual map that correlates to the database of providers and displays a visual of the financial education activity in all cities and towns
- The website should have a self-updating feature with user names & passwords.
- It should be involved with outreach, awareness campaigns, and advocacy.
- It should not duplicate financial education efforts or add bureaucracy/red tape.
- Should support all areas of the Commonwealth, including western MA.
- Maintain a schedule of events and send materials to organizations like schools and libraries/community organizations.
- If a system structure exists as a state managed entity, then it should be balanced with a board or a council that represents all areas of government that can offer a service to such a system; ie: The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, The Department of Transitional Assistance, The Executive Office of Elder Affairs, to name a few.
- If a system structure exists as a non-profit, then it should be designed in a way that it is not competing with other non-profits for funding.
- The system's design must have an equally non-government arm for there is a clear desire for an advocacy component by the attendees. This would be a conflict of interest for a strictly state based structure.