

Survey of Financial Education in Ohio's High Schools:

Assessment of Teachers, Programs, and Legislative Efforts

A Research Project funded by The Ohio State University P-12 Project

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Executive Summary

This research contributes to the understanding of the scope and determinants of financial education in Ohio high schools. It was conducted at the time when the legislative body in Ohio decided to mandate financial education in Ohio high schools. Specifically, the study objectives were to provide:

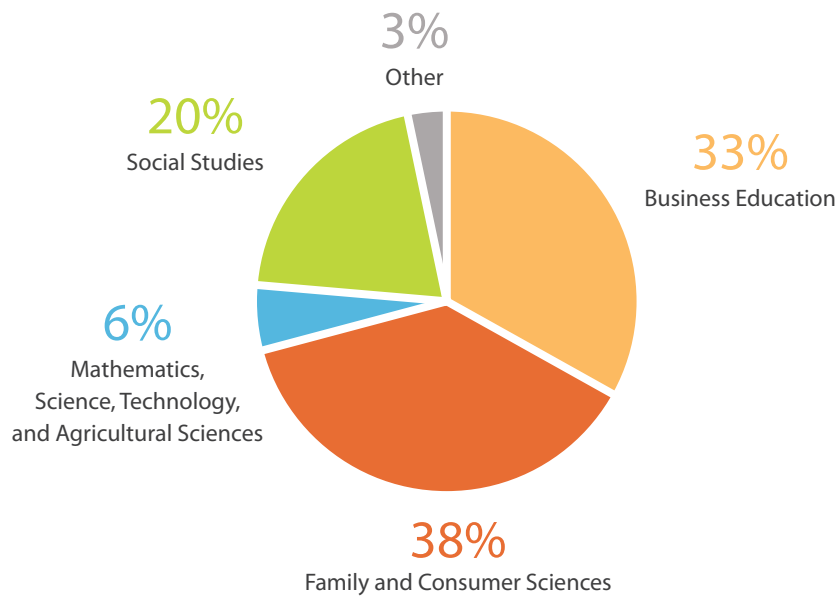
1. Quantitative information about the *when, where, who,* and *how* of personal finance instruction in Ohio high schools;
2. Quantitative information about the student population attending personal finance courses;
3. Knowledge of Ohio high school teachers' personal finance knowledge and the sources they use to stay informed of personal finance topics;
4. A comprehensive manual of financial literacy programs used by high school teachers in Ohio and organizations which offer train-the-teacher programs across Ohio; and
5. Knowledge of the key actors and status of legislative efforts to achieve legislation mandating effective financial education in schools.

Funded by a grant of *The Ohio State University P to 12 Project*, an Ohio-wide survey of high school teachers who teach personal finance was conducted.

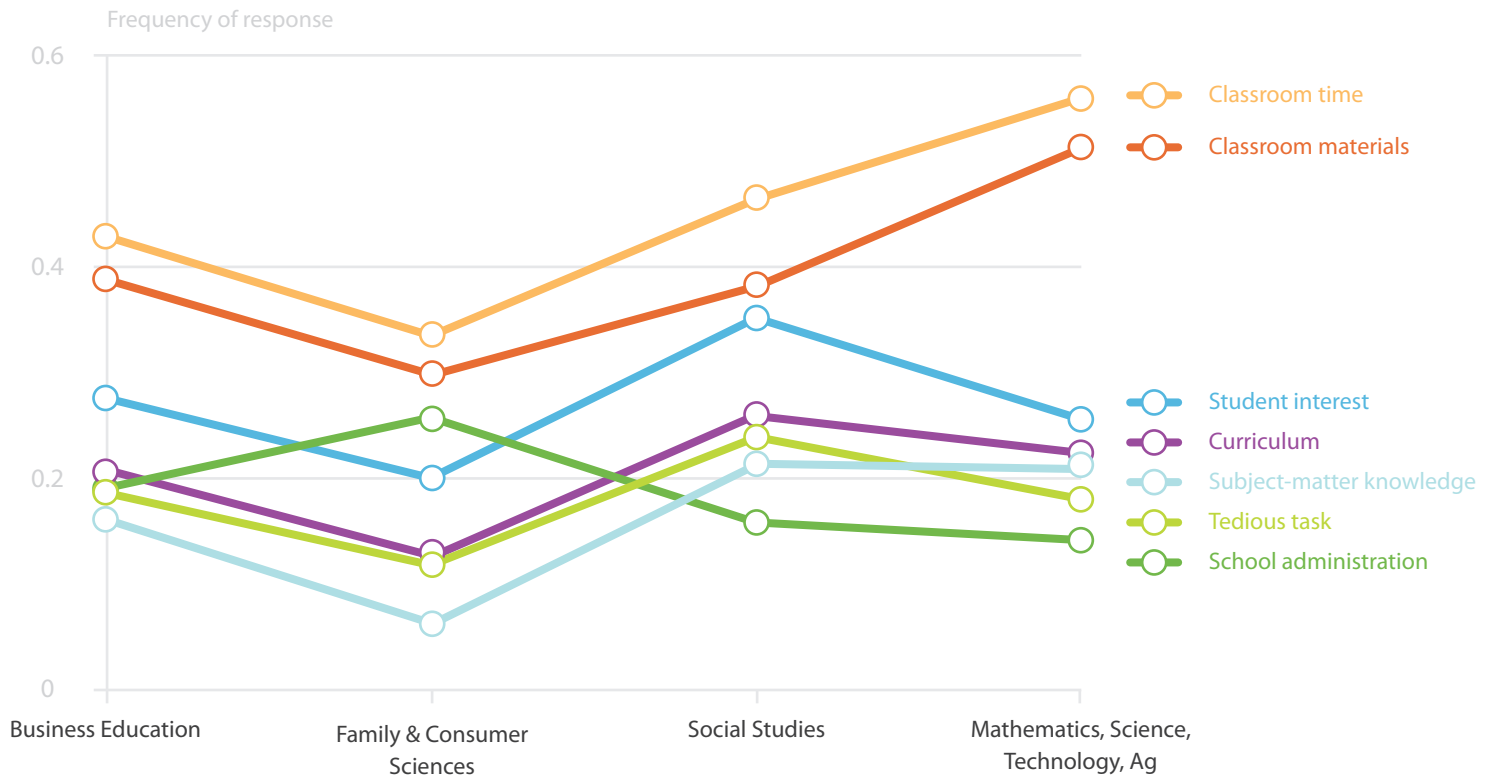
- Qualified participants were high school teachers who actually teach personal finance in the 2006/2007 academic year.
- Business Education, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Social Studies teachers in 1,145 high schools in Ohio were contacted by mail and invited to participate in the survey.
- The questionnaire consisted of 54 questions and was administered online from February 26 to April 7, 2007.
- A total of 710 respondents completed the survey.

Major survey findings by study objectives

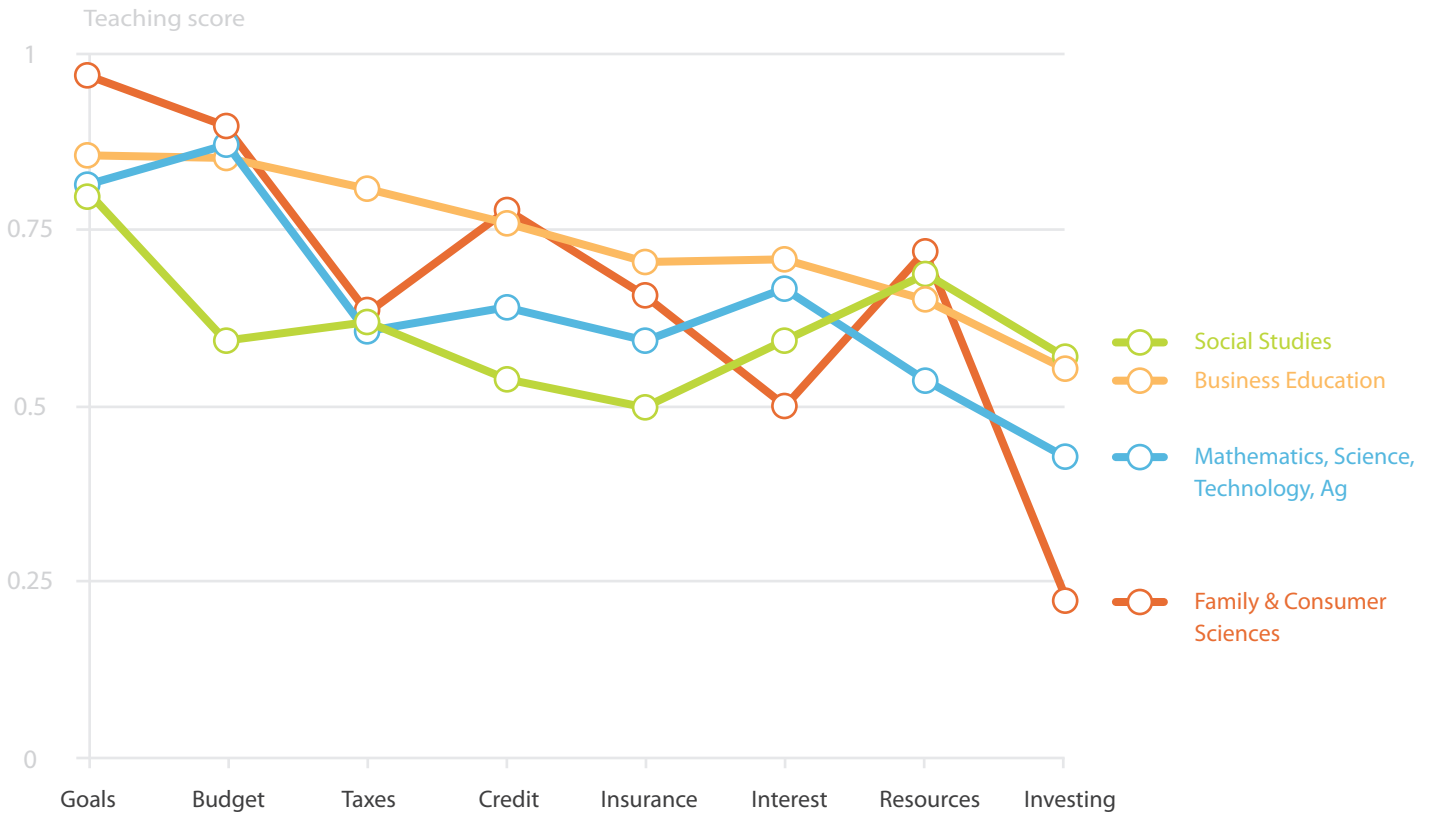
The majority of personal finance instruction was offered by three academic content areas: Family and Consumer Sciences, Business Education, and Social Studies.



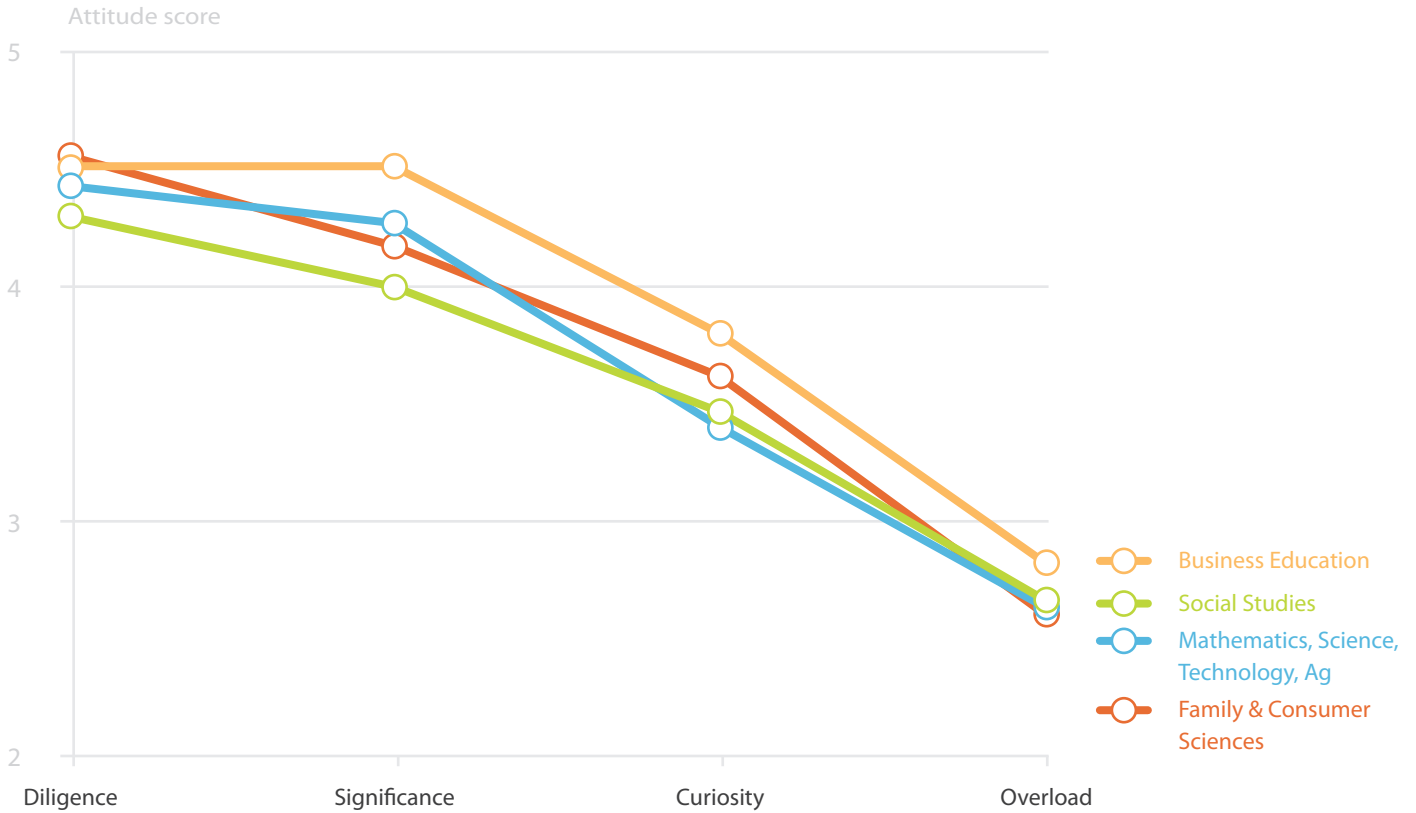
The lack of classroom time to properly teach personal finance topics and the lack of classroom materials were the top challenges for teaching personal finance across academic content areas.



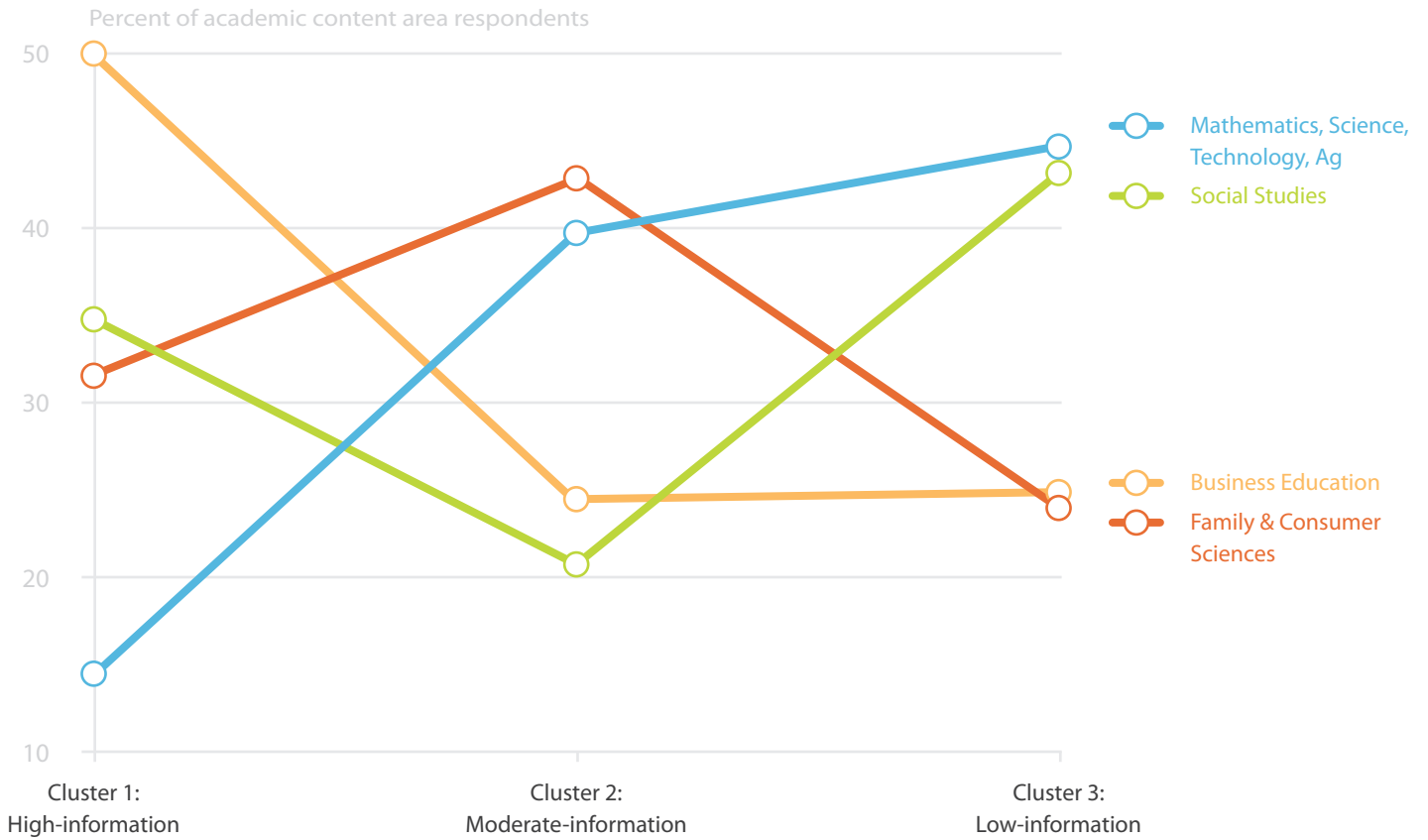
The four academic content areas differed significantly in their instruction of the eight personal finance themes. In this illustration, Business Education teachers were used as basis for comparison.



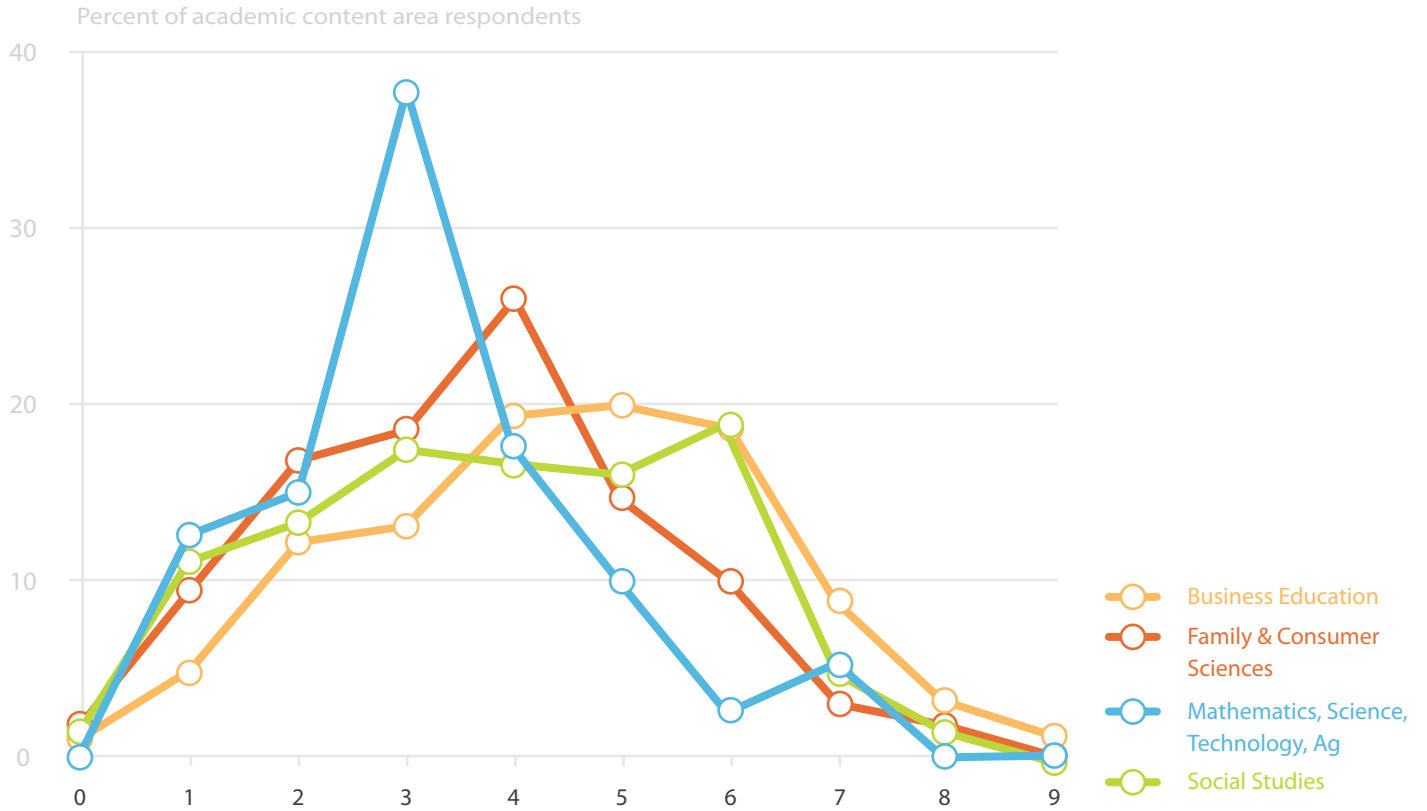
The four academic content areas differed significantly in their curiosity toward teaching personal finance, the significance they attached to these topics, and the diligence in researching them. The feeling of information overload was low and not significant when comparing the four groups.



Business Education teachers were most likely to practice a high-information strategy to stay current about personal finance topics whereas Social Studies and Sciences teachers preferred a low-information strategy.



In the financial knowledge quiz, most respondents answered between two and five questions correctly. There was a much lower percentage who answered none/one question or six to nine questions correctly.



Major survey findings by academic content area

Business Education

Business Education teachers were more likely to teach elective courses, to teach tax-related topics, and to have a higher percentage of male students in their personal finance classes. On the other hand, their courses were less likely to be limited to one semester and they used less classroom time to teach personal finance compared to the other academic content areas. They were less likely to teach goal setting and limited-resource topics, and were most likely to score high on the personal finance quiz. They were curious about learning personal finance and attached great significance to teaching these topics.

Their main barrier to teaching personal finance topics was their school's administration. None of the subject-matter barriers were pertinent for this content area. In fact, Business Education teachers were even less likely to cite curriculum needs and student ignorance as challenges for teaching personal finance compared to the other academic content areas. Those teaching personal finance were less likely to be female and to participate in continuing education courses, but were more likely to have taken college courses on personal finance.

Family and Consumer Sciences

Family and Consumer Sciences teachers were more likely to teach credit, budgeting, and goal-setting, while they avoided the investment topic. They were most likely to be teaching personal finance in an elective course offered on a one-semester schedule with ample time spent on this topic. Their audience was less likely to be male. These teachers expressed high diligence in researching personal finance topics and were highly likely to belong to either the high or moderate-information search types of teachers. Surprisingly, they tended to score low on the knowledge quiz and to dislike the Internet as a source of information on personal finance topics.

Their main challenges in teaching personal finance were a lack of curricula that fit their teaching needs and the lack of student interest. School administration and classroom materials were less likely to present barriers to this content

area. Overall, they attached less significance to teaching these topics than did Business Education or Science teachers. Family and Consumer Sciences teachers were most likely to be female, older, and living in households with a higher household income. Most likely, they had been teaching personal finance for a number of years supported by continuing education courses. This group of teachers was less likely to hold a Masters' degree.

Social Studies

Social Studies teachers were most likely to teach investment, tax, and limited-resources topics. They stayed away from teaching budgeting and interest-related topics. They were more likely to teach a large number of students in Grade 12, to devote significant time to these topics, and to follow a one-semester course schedule. Their courses were least likely to be elective compared to the other academic content areas.

This group of teachers attached little significance to teaching personal finance topics and the group members were less likely to diligently research personal finance topics. They were unlikely to belong to the high- or moderate-search types of teachers for personal finance information. They did indicate that they like to talk to colleagues to prepare for teaching these topics and that their main challenges were classroom materials and classroom time to properly teach these topics. Social Studies teachers who were teaching personal finance were least likely to be located in rural school locations, to be female, and to participate in continuing education on personal finance topics. They also reported fewer years teaching personal finance.

Mathematics, Science, Technology, and Agricultural Sciences

The group of "Science" teachers was more likely to focus on budgeting and to avoid teaching limited-resource related topics. While Science teachers were more likely to have a higher number of male students, their personal finance instruction was characterized by fewer students in Grade 10, the topics being spread out over fewer courses, and generally less time reserved for teaching personal finance topics.

Similar to Business Education teachers, their courses were less likely to be limited to one semester. These Science teachers attached the highest level of significance to teaching personal finance topics among the four academic content areas. While they were less likely to practice high-information search efforts to learn about personal finance, they were most likely to talk to others to prepare for teaching these topics.

Their greatest reported challenge was the feeling that teaching personal finance often seems tedious.

Classroom time, in particular, was of little concern to this group. They were less likely to teach personal finance at public schools, to be female, and to hold a Masters' degree. They reported fewer years teaching personal finance topics and were less likely to have taken college-level coursework in this area. However, they did indicate that they participate in continuing education courses.

Major findings of a comparison of state statutes' attempts to provide students with financial literacy instruction

In addition to the survey of high school teachers, a comparison of state statutes' attempts to provide high school students with financial literacy instruction was conducted. Seventeen states and one United States territory have some form of legislation concerning financial literacy in public schools.

- Nine actually require financial literacy education, either as a separate course or to be integrated into existing courses.
- Rather than mandating the inclusion of financial literacy, six states encourage school districts to provide financial education by requiring the state's education agency to set academic standards, create financial literacy curricula, or provide resources for disseminating financial education.
- Finally, three states have enacted laws that merely require the state's education board to accumulate information on financial literacy programs or require an entity to conduct studies about need for financial literacy instruction.
- All of the statutes currently enacted vary greatly based on factors such as the extent of discretion granted to boards of education in requiring financial education, guidance about what financial literacy topics should be taught, funding availability to create financial literacy courses and materials, and training of teachers in financial literacy instruction.