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# Empowering All Students with a Secure Economic and Financial Future: Multidisciplinary Investment Education in Social Studies Curricula and Beyond

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This position paper argues for upper elementary, middle, and high school teachers into action to incorporate economic and personal financial knowledge and skills into their respective curricula in a meaningful, active, and collaborative way to prepare students for a prosperous future as adults, including retirement years. Moreover, the paper heightens awareness about the "state of affairs" for economic education and personal financial education in America's schools, reinforcing the call for all states to prioritize economics and personal finance as curricular and graduation requirements. The author also provides guidance on first step in reversing the low economic and financial literacy rates among K-12 students.

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## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In the recent past, Americans could depend on the government and employers to provide the income needed to live comfortably during retirement years using Social Security and pensions as simple and safe financial instruments of money storehouses and payments. However, with the recent structural challenges faced by the U.S. Social Security Administration and the economic struggles experienced by businesses, the responsibility for making financial decisions about saving and investing money for a secure retirement is slowly but steadily shifting to individuals (Van Rooij, Lusardi & Alessie, 2007). The degree to which an individual enjoys a similar lifestyle in retirement as was enjoyed when employed depends increasingly on his or her financial knowledge and skills, specifically related to investing. Compounding the bleakness of available retirement money is the increased complexity of financial products (Hilgert, Hogarth & Beverly, 2003) and the volatility of a stock market struggling to recover alongside an economy that has reached historical lows. These distressing expectations and conditions have

rightly heightened concerns about the current and future rates of economic and financial literacy among all Americans (Lester & Williams, 2010) which national literacy test scores indicate are alarmingly low.

In conjunction with elevated concerns about the overall economic and financial literacy of Americans, research shows that financial literacy or lack thereof, has direct implications for financial security, or insecurity, during retirement. The U.S. Social Security Administration funded a recent study under the auspices of the Retirement Research Consortium that found individuals who were more financially literate were more likely to be ready for retirement, and conversely, a lack of financial knowledge was a primary factor in not having planned for retirement (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2009). Another study suggested statistical significance in the link between higher levels of financial knowledge and positive financial behaviors in saving and investing as well as cash-flow and credit management (Hilgert et al., 2003). Moreover, a similar study reported a causal connection between financial literacy and productive financial practices while claiming the benefits of financial education are reaped in a variety of money-related practices including retirement planning, savings, homeownership, and credit (Martin, 2007). These studies advocate that just as knowledge is power in other areas of life, financial knowledge is the catalyst for a trajectory of financial well-being clear into retirement.

In addition to financial illiteracy contributing to retirement unpreparedness, lack of financial knowledge leads to a host of other financial problems such as consumer debt, credit card misuse, predatory lending, and bankruptcy. These financial problems result once again from uninformed, unproductive uses of money which prevent individuals from even having enough money to set aside for retirement if they so desired. For example, young people today accumulate high levels of debt resulting from student loans and credit cards which hinder their ability to acquire the wealth necessary for retirement investments (Lusardi, Mitchell & Curto, 2009). According to a study conducted by Sallie Mae, the mean amount of credit card debt carried by college students in 2008 was $3,173 (Chu, 2009). Such early financial entanglements can become costly monetarily and in terms of foregone opportunities to invest for retirement. Fifty-five percent of young adults admit to not contributing money to a retirement savings plan such as an individual retirement account or 401-K account (Jones & Newport, 2006). Increased debt coupled with lack of financial knowledge is an unfortunate combination that leads to higher than average chances of becoming a victim of predatory lending which often skyrockets consumer debt, ultimately culminating in bankruptcy. And although the causes of bankruptcy are many, it is often associated with a lack of financial knowledge (Hilgert et al., 2003) and results in unpaid debts to businesses that are forced to pass on financial losses to all consumers often in the form of higher prices. Bankruptcy and other consequences of a largely financially illiterate population are therefore not only personal financial roadblocks for short-term and long-term investing but are also financial problems for society as a whole.

The harsh reality of the societal impact of low financial literacy rates in an increasingly interdependent American economy has never been more transparent and life-changing than with the housing market crisis which began in 2007 and led in large part to the current U.S. economic recession. While a percentage of the unprecedented number of housing foreclosures stemmed from intentionally unethical lending practices, much of the responsibility is shifted to uninformed financial consumers who likely would have

avoided such costly financial mistakes if they better understood mortgages and interest rates. In addition to eliminating their own personal financial detriment and the subsequent ripple effects felt by all Americans through depreciating home values nationwide, these consumers held the potential to increase the competitiveness and efficiency of the housing market for all Americans had they been more financially literate. Hilgert, Hogarth and Beverly (2003) best summarize the positive effects of knowledgeable consumers on the marketplace as a whole in an article they wrote, ironically before the housing market crisis:

In classical economics, informed consumers provide the checks and balances that keep unscrupulous sellers out of the market. For instance, consumers who know the full range of mortgage interest rates and terms in the marketplace, who understand how their credit-risk profile and personal situation fit with those rates and terms, and, consequently, who can determine which mortgage is best for them make it difficult for unfair or deceptive lenders to gain a foothold in the marketplace. (p. 309). Financial education is not only critical to the financial well-being of individuals but also to their families, neighborhoods, states, nation, and world in this unparalleled, globally connected time in economic history.

The need to prioritize economic and financial education has never been more urgent than amidst the current highly volatile economic conditions and financial market failures responsible for devastating financial losses incurred by millions of Americans (Lester & Williams, 2010). One of the greatest barriers on the road to recovery is a largely financially illiterate population in which women and minority groups represent the greatest need for financial education (Lusardi, Mitchell & Curto, 2009) as they are sometimes trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty perpetuation tied directly to a lack of financial knowledge and skills. Thankfully, the good news in a seemingly hopeless situation is that numerous research studies link teaching financial knowledge and skills to improved and profitable financial decisions including retirement planning (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2009) and stock market participation (van Rooij et al., 2007). Moreover, research suggests that women and minorities profit most from financial education programs (Martin, 2007). K-12 students are also in a prime position to understand and relate financial concepts to their families' financial struggles and the bombardment of financial news reports in all types of media; the current economic recession has created the perfect storm in which to show students how economic and financial events impact their lives on a daily basis (Lester & Williams, 2010). Roger Ferguson (2002), former Vice Chairman of the Board of Governors of the U.S. Federal Reserve System, succinctly captured the need for a more financially literate population that has especially significant implications for the U.S. today when he commented, "…when millions of educated consumers make good personal financial choices, our economy is strengthened in fundamental ways" (webpage).

The overarching goal of this position paper is to call upper elementary, middle, and high school teachers into instructional action to incorporate economic and personal financial knowledge and skills into their respective curricula in a meaningful, active, and collaborative way that is congruent with the general goal of K-12 public education – to prepare students for a prosperous future as adults, including retirement years. Moreover, the intent of this paper is to heighten awareness about the "state of affairs" for economic education and personal financial education in America's schools, calling all states to prioritize economics and personal finance as curricular and graduation requirements. A

brief overview of where teachers can find investment education lessons and resources is included, followed by specific examples of how investment education synergistically fits within many social studies and non-social studies curricula alike. This multidisciplinary approach to teaching investment education has the added benefits of aligning with many 21st Century Skills and Common Core State Standards which are discussed toward the end of the article. The author's ultimate hope is to provide an immediate, relatively simple, first step in reversing the low economic and financial literacy rates among K-12 students so that all Americans, individually and collectively, will contribute to revitalizing an economy reliant on the education and productive participation of its citizens (NCSS, 2010).

## PERSONAL FINANCIAL EDUCATION – THE STATE OF AFFAIRS

The title of the Greatest Generation originated from Tom Brokaw in his book *The Greatest Generation Speaks*. Brokaw describes this generation as "the American men and women who grew up in the Great Depression, who came of age in World War II and then devoted their adult years to the building of modern America" (Brokaw, 2010 p. X). Given the current age range of the Greatest Generation (88+) most are currently more concerned about health issues and the passing of their estates than the future of equities.

However, all living generations can learn from the perceptions this generation had while they were both accumulating and distributing wealth. Many in this generation never really had a goal of retirement and worked as long as they could. Many that have retired have corporate pensions to rely upon for income. In addition, during their retirement years, starting in the 1980's, the interest rate environment was rising, eventually reaching 18%. Markets and interest rates were much more favorable to those of this generation that did retire.

The low financial literacy rates among adults, college students, and K-12 students are not only evident by adverse economic conditions faced by households and the U.S. economy as a whole, but the prevalence of financial illiteracy is also confirmed by recent financial literacy studies and tests (Lester & Williams, 2010). The Jump$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy administered its biennial financial literacy test in 2008 to 6,856 12th grade students and 1,030 full-time college students (Mandell, 2008). The same test was administered to both groups of students and consisted of 31 multiple choice questions examining four basic categories of financial knowledge and skills based on the second edition of the National Standards in K-12 Personal Financial Education as revised by the Jump$tart Coalition. The four categories include income, money management, savings and investment, and spending and credit. The average score for high school students was 48.3 percent, a record-setting low score, while the average score for college students was 62.2 percent – both scores earning a failing grade based on traditional grading scales. The average score for college students increased year by year as students progressed through a four year program; however, this somewhat encouraging news is negated by the fact that only about 28 percent of United States citizens graduate from college thus suggesting the majority of citizens are even less informed and capable of making sound financial decisions (Mandell, 2008).

So how do the remaining three quarters of people learn to effectively manage their finances if they have not received any formal financial education instruction in grades K-12 or college? A natural and convenient alternative for this deficit of financial

education instruction is to consult family and friends as the need to make financial decisions arises. A recent study provides support for this natural inclination by reporting that people who were most uninformed about financial matters were most likely to seek out financial advice from family and friends (van Rooij et al., 2007). This reliance on family and friends is problematic on multiple levels including the fact that many parents are not comfortable discussing finances because of their own lack of financial knowledge (Ash, 2009) which is confirmed by the majority of Americans receiving a failing grade on financial literacy tests. To elevate problems further, today's financial markets are comprised of increasingly complex financial choices and products requiring even greater financial literacy than ever before. The same study that reported family and friends as the primary source of financial information for people with low financial literacy also reported that many families avoid financial decisions altogether that involve investing in stocks because of their unfamiliarity with the stock market (van Rooij et al., 2007). This perpetuation of financial illiteracy paints a dismal picture of the retirement years of today's young people not to mention their parents.

The current financial struggles endured by many Americans as well as the dire results of financial literacy tests and studies have motivated more schools to incorporate financial education in the K-12 curricula (Ash, 2009). Also motivating schools is the increased pressure from policy-makers, educators, and parents insisting that all students graduate from high school with the financial knowledge and skills necessary to avoid the dangers recently experienced by a financially illiterate society (CEE, 2012). As of 2011 thirteen states require students to take a personal finance course—either as a stand-alone course or integrated into an economics course—to graduate from high school, nearly doubling the seven states that mandated such a course in 2007 (CEE, 2012). Forty-six states have taken a first step in validating the need for financial education in the K-12 curricula by including it in their educational standards, although only thirty-six states actually require these standards to be implemented and only five states require students to be tested on these standards, unfortunately down from nine states in 2009 (CEE, 2012). This increase in financial education inclusion in K-12 curricula is encouraging, however, continues to fall short of ensuring that all students have equal access to acquiring financial knowledge and skills that will assist them in avoiding the costly consequences of making uninformed financial decisions as adults.

## ECONOMIC EDUCATION: THE FOUNDATION OF PERSONAL FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Just as a lack of financial education and informed family influences negatively impact young people's financial knowledge and skills, the reverse is also commonly true. For example, a recent study estimated a person with a college education whose parents invested in stocks and saved for retirement was 50 percent more likely to understand financial concepts such as risk diversification than a person who did not attain a high school diploma and did not have parents who neither invested in stocks nor saved for retirement (Lusardi, Mitchell & Curto, 2009). Also significant in positively impacting young people's financial knowledge and skills is a basic yet comprehensive understanding of economics which is the underlying foundation of all financial decisions. Lusardi & Mitchell (2009) supported this conclusion with a study which associated an increased exposure to economics in school or in the workforce with an increased level of

financial literacy. Because many people do not understand that personal finance is only one area of study under the umbrella of economics, people often erroneously assume economics and personal finance are synonymous thus disregarding the significance and relevance of economic education on financial literacy. A thorough understanding of economic principles is critical to understanding the "why's" behind making fully informed, prosperous financial decisions.

A rudimentary reason for the study of economics often falling by the wayside in K-12 education revolves around a common occurrence in which people do not make connections between economics and everyday life. When properly taught and understood, economics is a life skill applicable to every area of life including personal finance. A simple yet comprehensive definition of economics is the study of choices or decision-making under scarcity. To appropriately distinguish economics from its social science counterparts that also study choices thus human behavior such as psychology and sociology, economics is the study of choices, both monetary and nonmonetary, made predominantly by consumers, producers, and the government which is more than a daily occurrence for people of all ages. Economics analyzes not only individual and collective choices but also the opportunity cost (i.e., the second most desirable alternative foregone) incurred each time a choice is made. Students are never too young to learn how to make informed and productive choices for their personal gain and for the welfare of others.

Part of the confusion that leads many people to erroneously interchange the study of economics with personal finance stems from that fact that many economic decisions are in fact monetary; however, increased emphasis must be given to the reality that even more economic choices made in life on a daily basis are nonmonetary. The relevance and importance of making beneficial choices, both monetary and nonmonetary, in the lives of people of all ages is a cornerstone argument in making the case that economic education should also be a part of the K-12 curricula, including personal finance courses, which is backed by research findings that suggest that learning economics is relevant and age-appropriate even for elementary school students (VanFossen, 2011).

## ECONOMIC EDUCATION – THE STATE OF AFFAIRS

Whether learning economics to make better personal finance choices or to cast a more informed vote for political candidates based on a personal understanding of their economic policy proposals, economic education should not be optional at a time in history where the current U.S. economy failures mirror in some ways the U.S. economy failures of the Great Depression. Legislating economic education in K-12 curricula is a primary focus of the Council for Economic Education (CEE) which is in large part motivated by less than desirable economic literacy test scores. In a 2005 report entitled, "What American Teens & Adults Know About Economics," the CEE reported scores for an online economics and personal finance test administered in January and February 2005 to 3,512 adults aged 18 and older and 2,242 students in grades 9-12. Twenty of the 24 multiple choice questions covered economic concepts addressing each of the 20 Voluntary National Content Standards of Economics and four of the test questions covered basic financial concepts. The average score for adults was 70 percent, and the average score for students was 53 percent. In addition to confirming a continuation of less than proficient economic literacy rates from years past, the CEE's analysis of the test participants reveals a gender and minority achievement gap where women, Blacks, and

Hispanics scored lower than their White peers. Test participants who did not receive economics instruction in high school also scored lower than test participants who did. Likewise, level of education made a difference in test scores as revealed by adults with only a high school diploma scoring lower than adults with college degrees.

Few if any people presently dispute the need for American citizens to be economically literate. More than 90 percent of adults and students surveyed by the CEE (2005) believe that all Americans should understand basic economic concepts and skills regardless of whether or not they obtain a college degree, and nearly all adults surveyed believe economics should at least be taught in high school if not earlier. These beliefs fuel the need to teach economics in the K-12 curricula particularly because most Americans do not graduate from college and Americans who do attend college often do not take an economics course. As of 2011 the CEE reports 22 states require students to take an economics course to graduate from high school while all 50 states include economics in their state standards (CEE, 2012). Further, 40 states require these standards to actually be implemented but only 16 states require testing of students' economic knowledge, seven fewer than the number of states that required testing in 2007 (CEE, 2012). Despite the overall gains in teaching economic education in our nation's schools in recent years, more work remains if the goals of education are to prepare students for adulthood by ensuring all students are given the productive and prosperous life skills arising out of a firm grasp of economic concepts.

At time when high stakes testing in language arts and mathematics as prescribed by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation restricts the amount of instructional time for teaching other core subjects such as science and history, the utopias state of U.S. public education in which every student is required to take a course in economics and personal finance to graduate from high school will likely not come to fruition, regrettably, in the near future. However, in the meantime, is there a more realistic, immediate strategy teachers can employ that includes economics and personal finance instruction in an already overcrowded K-12 curricula? The answer is a resounding "yes"! An effective alternative to these advantageous stand-alone courses involves utilizing multidisciplinary approaches to teaching economics and personal finance lessons in subjects that have natural correlations and applications such as mathematics, language arts, social studies, technology, and business and marketing. In fact, research shows that economic literacy is increased when economics is integrated repetitively throughout multiple grades and subjects (Watts, 2005). For example, one study involving 600 classrooms in grades 4-10 found that students who played an online investment simulation called The Stock Market Game significantly outscored students who did not play the investment simulation on both mathematics and financial literacy tests (Hinojosa et al., 2009). Using a multidisciplinary approach not only gives students the opportunity to learn the economic and personal finance life skills they will need for a prosperous future, but it also has the potential to reinforce and improve learning in core subjects including ones under the mandates of high stakes testing.

## MULTIDISCIPLINARY INVESTMENT EDUCATION IN SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULA AND BEYOND

Many multidisciplinary online lessons and resources for teaching investment basics in upper elementary, middle, and high school grades are available free of charge from

educational organizations such as the CEE (econedlink.org), Jump$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy (jumpstart.org), and the Federal Reserve (federalreserveeducation.org). The most effective lessons and resources weave economic concepts throughout to show students how economics is connected to everyday life including decisions about money. General lesson objectives should be two-fold: 1) to provide students opportunities to construct basic economic and personal financial knowledge essential for making sound and prosperous investment decisions; 2) to create a safe, simulated environment—where the risks of loosing real money are eliminated—in which students can practice the economic and personal financial skills necessary for investing money in a way that will empower them with a secure financial future well into retirement.

Students may also participate in online stock market simulations and games which have the added advantages of many students already being immersed voluntarily in digital environments everyday and the inherent scaffolding nature of games and simulations which allows teachers to be something less than experts (Ash, 2009). One such investment simulation is called The Stock Market Game (SMG)—sponsored by the Securities Industry & Financial Markets Association (SIFMA) Foundation since 1977—played by 700,000 students in grades 4-12 in 2010 (SMG, 2010). Groups of students are given a hypothetical $100,000 to invest in real-time stocks listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), American Stock Exchange (AMEX), and NASDAQ stock exchange for a 10 – 15 week playing period during the fall and spring semesters. In addition to incorporating more complex investing knowledge and skills into students' learning experiences such as short selling and extending on margin as well as adding an element of friendly competition that often serves as a learning motivator, the website that hosts the online simulation offers a wealth of teacher and student resources.

Economics and personal finance are the most common subjects in which lessons on investing should be integrated; however, the potential for using a multidisciplinary approach encompassing other social studies subjects readily exists when teaching investment education. The National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies are based on 10 themes which serve as a framework for core social studies subjects such as sociology, history, geography, civics, and government (NCSS, 2010). Following are examples of how the 10 themes inherently lend themselves to simultaneously teaching investment education and core social studies concepts. The social studies theme that has the most obvious connection to investment education is Theme 7: Production, Distribution, and Consumption, as students research what, how, and for whom publicly traded businesses produce and distribute products. Other themes include Theme 1: Culture which can be incorporated into most investment lessons by students analyzing the consumption preferences and patterns of various cultural groups in their communities as a way to uncover which businesses might be most profitable thus potentially good investments. Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change requires students to demonstrate an understanding of how historical events continue to shape life as we know it. Perhaps like never before, the Stock Market Crash of 1929 is a highly informative and contextualizing historical event for the economic and financial struggles experienced by businesses today. Theme 3: People, Placed, and Environments has particular relevance as students investigate geographically where in the world businesses have purchased raw materials for the production of their products or which foreign countries are home to many U.S. business operations as a consequence of outsourcing and off-shoring.

Similarly, students can demonstrate proficiency in social studies standards guided by Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance as students research the scope and limits of the government's authority as it pertains to business operations and taxes. And because many of the most profitable businesses for investors are technology based, Theme 8: Science, Technology, and Society can also addressed as students contemplate the technological advances and societal impacts of products sold by the technology businesses in which they may choose to invest.

Non-social studies subjects that lend themselves to the ultimate goal of teaching multidisciplinary lessons on investing include mathematics, language arts, career and technical education (CTE), and even music. For example, much of the data generated by the stock market is mathematically derived, requiring basic adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing for calculating financial data such as price-to-earning (PE) ratios, dividend percentage yields, and net changes in stock prices from day to day. Language arts curricula create the perfect opportunities for students to write a convincing essay, poem, or even rap song for investing in one company over another as well as to prepare and deliver an oral presentation speculating why a company's stock price has increased and/or decreased over the last several weeks, months, or years. CTE courses in business/marketing and technology also have inherently relevant competencies through which to teach investing knowledge and skills including units on competition and advertising as well as practical software applications of spreadsheets, graphs, word processing, and Internet search engines. And in a world where teachers of all subjects assume responsibility for and have a vested interest in graduating students with a solid foundation in investment education, even music teachers can be inspired to teach about historical and current mainstream music that influences consumer demand for particular products thus stock prices.

## 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

Investment lessons not only fulfill much of what constitutes effective social studies and non-social studies instruction but also concisely align with many of the 21st Century Skills. The 21st Century Skills recommendations were designed to update public education curricula with skills that will make students, and consequently our economy, competitive in an ever-increasingly globalized workforce (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002). These skills are categorized into three main areas of performance in which all students are required to demonstrate proficiency. Following are the three primary categories of skills students, workers, and citizens will need for the 21st century as advocated in the 21st Century Skills, Education & Competitiveness: A Resource and Policy Guide, after which are listed the subcategories that are potential direct student outcomes of implementing investment lessons: 1) Learning and Innovation Skills – creativity and innovation skills, critical thinking and problem solving skills, and communication and collaborative skills; 2) Information, Media, and Technology Skills – information literacy, media literacy, and ICT (information and communications technology) literacy; 3) Life and Career Skills – flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility. Further qualifying investment lessons as an efficient and effective resource for teaching these skills are four 21st century themes that are also

woven throughout core subjects including the Financial, Economic, Business, and Entrepreneurial Literacy Theme.

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

A more recent, yet similar, initiative that lends support for implementing investment lessons is the Common Core State Standards. This initiative was grounded in an effort to establish clarity and consistency in learning objectives for all students across the nation by creating standards in language arts and mathematics which are "robust and relevant to the real world" so that students and their communities "will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011a, homepage). While regrettably there are not specific Common Core State Standards for social studies yet, expectations for how the language arts standards should be correlated to history and social studies content have been published by the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2011b). Examples of such correlations as they pertain to investment lessons include a reading standard that asks students to "integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem" (p. 61). Other correlation examples include the writing standards that ask students to "use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others" and to "conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question…or solve a problem…demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation" (p. 63).

## CONCLUSION

Shortly after the U.S. current economic and financial crises began in 2007, Frederic Mishkin (2008), then on the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, concisely captured the lessons that would continue to be learned in the years that followed at the Third National Summit on Economic and Financial Literacy in Washington, D.C.: "There can hardly be a better time to make the case for economic and financial literacy than right now…a better-informed citizenry would likely have resulted in more prudent decision making and, consequently, less harm to the economy." As the U.S. economy desperately struggles to recovery and its citizens are left wondering about the degree to which their retirement years will be funded by government and employer payments, the time has come for K-12 education to whole-heartedly commit to empowering our young people to take control of their own financial futures by learning and practicing economic and personal financial knowledge and skills. K-12 education no longer has the luxury of teaching such knowledge and skills to a select few students in a select few subject areas, but rather K-12 education is fundamentally obligated now more than ever to teach all students about investing because preparing young people for their future as adults without financial security during retirement is profoundly unacceptable.

The intent of this position paper is to get the ball rolling in a direction where teachers of all subject areas are challenged to find instructional opportunities to teach students about investing with the goal of developing civically competent students who "have the ability to use their knowledge about their community, nation, and world; to apply inquiry processes; and to employ skills of data collection and analysis,

collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving" (NCSS, 2010, p. 3). Moreover, this call to action also includes preparing all students for life after their careers have ended, as retired citizens whose financial security is dependent upon the investment knowledge and skills they hopefully gained and practiced on multiple occasions throughout their public education experience. The time for teachers to act is now.

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