



The Councilor: A Journal of the Social Studies

Volume 78
Number 1 *Volume 78 No. 1 (2017)*

Article 1

January 2017

Introduction to the Special Issue of The Councilor on Economic Education

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Recommended Citation

Henning, Mary Beth (2017) "Introduction to the Special Issue of The Councilor on Economic Education," *The Councilor: A Journal of the Social Studies*: Vol. 78: No. 1, Article 1.
Available at: https://thekeep.eiu.edu/the_councilor/vol78/iss1/1

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Illinois Council of Social Studies



Introduction to the Special Issue of *The Councilor* on Economic Education

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Elementary, middle, high school, and college students are struggling to navigate current economic realities, and despite the Great Recession of 2008 and growing complexities of economic decision-making, *The Councilor* has published only one article in the last eight years concentrating on economic education. Now is the right time for *The Councilor* to publish a special issue on economic education. Educators searching for novel ways to teach economics and new research on economic education will find the articles in this issue to be timely and practical.

The National Council for the Social Studies (2013) recently released *The College, Career, and Civic (C3) Life Framework for Social Studies Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History*. Illinois, as well as many other states, have adopted new social science standards based on the C3 Framework. Like Illinois, 45 states include personal finance in their state benchmarks, and 23 require economics be offered as a high school course (Council for Economic Education, 2016). Clearly there is a need for more economic education and more quality curriculum to meet new standards for economics and financial literacy, and this issue of *The Councilor* provides resources and ideas for teaching economics and financial literacy to all levels of students.

Several of the articles and resource reviews included in this issue connect to the C3 Standards explicitly. Readers can easily find tables showing lesson alignment to specific standards in Marsha Clayton and Jennifer Logan's "Noodlenomics: Using Pool Noodles to Teach Supply and Demand" and Neil Graham Shanks' "We Shall See: Critical Theory and Structural Inequality in Economics." Scott DeWitt and Nick Dilley helpfully include hot links to 15 lessons as well as alignment among the lessons and C3 Standards in their review of the Understanding Fiscal Responsibility Lesson Materials (Understanding Fiscal Responsibility Project Team, 2015).

Specific lesson plans that can be used in middle school, high school, teacher education courses, and college economics classes are interwoven throughout this special issue of *The Councilor*. Readers wishing to see how economics can be taught across the curriculum (integrating math, language arts) or to English as Second Language learners and special education students will especially appreciate reading Natalia V. Smirnova's "Teaching Unemployment Across the Curriculum." Her article describes teacher-tested lessons for diverse populations that build on resources in *High School Economics*, 3rd edition

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(Anderson et al, 2014). Marsha Clayton and Jennifer Leigh Logan include detailed descriptions of how to teach the concepts of supply and demand and graphing using pool noodles in “Noodlenomics: Using Pool Noodles to Teach Supply and Demand.” Students of all ages will enjoy the hands-on component of using noodles to graph different economic scenarios. Neil Graham Shanks describes how social studies teachers can teach concepts such as economic indicators, human and social capital, and gentrification in his article “We Shall See: Critical Theory and Structural Inequality in Economics.” The lesson plans Shanks describe integrate economics particularly well with geography and gender or race studies. Thomas A. Lucey, Elizabeth S. White, and Aline Andre analyze teachers’ responses and evaluation of an online free curriculum for teaching personal finance in “Teacher Interpretations of MoneySKILL®.” Secondary educators as well as teacher educators may find Lucey, White, and Andre’s inclusion of teachers’ voices illuminating as they consider whether to use MoneySKILL® in particular, or any other online personal finance curriculum.

Those who wish to try more hands-on or technology-based lessons that use a critical approach to economics will appreciate Shanks’ ideas as well as some of the suggestions made by Lucey, White, and Andre. These last two articles suggest that students’ personal contexts and resources may be pertinent to curriculum and instructional choices made by teachers of economics.

Three resource reviews are also included in this issue. The first review, by Stephen Day, evaluates *Innovations in Economic Education: Promising Practices for Teachers and Students, K-16* (Henning, 2017). Day summarizes the content of the book, which includes lesson plans and teaching ideas for all levels of economics. Scott DeWitt and Nick Dilley review the Understanding Fiscal Responsibility Lesson Materials, which are available online from The Council for Economic Education (Understanding Fiscal Responsibility Project Team, 2015). DeWitt and Dilley note the usefulness of the Understanding Fiscal Responsibility curriculum to civics teachers as well as economics instructors. Finally, Allison Thomason, provides a lively review of *The Roman Guide to Slave Management: A Treatise by Nobleman Marcus Sidonius Falx* (Toner, 2014). She describes how this text might be relevant to ancient history instructors as well as economics teachers.

It has been a pleasure to edit this special issue of *The Councilor* focusing on economic education. I appreciate managing editor Jason Stacy teaching me the open journal system for managing the journal. Jason Stacy has worked to improve *The Councilor* and to bring it fully online for an international audience. His patience and passion for quality are evident in the growing numbers of readers of this journal. Many peer reviewers assisted in selecting the articles for this issue and in making the manuscripts stronger. I



would like to thank those reviewers, who must remain anonymous. Many of them were new to reviewing for *The Councilor*. Suffice to say, reviewers who are middle school and high school teachers of economics, as well as professors of economics and teacher education, all contributed to improving the final version of the manuscripts published in this special issue.



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