Freeman students teach ABCs of financial literacy

November 6, 2024



Freeman students Rachel Gardner, Ria La Sota and Jason Parker, left to right, teach a lesson on entrepreneurship at Esperanza Academy in New Orleans.

For business students in Ashley Nelson’s the Art of Management course, it’s never too early to start learning about money. To help local elementary schoolers learn the basics of financial literacy, Nelson’s students partnered with Junior Achievement of Greater New Orleans to deliver a day of service at Esperanza Academy, a bilingual, biliterate charter school.

As Esperanza teachers looked on, Nelson’s students took charge of third- and fifth-grade classrooms. Working in teams, they discussed entrepreneurship, engaged students in conversations about responsible spending and played math-themed games.

These hands-on activities resonated with many of Nelson’s students who said they wished they had learned about money management earlier in life. “I didn’t learn about finances until middle school, and I wish I learned about it when I was younger because I would have known that I had an interest in business,” said Samantha Gitlin (BSM ’28), a first-year finance major.

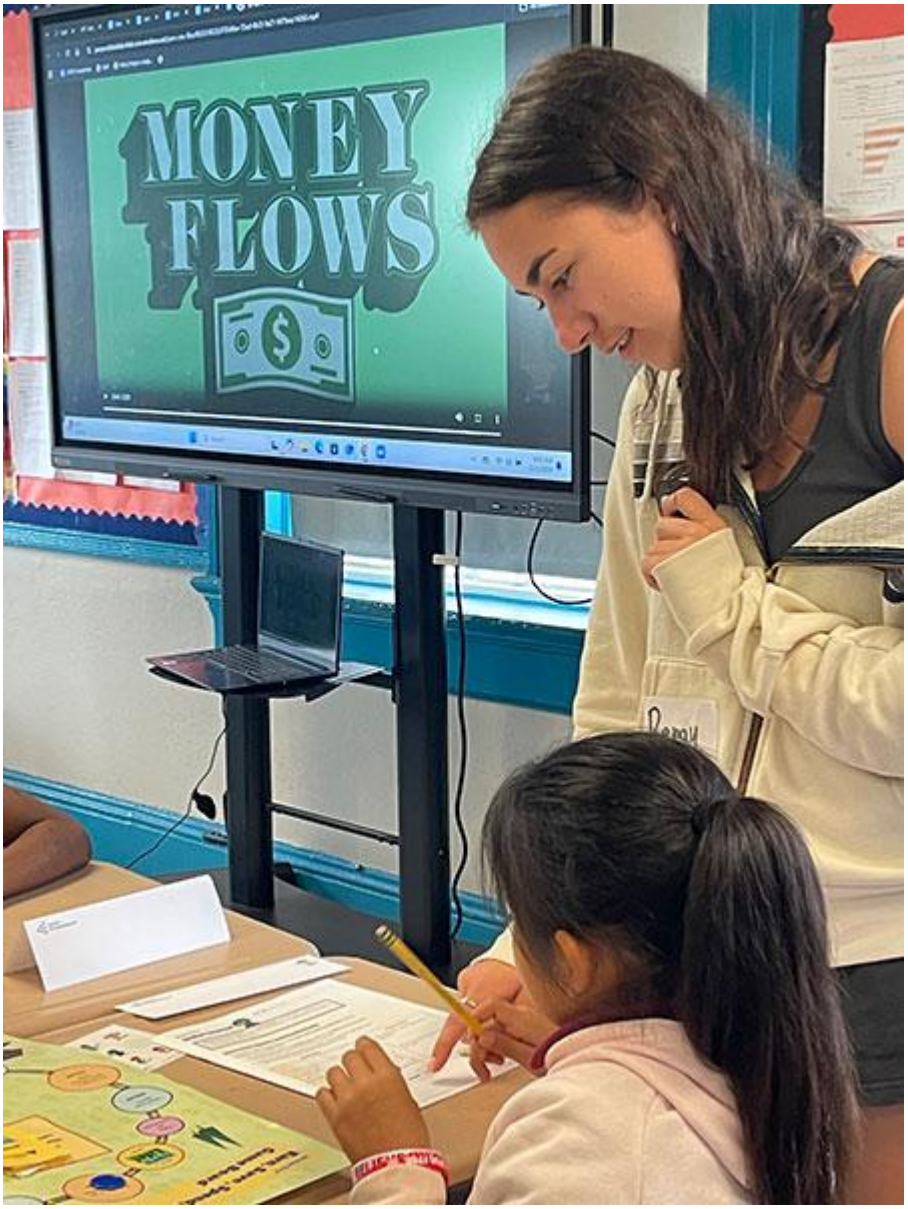
Julia Hatcher, a math teacher at Esperanza, said even young learners benefit from lessons on spending and saving. These discussions, she said, equip her students with important life skills they can use right away. “For instance, if they go to the grocery store, they can help their parents with budgets,” Hatcher said.



Jonah Sandow looks on as students at Esperanza Academy play a money management game.

The Art of Management is part of Tulane's TIDES program and colloquium, a series of courses for first-year students designed to engage them with academics and the city of New Orleans from an interdisciplinary perspective. In addition to teaching elementary schoolers about finances, Nelson says the course connects students to the local community. "What's really important for first-year students is getting them out of the bubble," said Nelson, a senior professor of practice in business and legal studies. "This project brings them into the community to work with a charter school."

Gitlin echoed that sentiment, noting that service-learning is a way for her to pay back New Orleanians for their hospitality. "I'm not from New Orleans, but through this course I'm able to go into the community and engage," she said. "They're allowing me to go to college in their city, and I get a chance to give back."



Remy Schottenstein helps a student at Esperanza Academy work on a financial literacy activity.

Founded in 1955, Junior Achievement is a nonprofit dedicated to helping prepare students for the workforce. Eric Walter, director of impact and post-secondary achievement at Junior Achievement, said the children he works with are excited to learn from Freeman students. “Kids are more likely to listen to and absorb information from people who are closer to their age,” he said. “When an adult talks, it can go in one ear and out the other. But hearing a young person talk, they really absorb it.”

Esperanza students weren’t the only ones who honed business skills during the day’s session. Nelson said that teaching financial literacy allowed her students to

practice the organizational and presentation skills they learned in the course.

“They see what it’s like to facilitate lectures and projects while working with younger students and developing a presence in the classroom,” Nelson said. “It’s a great example of experiential learning in action.”

Hayden Senst (BSM ’28), a first-year finance major, agreed that the day was a valuable experience for both Freeman and Esperanza students. “Service-learning is a great opportunity, both for these kids and for us.”