

**Momentum Mississippi: The Building Blocks of Economic Understanding
Grades 9-12**

Integrated Economics Thematic Unit

The lessons in this unit can be incorporated into any of the following courses: Economics, Mississippi Studies, US History Since 1877, Sociology, American Government, & Law Related Education.

Philosophy behind Unit Design

Keeping students interested and enthusiastic is extremely important. Social Studies is a content area that is truly a student-centered field therefore I strive to provide students with a plethora of hands-on activities that have clear and concise real-world applications. These types of discovery learning activities motivate students to become not only interested in, but enthusiastic about, how they as individuals and active citizens will interact with tomorrow's social, political, and economic challenges. Students enter class at both ends of the spectrum with regard to conceptual familiarity regardless of the content area- *History, Law, Psychology, Economics* or *Sociology*. That is why I feel that it is imperative that I assist students in becoming proficient with the tools of social science inquiry. The overarching goal of my teaching practice is make learning real-world relevant for my students by preparing them to be productive adults by fostering active citizenship and economic self-sufficiency.

Project Implementation

While participating in the Master Teacher of Economics Program during the 2005-2006 school year, I was inspired to integrate basic economic concepts into not only my economics course but the other social studies courses I was teaching as well. The development of this thematic unit is ongoing as over the past four years I have continually revised, updated, and adapted the lessons to meet the needs of my students by providing them with the most up-to-date statistical information, multi-media resources, and periodicals available.

Student Demographics

School Year	School District	School Campus	Scheduling	Number of Students	Unit Integration into Social Studies Courses
2005-2006	Jackson County	St. Martin High School	4 X 4	187	Economics, Law-Related Education, Sociology, US History Since 1877
2006-2007	Jackson County	St. Martin High School	4 X 4	178	Economics, Law-Related Education, Sociology, US History Since 1877
2007-2008	Ocean Springs	Alternative Education Center	4 X 4	45	Economics, Mississippi Studies, Sociology, US History Since 1877
2008-2009	Ocean Springs	Alternative Education Center	4 X 4	23+	Economics, Mississippi Studies, American Government, Law-Related Education

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ABSTRACT

Momentum Mississippi is a thematic unit of financial literacy lessons that I incorporate into each of the social studies courses I teach. The overarching concept behind the lessons is to demonstrate to students the applications of economic/financial literacy concepts in our everyday lives. Each of the social studies content areas requires that students know and are able to demonstrate knowledge of economic concepts through mastery of economic strands within the curriculum framework

In sample lesson one, Life in Mississippi: Harsh Realities Need Real Solutions, students engage in learning to question their actions utilizing a five-step decision making model (Problem-Alternative-Criteria-Evaluate-Decision Model) that provides a framework for making rational choices about issues in their everyday lives as well as in a broader social context. In this lesson, students explore the fundamental economic concepts of resource allocation, choices, economizing behavior, opportunity costs, and scarcity.

Applicable NCEE Standards: 1 – 2 – 4 – 5 – 13 – 14 – 15

In sample lesson two, Economic Self-Sufficiency: Mississippians Demonstrate Success, students use economic thinking strategies to develop economic reasoning skills. . In this lesson, students build upon their knowledge of fundamental economic concepts of choice, future consequences, human capital, incentives, opportunity cost, and voluntary trade.

Applicable NCEE Standards: 1 – 2 – 4 – 5 – 13 – 14 – 15

In sample lesson three, Mississippi Magazine: Our Economy & You, Students are able to work cooperatively to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the way economic choices impact their daily lives. *Applicable NCEE Standards: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18-19-20*

In order to assess student mastery of economic and financial literacy concepts, at the beginning (pre-test) and the end (post-test) of each course I teach, I have students take the 2004 version of the *Financial Fitness for Life Test* developed by the National Council on Economic Education.

Key Quantitative Results

School Year	Average Unit Pre-test Score	Average Unit Post Test Score	Percentage Change
2005-2006	51 %	71 %	+ 20 %
2006-2007	63 %	86 %	+ 23 %
2007-2008	57 %	78 %	+ 21 %
2008-2009	52 %	75 %	+ 23 %

**70% is considered mastery of student learning objectives*

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Unit Overview

The unit is design to demonstrate the promotion of economic understanding through each student's capacity to comprehend key terminology and overarching concepts, utilize complex cognitive skills, and to develop habits of thought that exhibit intellectual growth over time. As we begin the 21st Century, the United States remains the most economically powerful nation on earth yet we stand on the brink of an ever-changing global economic system. For this reason, it is essential for students to understand the past, to understand the present, and to anticipate the future. Economics education provides students with an opportunity to use the knowledge they are building as a tool for understanding not only on how to achieve economic self-sufficiency but also how to prepare themselves to be active, productive citizens. As part of the social studies curriculum, the study of economic concepts teaches students to explain and analyze human behavior. In particular, students learn to observe and understand how people respond to incentives because economic choices are driven by incentives therefore changes in incentives influence behavior in predictable ways. Students should be taught that education does not occur in a vacuum but rather that the reasoned decision making that conscientious citizens are called upon to do requires them to consider their own beliefs, insights, and knowledge base to guide their thinking.

Desired Instructional Outcomes

- (1) Promoting students proficiency in economic reasoning,
- (2) Fostering student understanding of and proficiency in applying basic economic concepts, and
- (3) Providing students with an interdisciplinary, real-world understanding of economics as it relates to their every day lives -- **why what they are learning matters.**

Student Outcomes

- (1) Demonstrate an understanding that economic reasoning is necessary in order to make rational choices and
- (2) Assess how people with different values, wants, and needs make different economic decisions based on the same evaluative criteria.

