

Businesses should teach workers about finances, state advises

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Businesses have plenty to do to train workers, from showing workers the basics of what companies do to teach workers how to operate complex machinery. A four-year-old state program has been trying to promote the idea of teaching them one more thing: how to handle money.

The Pennsylvania Office of Financial Education (OFE), an office of the state Department of Banking, works with businesses and schools to develop programs that make workers and students more financially savvy.

With a five-person staff, OFE works closely with others to foster financial education. OFE encourages teachers of grades kindergarten through 12 to incorporate age-appropriate financial concepts into lesson plans. For example, while teaching mathematics, teachers can develop exercises using credit-card statements and calculations of interest on loans.

"Financial education has to be available during your entire life in places where you live," said Heather Tyler, a spokeswoman for the Department of Banking. "The financial learning process needs to be ongoing

Financial education done right

A lot of well-run financial-education programs share similar characteristics, including:

- A clearly articulated mission, defining values, priorities and goals
- Targeted outreach
- Adequate resources to design a course, develop materials and train instructors
- Evaluation and follow-up to determine participants' application of the education and to improve the course
- Accessibility. Make sure there's time off for employees to attend training
- Relevant curriculum, geared to participants' backgrounds
- Community partnering. Use a local bank to design the course and supply teachers.

SOURCE: INSTITUTE FOR SOCIO-FINANCIAL STUDIES, AS REPORTED IN WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT, JANUARY 2005

because of continual changes in financial regulations and options."

Tyler said improving the financial education of today's students would enhance the financial skills of tomorrow's workers, while improving



PHOTO/AMY SPANGLER

McClarin Plastics Inc. employee David Frock moves a wind-turbine spinner cover into the shipping yard at the company's renewable-energy division in York County. McClarin provides financial education as part of its in-house training.

employee education can improve bottom-line business performance.

McClarin Plastics Inc. in Hanover, York County, is a manufacturing firm that provides financial education as part of its in-house training. Roger Kipp, vice president of marketing and engineering, said increasing employee financial knowledge improves the bottom line and helps company's 185 employees manage their personal finances.

McClarin uses lean manufactur-

ing to reduce waste and increase efficiency.

"Employees quickly learn that lean techniques involve a lot of measuring, and if you don't understand economics, you don't understand why the measuring is important," Kipp said.

"As part of our manufacturing economics course, employees are provided a template that they can use to help them with their own finances," Kipp added.

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**Roger Kipp,
McClarin Plastics Inc.**

Throughout the course, employees are shown the correlation between business and personal finances, he said. The course has been taught for about four years and has been shared with local companies.

Kipp said he believes that the course, taught with the active participation of senior management, enhances internal business communications. Employees complete the course better equipped to handle their own finances. McClarin benefits as employees complete the course with a better understanding

