



AMERICAN
PUBLIC EDUCATION
FOUNDATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

**Success
Through
Significance**



Introduction

The American Public Education Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization focused on inspiring youth, one child at a time. Formed in 2014 and open to all public schools advocates, the Foundation aims to empower America's youth through a concerted focus on engaged citizenship and global competitiveness.

We consider ourselves a relevant partner in America's future and serve the interests of our nation's public schoolchildren – our country's future leaders. The American Public Education Foundation was founded to help protect America's economic interests through programs and services that support high-quality public education. We believe in the power of public education to transform lives, grow economies, and strengthen America.

Our foundation's focus for the next 10 years is on the areas of Financial Literacy, Workforce Development, and Classroom Innovation.

Success in the Face of Adversity

Since our last published Annual Report, a lot has happened in the world and, subsequently, in our foundation. Even though our nation's schools, educators, students, and parents faced many challenges in the wake of the pandemic, we have all persevered through innovation.

Below, you will find some of our foundation's recent successes, and can read about each of these initiatives in more detail throughout this report.

- **October 2019:** our foundation was honored by receiving the *Invest in Others Foundation's* Catalyst Award for our work in public education
- **December 2019:** we hired Cassie Lynn Foote to serve as Assistant Executive Director, helping us bolster future initiatives and expand our footprint across the country
- **August 2020:** we proudly partnered with BusyKid to advocate for and improve financial education via their child-friendly chore and investing app
- **April 2021:** we partnered with NS4ed to infuse financial literacy lessons into their career exploration curriculum
- **July 2021:** we launched our second national report card on financial literacy, grading each state – with the addition of Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico – on how they handle financial literacy instruction
- **August 2021:** we hired Amanda Prewitt to serve as research assistant for our Financial Literacy Digital Library



Our Vision for the Future

How we measure success over the next three years is based on **5 Pillars for the Future**. These pillars represent the work we are doing in the realm of financial literacy and workforce development:

1. New Mexico Grant Work

- We envision our curriculum work embraced and adopted in New Mexico
- We will take this work and expand it nationwide

2. Convener

- We envision bringing together the best ideas from across the country
- We shed a bright light on excellence we see in public education, especially in workforce development and financial literacy

3. Learning Objectives

- We envision the endorsement of Learning Objectives that we would encourage states to adopt as part of a required, stand-alone personal finance course
- Everyone defines success differently – we need to define what success looks like
- Stipend to give to those doing well in financial literacy and workforce development

4. Advocacy Work

- We envision the creation and dissemination Model Legislation via our network of advocates

5. Digital Resources Library

- We envision the creation and nationwide adoption of our library of robust, trusted open-source content in the financial literacy realm

Looking Ahead

Digital Resources Library

The American Public Education Foundation has increasingly become a collaborator and convener of organizations and partners in the field of financial literacy – there are many groups working to increase the level of financial literacy in the US, but resources are often disjointed and decentralized.

Our aim is to gather and organize available standards, curriculums, and resources that are reputable and reliable into one easily accessible site. The majority of the feedback we received after releasing our Report Card was asking where to find resources to help parents and teachers better instruct students in personal finance, indicating that there is a need for this type of library. We will also include sample legislation that states can access and use as they pursue their own financial literacy goals.

Launching Spring 2022



Financial Literacy

Why Focus on Financial Literacy?

We are a nation in crisis – our schools are graduating students who are lacking financial knowledge. By failing to teach kids how to make sound financial decisions, our schools are dimming not only their potential, but our country's economy. Financial illiteracy threatens not only the safety of our nation but also leads to unemployment, stress, and in some cases suicide. The issue is overwhelming: only 57% of adults in the United States are financially literate.

Our goal is to help ensure our next generation is prepared to handle their finances smartly, avoid debt, better understand our economy, and learn to make good decisions about their life and money.

Our Focus on Financial Literacy Starts Now

Youth need to develop sound money management practices, entrepreneurial skills, and the personal discipline that support financial literacy, security and independence. Core principals of earning, spending, saving, and investing provide students with a vital life skill they will draw upon throughout their lives.



Where Corporate and Non-Profit Worlds Meet

A leading education expert and former National School Boards Association president, American Public Education Foundation executive director David A. Pickler, J.D., ChFC®, CFP® founded Pickler Wealth Advisors in 2005, an independent wealth advisory firm nationally recognized for its standard of excellence.

- Pickler's focus on financial literacy through the American Public Education Foundation reflects his personal ethos to "pay it forward" and help America's next generation to understand the principles and practices of effective money management.
- All Foundation services are offered at no cost to school districts and children across America.
- Pickler was named to the *Financial Times* 400 Top Financial Advisors list, listed as one of *Forbes'* best-in-state wealth advisors, and is listed as one of Inc. 5000's fastest-growing companies.



Financial Literacy



BusyKid is an app that allows parents or guardians to pay kids for assigned activities and chores. Kids are able to see their earnings and spend, save, donate to linked charities, or even invest in fractional shares of real stocks which helps demystify the idea of investing for both children and many adults who have never participated in the stock market.

We worked together to create a co-branded version of the app, and BusyKid uses data from our financial literacy report card as they share the importance of financial literacy all across the nation.

American Public Education Foundation & BusyKid

Your kids' first job with direct deposit, our award-winning, revolutionary app helps your kids develop a strong work ethic and important money management skills they won't learn in school. Children learn best by "doing" and BusyKid lets them practice real-life lessons from the palm of their hands.

GET THE BUSYKID APP

A screenshot of the BusyKid Parent Dashboard app interface. At the top, it says 'Parent Dashboard' and shows the American Public Education Foundation logo. Below this, there are two circular profile pictures of children, Sarah and Cody. A central circular gauge shows a balance of \$6.95, labeled 'Allowance to be paid on Feb 5'. The gauge is divided into three segments: 'Spend' (green, \$8.19), 'Share' (pink, \$8.46), and 'Save' (blue, \$11.99). At the bottom, there are icons for 'Transfer' and 'Send Bonus'.

It Couldn't Be More Simple.

EARN
Parents set the chores, kids complete them, and allowance is direct deposited each Friday!

SAVE
Each week a percentage of weekly allowance is saved automatically!

DONATE
Kids learn the importance of giving back by donating a percentage of their allowance to charity.

INVEST
BusyKid is the only app where kids can turn allowance into real stock.

SPEND
Learning to be responsible with money is easier with the BusyKid VISA Prepaid Spend Card.

Fast Fact:

Many argue that it is solely the parents' responsibility to teach their children financial literacy. However, 41% of parents report reluctance in talking about money management with their children.

Financial Literacy



The American Public Education Foundation has made financial literacy one of its core focuses over the next decade. With The Nation's Report Card initiative, our foundation is putting a spotlight on financial education in the classroom.

Previously released in September 2019 as "Vision 2020," the American Public Education Foundation published **The Nation's Report Card on Financial Literacy** in July of 2021. This 50-state review – now with the addition of Puerto Rico – points to a nation in crisis with regard to our schools' failure to prepare and educate K-12 students in personal finance and decision-making. Financial illiteracy is an American epidemic and the crisis is growing.

The 2021 analysis found that two-thirds of states (35 states including Puerto Rico and Washington D.C.) earned grades of "C" or less for financial literacy instruction, with just 17 states earning grades of "A" or "B."

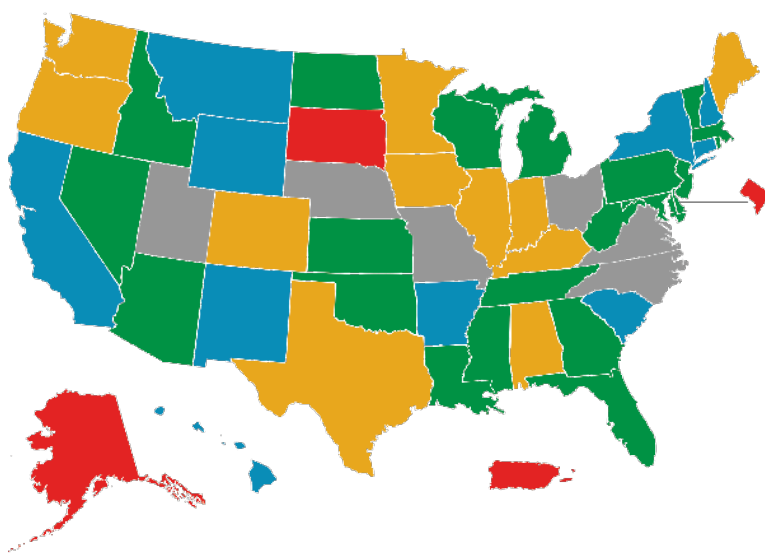
Notable changes in this 2021 report card versus the 2019 report card include Nebraska and North Carolina moving from a "B" to an "A," Alabama moving from a "C" to a "B," Vermont moving from a "D" to a "C," and Rhode Island moving from an "F" to a "D."

2021 Grades:

- **A:** 6 states (Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Utah, and Virginia)
- **B:** 11 states
- **C:** 21 states
- **D:** 10 states
- **F:** 4 states/territories

Fast Fact:

Utah, one of the few states to receive an "A" on this report card, has the lowest average student loan debt per student (\$17,935) from the class of 2019.



GRADING KEY





Spreading the word about financial illiteracy in America

Because of our work on the 2021 report, the Foundation was featured on multiple high-profile outlets including CNBC, Business Insider, and Forbes. The Nation's Report Card produced a total potential audience of 132 million people. With thousands of press release views and website hits, the word is rapidly spreading about our nation's crisis.

AS SEEN ON:



How to Make Money Matter to Your teen

In September of 2021, *The Balance*, a prominent, finance-focused publication, reached out to the Foundation after seeing our report card on financial literacy. Jess Feldman, a reporter at The Balance, sat down with David Pickler to discuss the importance of choice and money management:

From creating savings, spending, and give-away jars, to explaining taxes by way of grandma or the neighborhood fire department, lessons about money need to be relatable to your child's life. At least that's how David Pickler, director of the American Public Education Foundation, sees it.

Children and teens also look up to parents as their example—their very first example—of how to handle money, Pickler told *The Balance*.

"I think if a parent is able to not just talk the talk, but I mean actually walk the walk, and actually display that good behavior and those good disciplines, that can really influence children," he said.



Read the entire article at thebalance.com or theapef.org

Financial Literacy



The New Mexico Career Portal

The American Public Education Foundation is partnering with NS4ed, a rising leader in technology-based career and college education services, in the development of a career exploration curricula for middle- and high-school students in New Mexico, reflecting the importance of career development at each grade level from 6th through 12th grade.

To add to the core curriculum, we will provide robust financial literacy curricula and classroom activities that will be taught through the lens of career exploration and awareness, which matches with our dual focus as a foundation of financial literacy and workforce development. Students will learn how finances can impact their choices around college, career, and ultimately their quality of life.

The program will also utilize Pathway2Careers curricula to engage students through real-world application of core math concepts demonstrating how each concept is used in authentic on-the-job examples. The curriculum emphasizes high-demand job opportunities answering the familiar question from students, "Why do I need to know this" or "When will I ever use this?"



Fast Fact:

Total student loan debt in the U.S. reached a record high of \$1.57 trillion in 2020 — an increase of about \$166 billion since 2019.

Workforce Development

Why Focus on Workforce Development?

Workforce Development is a massive opportunity for the Foundation and will be guiding our work for the next decade. While college remains a worthy goal for many of our students, public education must embrace the challenge of a rapidly evolving global marketplace as we prepare them for learning, for leadership, and for life.

We are working tirelessly to ensure that this becomes an essential element in public education, and that our children are armed with the skills necessary to compete successfully in college or the career field.

Developing a completely new way of thinking about public education.

As our world changes, we must adapt and evolve. We must lead the change to ensure that public education remains relevant. While college remains a worthy goal for many of our students, public education must embrace the challenge to prepare them for learning, for leadership, and for life.



It is not just about preparation for college, but also for career. Workforce Development must become an essential element in public education, whether in vocational, technical, or professional development.

Our work with Collierville High School

We partnered with Collierville High School – the newest and largest high school in Tennessee – to create a Model District for Workforce Development. We have worked with CHS to give high school students the opportunity to gain certification and/or up to an Associates Degree, preparing them for life outside of high school. Some of these classes include Welding, Nursing, and Hospitality.

We also partnered with a local Ford dealership to gain state-of-the-art tools for the Auto Mechanic Class. We will be building business partnerships for Welding and HVAC, among many others.

Fast Fact:

As of March 2021, 40% of recent college graduates are working in jobs that typically don't require a 4-year degree. *Federal Reserve Bank of New York*

Workforce Development



Partners in Education

The American Public Education Foundation manages a workforce development organization in Collierville, Tennessee called Partners in Education (PIE). PIE works to bridge the gap between education and industry, creating partnerships and opportunities for engagement at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels.

This year, PIE hosted a series of workforce development meetings, bringing in local business leaders to meet with teachers from the middle and high schools to discuss curriculum, emerging technologies, industry certifications, and opportunities for involvement including class speakers, demonstrations, field trips, and work-based learning.

When surveyed, we found that over 70% of the business representatives had never provided industry feedback to an educator or education organization, but 100% left the meeting satisfied and desiring to stay connected to their local school district.

100% of the educators participating found the meeting useful and stated that they had made meaningful connections with the business community that would enhance their ability to prepare students for their next steps, be that college or career.

In October, Partners in Education Executive Director, Cassie Foote, was invited by the Tennessee Business Roundtable to share the "Collierville PIE Model" with their board. The board, made up of some of the largest businesses in the state, will try and implement the PIE workforce model in various parts of the state to encourage more business involvement in education and to ensure that curriculum aligns with current and future local business needs.



Cross-District Partnerships

Continuing our role as a convener, the American Public Education Foundation is facilitating conversations across local municipal districts centered around how to bolster College and Career Technical Education (CCTE) programming to meet the increasing workforce needs in West Tennessee. Guided by the work of Collierville Partners in Education, we intend to bring stakeholders together in order to share knowledge, resources, and best practices in order to improve the talent pipeline for our region.

Advisory Board

Advocating for our Nation's Public-School Children

The American Public Education Foundation Advisory Board is a hand-selected group of public education advocates and super stars who share the same passion regarding public education and preparing the 50 million children of America's public schools.

The purpose of this board is to broaden our foundation's perspective, deepen our knowledge, embrace diversity of thought, and better reflect all of America.



John Aitken
Jeanette Bennett
Barbara Bolas
John Bulina
Lisa Bushey
Kevin Ciak
Linda Cranford
E. Jane Gallucci
Dr. Tammy Grissom
Ronald Hopkins

Jonathan Howe, Esq.
Joe Keohane
Kristin Malin
C. Ed Massey
Dr. Cynthia McCarty
Dana Moore
Thomas J. Nespeca
Dr. Tony Prothro
Frank Pugh
Earl Rickman

James R. Ruhland, Jr.
Sonny Savoie
Chuck Saylors
Phillip Shipley
Sally Smith, J.D.
Andy Wagner, J.D.
Art Widmann
Montel Williams
Joe T. Wood

Donate

Invest in Today's Youth

We serve the interests of our nation's public school children — our future leaders — by promoting financial literacy, workforce development, and innovation in the classroom. We believe in the power of public education to transform lives, grow economies, and strengthen America.

Donate Online

Visit us at www.theapef.org or scan the QR code with your smartphone to donate to the American Public Education Foundation.



Scan to Donate

For checks, please make them out to American Public Education Foundation. Our address is 1135 Halle Park Circle, Collierville, TN 38017

Contact Us

Foundation Leadership

The American Public Education Foundation is led by individuals who all believe in the power of public education. As professionals in the finance, legal, and marketing fields, our Leadership Team is driven to move the needle in America's public schools.



David Pickler
Executive Director

dpickler@theapef.org



Cassie Lynn Foote
Assistant Executive Director

cfoote@theapef.org



Cameron Spann
CCO

cspann@theapef.org



Amanda Prewitt
Research Assistant

associate@theapef.org



American Public Education Foundation
1135 Halle Park Circle | Collierville, TN 38017
855.744.2733 | cfoote@theapef.org