

Vernon Hill Elementary Students Receive Prizes for Graduating a Financial Literacy Program Thanks to Ellis Cropper

WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS, UNITED STATES, August 6, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Ellis Cropper](#), Certified Financial Education Instructor (CFEI®) and Founding Member of the Massachusetts Financial Educators Council (MFEC), awarded prizes to 3rd-, 4th-, and 5th-grade students at Vernon Hill Elementary School in Worcester. The awards recognized the top entries in a financial literacy essay contest held at Vernon Hill, the culmination of financial education courses Cropper has been teaching throughout the school year.



Ellis Cropper presenting award to 3rd grade financial education report runner-up.

The winning students received a total of \$2,400 in prizes: \$500 for the top 5th grader, \$400 for the top 4th grader, and \$300 for the top 3rd grader. Each of the second-and third-place winners will receive \$250 in 5th grade, \$200 in 4th grade, and \$150 in 3rd grade. The essay criteria specified an age-appropriate word length and asked students to reflect on the topics covered in the financial education coursework across the year.

“

Before you started teaching this course, I did not think that I could be a doctor. You [Ellis Cropper] are giving me the courage to do all that I'm doing right now.”

Joyceline, a 4th grade student at Vernon Hill

The 5th-grade students' essays highlighted the program's impact. John H., a 5th Grader at Vernon Hill Elementary School, stated, " This financial Literacy Class has helped me understand the value of money and how important it is to use, save, and invest in my future." Rosa mentioned, "This program has helped me understand more of what most adults go through daily and has allowed me to understand

many financial skills." Vernon Hill student Esperanza V., noted Building a habit of saving is essential. Setting aside a portion of future expenses , income for emergencies, and long term

goals to make sure you are stable.

The 3rd- and 4th-grade essays also demonstrated student progress. Jessica C. a 4th-grader stated, "Before taking this class, I used to spend all the money I'd get, but now I like to save most of it. I am using what I learned in my daily life to help me save more money and not use my money on things that I don't need. I can also let my parents use money if they ever need it. I like sharing what I've learned with my family." And 3rd-grader Alyeen R. wrote, "In the end, the choice between spending and savings comes down to people's goals. Because you need to be balanced between spending money on the stuff you like and saving for your future."

The contest and awards underscore Ellis Cropper's motto for teaching financial literacy, "Learning is Earning." For example, Cropper rewards students with cash in amounts of \$1-\$20 when they show exemplary achievement in his financial literacy classes.

In addition to the Massachusetts Financial Educators Council, three other stakeholders are helping support the financial literacy program at Vernon Hill: Country Bank, Savers Bank, and the Worcester County District Attorney's office. Country Bank's Vice President for Community Relations, Jodie Gerulaitis, was inspired to enroll in the CFEI® training after hearing about it from Ellis Cropper. Cropper volunteers for Country Bank's Credit for Life program, and the bank's Vernon Hill branch manager has presented financial education classes at all three grade levels this year.

Savers Bank provides printed workbooks for all participating Vernon Hill students and has offered to support the program in any way possible. Through his office, Worcester County DA Joseph D. Early, Jr. is providing limited funding to support financial education in the Worcester community.



Ellis Cropper presenting award to 4rd grade winner of financial literacy essay contest.



Ellis Cropper presenting financial education award to 5th grade student.

Ellis had originally planned to teach financial education in just the 5th grade for his pilot program. But Vernon Hill Principal Craig Dottin asked if he could include 3rd and 4th grade, an addition that Cropper claims provide excellent insight and supports research data indicating that children learn their financial behaviors between ages 7 and 9. "Third and fourth graders are excited to learn and get exposure to the topic," says Cropper. "When I tell people that my new passion is teaching financial literacy to elementary school children, they automatically assume it's just about money. What I'm learning from teaching at this level is financial education is truly about dreams, goals, and lifestyle."

[Mr. Ellis Cropper](#) describes how it took several weeks to establish rapport with 5th-grade students, opining that at this level their behaviors are already being shaped. He shared how one student asked, "Do you think we're adults or something? Why do we have to learn about money?" As some students aspired to be soccer players or gymnasts, Cropper responded by asking, "Are you going to wait until you're 18 to start practicing soccer or gymnastics?" This perspective resonated with the children and he began to see changes in their behavior.

Memorable quotes from Vernon Hill students participating in the program include one from Joyceline, a 4th grader who said, "Before you started teaching this course, I did not think that I could be a doctor, but now I know that if I just try, I can be a doctor. You are giving me the courage to do all that I'm doing right now." Principal Dottin overheard her and commented, "Wow, I can measure your math and reading scores, but this is beyond measure."

Other students have been inspired to work toward becoming CEOs or entrepreneurs. Dominique, a 4th grader, originally planned to become a trash man, but now has set sights on being a business owner. Ashley, a 5th grader who was uninterested in financial education at first, now makes and sells bracelets to earn income.

The [MFEC \(Massachusetts Financial Educators Council\)](#) is an affiliate of the National Financial Educators Council, a Certified B Corporation® and Accredited Provider through IACET. The NFEC focuses on empowering and mobilizing a global team of financial literacy champions, providing training and materials to spread the financial wellness message worldwide and support community economic empowerment.

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