



## About Abbigail Blakney

Abbigail Blakney was born and raised in Spokane Valley, Washington. She graduated from University High School and attended college at Eastern Washington University.

After graduating college Abbigail moved to Selah, WA and began working as a teacher at Toppenish Middle school in Toppenish Washington. Abbigail has also taught at Washington Middle School and Eisenhower High School, both in the Yakima School District in Yakima Washington. Currently Abbigail is teaching at Selah High School. Throughout her career, Abbigail has taught United States History, Reading, Writing, Economics, Personal Finance and Financial Algebra.

In 2014, Abbigail started working with the Financial Education Public-Private Partnership (FEPPP) ultimately incorporating suggested curriculum and teaching techniques into her classrooms. Abbigail is currently a Fellow with FEPPP and is super passionate about bringing financial education to all K-12 students.

Tracy Godat, FEPPP Executive Director, sat down and asked Abbigail some questions about her teaching experience and here's what she had to say.

### **TG: What was your journey into teaching?**

**AB:** I have been teaching since age 6. I would round up kids on the playground and give them work to do. Then I would grade their scribbles with my own. I went to work for my first daycare provider right out of high school. I was in college to prepare for my teaching degree, and he told me he was not surprised to know I would be a teacher. It is what I wanted to do for as long as I can remember.

### **TG: I know you have taught middle and high school. How did you pick the higher grades?**

**AB:** Well, I was a student teacher in a first-grade classroom and was first introduced to Junior Achievement there. When I finished, I applied for many jobs throughout Eastern Washington. One application I sent in was intercepted by a middle school principal. I was apprehensive, but then I started teaching 8th graders and knew this was my calling. At the secondary level, I am able to not only teach them, but also to help them see where to apply their learning to real life experiences.

### **TG: What are the rewards of teaching financial education?**

**AB:** I didn't get financial education in school. And money wasn't something specifically discussed in my home. I knew I would have to pay bills and try to save money once I moved out but that was about it. So, I made some really poor decisions financially because of that lack of knowledge. I love being able to share my experiences with students. I want them to know my mistakes and learn from them. I also love to see how financial knowledge can be life changing for them.

### **TG: What are the most surprising responses from students when they learn life skills from you?**

**AB:** Seeing students understand the struggles their parents have making ends meet. Having students bring in their as well as their parents' tax information so I can help them fill out the FAFSA forms and realizing that further education will help them make better financial decisions in the future.

### **TG: What would you tell teachers new to financial education?**

**AB:** Even though it feels scary, it is not! Students connect with and respond to your story. Be honest, share your own personal journey and let your students know that talking about money is not taboo. This will be one of the biggest things students will take away from their K-12 education.