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GEORGIA COUNCIL ON ECONOMIC EDUCATION

GCEE Newsletter - April 2021

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Recognizing – and Rewarding – Excellence

Each year we are fortunate to serve thousands of K-12 teachers from across Georgia by providing effective professional development workshops and classroom materials designed specifically to help them teach economics and personal finance. It's during these workshops that we meet incredible teachers who are doing amazing work to ensure students are learning important skills that will prepare them to live prosperous lives.



We are also fortunate to collaborate with a network of supporters who work tirelessly to ensure that we are successfully fulfilling our important mission and vision. This network includes social studies coordinators, content specialists, school leaders, committee and board members and the contributors who help make our programs possible. These people are key to our success.

Spring is the time we have the privilege of recognizing the individuals and groups who go above and beyond to teach and support economic and personal finance education. In the stories below you will learn about a few of these incredible teachers and supporters as we recognize the winners of the Georgia Economics Teacher of the Year, the William J. VanLandingham Award and the Program of Excellence Award, as well as our monthly Featured Teachers.

As always, each of us at the Georgia Council remains committed to providing K-12 teachers with the absolute best resources, support and experiences that will make the teaching of economics and personal finance come alive for students. We have a number of exciting projects in the works and look forward to sharing them with the world in the coming months.

- Mike Raymer

WILLIAM J. VANLANDINGHAM COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION AWARD

Kirby Thompson: Champion of Economic Education

Throughout his lifetime, Kirby Thompson has been committed to promoting the importance of economic education, both personally and professionally. He credits his high school economics teacher, Mrs. Belger, for laying the foundation and hitting home the importance of being financially literate.



“She helped us understand economics and how it related to our community and the real world, and she made it fun,” he recalls. “She is the reason I majored in business during college.”

After graduating from the University of Georgia, Thompson took a job as a loan processor for the Department of Agriculture in south Georgia. That experience helped him land a job as a legislative assistant for Senator Sam Nunn. After he left Washington, he began a long career overseeing community and legislative affairs for some of Atlanta’s top financial institutions including C&S Bank, NationsBank, Equifax and SunTrust (now Truist).

Thompson learned about GCEE while at C&S Bank. Its founder – Mills B. Lane, Jr. – also helped found the Council in 1972 and served as its first chairman. And his boss, Bill VanLandingham, the award’s namesake, also served as chair. He tapped Thompson to join the Board and Finance Committee in 1986, beginning a relationship that’s spanned more than 30 years as he served on various committees and held leadership roles that culminated in Thompson serving as

chair from 2017 to 2019.

“All of the companies I have worked for have had a great interest in investing in and promoting financial literacy,” he says. “We make long-term investments in the community and enjoy a sound return on that investment. The Council is a good example of that. Through this multiplier effect, teachers who pass through the Council’s workshops in turn touch hundreds of students. We know that our investment has made a difference.”

In his government affairs position, he monitors legislation for how it will inform and influence the banking industry. In community affairs, he maintains a culture of community support, both through overseeing the company’s financial contributions and promoting employee engagement.

“We work towards a better business environment in Georgia and one that will continue to attract businesses,” he says. And to grow business, Thompson believes the state must feed and nurture a financially literate workforce.

“One of the reasons we are involved with the Georgia Council, “ Thompson says, “and why businesses should be involved, is we want to foster that climate where students have basic financial skills and understand how to use money, build credit wisely, and to help stimulate our economy. It’s vital to our success and their livelihoods.”

Thompson is currently Senior Vice President, Community and Government Affairs at SunTrust (now Truist) and with his guidance, the company has supported popular GCEE programs like the Atlanta Braves workshop, which explores the economics of baseball, and Lights, Camera, Budget!, an interactive online activity that teaches budgeting around the film industry. The bank also has a financial literacy program for its employees.

“Those are the kind of investments we like to make,” says Thompson. “The seeds we plant today will yield great results in the future. That’s the best part of my job.”

The William J. VanLandingham Commitment to Education Award was created in 1993 to recognize the long-time commitment of Bill VanLandingham (1937-1993) to education in general and to GCEE in particular. In winning the award named after his boss, Thompson believes everything has come full circle.

“It’s an honor to win this award when C&S Bank President, Bill VanLandingham, is the one who got me involved in the Council and was instrumental in me moving

up in both banking and economic education,” he says.

2021 GEORGIA ECONOMICS TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Laura Lampron: Proving Economics Is Not Boring

On the very first day of Laura Lampron’s macroeconomics class at Dunwoody High School, her students walk into the classroom to the song “Rock You Like a Hurricane” by the Scorpions. Not only does she create an energetic atmosphere, she is setting up an economics scenario. Without explanation, she flashes the lights on and off before they stay off.



“I tell the students there has been a hurricane and we have lost power, but each of them needs ice,” she explains. “I have them line up and give them each a situation card that shows their reason for needing ice.”

Based on those cards, her students make decisions about whether it is worth their time to wait in line. A class discussion ensues on explicit and implicit costs as well as opportunity costs. They also discuss incentives, price ceilings, shortages and cost-benefit analysis. All based on buying ice during a natural disaster.

This is just one of the ways Lampron, who teaches all AP macroeconomics, makes economics engaging, relevant and interesting.

“It sticks with them if you show them through interactive activities,” says Lampron, “instead of just taking notes or reading from a book. That’s what drives me to keep working at it.”

She gives extra credit if students send her an example of an economics lesson they’ve seen outside the classroom. She also writes song titles or other trivia on the board for them to see when they enter the classroom, and gives them a piece of candy if they are the first to identify what economic concept is illustrated by the song or if they get the econ-related trivia question correct.

“It’s fun for me to see them get excited about coming to class and excited about

learning,” Lampron says. “Economics is a subject that is easy to make boring. But it doesn’t have to be.”

She says she thinks about economics – and teaching it – all the time. If she hears an interesting NPR story, she makes a note to share it with her class. The same goes with music and articles and other real world examples. Her efforts have paid off: In 2019, 91% of her students passed the rigorous AP exam.

Lampron, who knew from an early age that she wanted to be a teacher, started her career as a special education teacher. After teaching at Clarkston High School for five years, she moved to Dunwoody High School. She continued to teach special education and social studies, before focusing almost exclusively on economics in 2014. That’s when she started taking GCEE workshops.

“I was totally sold after that first workshop,” says Lampron, who estimates she has taken at least 25 GCEE workshops. She is also now an AP reader, and has coached teams for both the Personal Finance Challenge and the Econ Challenge.

She says the ultimate validation is when former students email her from college and thank her for giving them a good foundation in economics. Still, she won’t take all the credit.

“I recognize that I don’t do this alone. I appreciate the support I get from my coworkers, the administration, GCEE and other organizations that have put materials out. Everyone around me has helped me to be able to do what I’m doing.”

2021 GEORGIA ECONOMICS TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Jana Lane: Relating Economics to the Real World



Jana Lane was excited when she was hired to teach in the social studies department of Mary Persons High School in Monroe County. Then she found out that the only class available – because no one else wanted to teach it – was economics. Lane, who has a degree in international studies from the Georgia Institute of Technology, and had been

teaching world history, embraced the challenge.

“It was definitely hard at first,” she admits. “There is so much nuance in economics. I felt like I was flying by the seat of my pants, and doing the best I could. But I have grown to love it.”

She built up her skills by taking GCEE workshops and collaborating with other teachers. Now, 14 years later, the teacher that claims “economics chose her” is teaching AP economics (and her students have a consistently high pass rate on the AP exam), has served as an AP reader, and she recently shared her expertise with other teachers by teaching a GCEE workshop.

Lane believes the key is making economics relatable to her students. She writes rap songs that illustrate economic principles. She also incorporates simulations and role-play. She uses examples within pop-culture and sports to talk about concepts like comparative advantage and supply and demand. In one activity, students create their own business, coming up with a budget and a plan to execute it.

“Standing up and lecturing doesn’t bring the information to where my students are,” she says. “By using interactive activities, they can see how it affects them personally, and tie it to the real world.”

That’s part of what Lane enjoys about teaching economics – the relevance she can show her students to their everyday lives.

“I love that my students learn things they use for the rest of their lives – personal finance skills and the ability to analyze supply and demand and marginal analysis. At the midpoint of my career, I find it so rewarding to realize I have taught so many future teachers, accountants, business owners and former students who have the knowledge to make good decisions.”

Outside of the classroom, she helps students prepare for the next steps beyond high school, just as her teachers did for her.

“I was the first in my family to attend college,” she says, “and I was fortunate enough to have teachers who helped me with practice interviews, proofreading my essays, and just planting dreams for me to succeed. I feel a tremendous desire to give back to my students in the ways that my teachers gave back to me, and I

hope my support in the college application and job search process can help my students take their next steps.”

PROGRAM OF EXCELLENCE

Henry County Schools: Making Economics a Priority

As a teacher, Heather Coody took many GCEE workshops to bolster her understanding of economics. So when she became Instructional Coordinator of Social Studies for Henry County Schools, she already knew the value of the Council and encouraged teachers to attend workshops.



“Coming out of the classroom, I know what challenges teachers face,” says Coody, who taught elementary school and eighth grade. “A lot of teachers in the K-8 space, for example, communicate a lack confidence in teaching economics when compared to other domains. I make these workshops a priority because I see how valuable they are.”

The list of Henry County participation in GCEE programs and support for the organization is long: Just in the last three years, Henry County has hosted 12 GCEE workshops. Teachers have participated in the Stock Market Game for at least 15 years and the county has had multiple regional winners. Schools from Henry County have competed in the Econ Challenge and the Personal Finance Challenge many times. With Coody’s help, the system has hosted the Econ Games for fourth and fifth grade students twice, and was the first system to host the competition virtually.

“The support Henry County has given us over the years is phenomenal,” says Chris Cannon, Associate Director of the Georgia Council. “They are willing to host workshops for us - often as the guinea pigs on first time runs - explore new programs offered by GCEE and their teachers are always engaged and involved. They are a great partner.”

Coody feels the same way.

“GCEE is an excellent partner,” says Coody, who also sits on the GCEE Board of Trustees. “They give us the opportunity to enhance what teachers are doing. Everything is so practical. They bring economic principles to life and make it fun for the students to learn.”

When it comes to professional development, Coody says she has the support and buy-in of teachers, the administration and the school board. And it pays off for the teachers and the students.

“To me, the fact that so many teachers continue to take workshops to strengthen their knowledge of economics is a metric of success,” she says. “I can’t think of any other discipline where your knowledge has the power to affect every aspect of your life as a citizen, taxpayer and employer.”



TEACHER RECOGNITION

Featuring Excellence in Teaching

Each month of the school year, GCEE's “Featured Teacher” program spotlights the incredible work of Georgia teachers who are using effective and engaging methods to teach economics and personal finance. Winners so far this year include **Libby Aldridge** from Brooks County High, **Bridget Boddie-Baker** from Brewer Elementary School (Muscogee County Schools), **Alex Seidensticker** from Savannah High School (Savannah Chatham County Public Schools) and **Amber Adams** from Troup County High School.

Winning teachers receive Amazon gift cards and signed certificates to acknowledge their fantastic work. To nominate an outstanding K-12 teacher of economics and personal finance for this honor, please contact GCEE Program Manager [Angie Battle](#).



Aldridge



Boddie-Baker



Seidensticker



Adams



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GCEE Newsletter, April 2021

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