

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

District II Family and Consumer Sciences, 5880 Glenwood Ave., Boise, ID 83714; 208-377-2107; Fax: 208-375-8715

## “Welcome to the Real World” Assists Students in District II

### *The Situation*

The average student who graduates from high school lacks basic skills in the management of personal finances, according to a 2008 survey by the Jump Start Coalition for personal literacy. Many are unable to balance a checkbook and most simply have no insight into the basic survival principles involved with earning, spending, saving and investing. On the 2008 high school financial literacy survey, seniors answered only 48.3% of the questions correctly. This is a drop from a 2006 survey, and illustrated that most students are ill prepared to manage financial issues. Today’s teens in adulthood will be required to take more personal responsibility for actively managing their financials than any previous generation. Those who understand budgeting, credit, debt and living within your means will have a significant advantage over those who do not. These concepts are integrated into the “Welcome to the Real World.”

### *Our Response*

District II Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Educators responded to requests from local high school teachers by offering “Welcome to the Real World,” a simulation on personal financial management, budgeting, savings and career exploration. Students receive instruction and go through a hands-on process of selecting a career, receiving a paycheck, putting money in a savings account, depositing money in a checking account, writing a check properly and balancing a checkbook. They learn about the different budget categories and the percentage of their income that should be

allocated for each. Based upon the salary for the “career” they have randomly selected, students write a check for housing, transportation, insurance, utilities, groceries, clothing, and entertainment. Each category has several choices with varying dollar amounts based upon the prices in their community. Students are also taught the difference between a debit card and a credit card. They are given the choice to use a debit card or on-line bill pay instead of writing a check for some of the categories. The last activity is random selection of a chance card. Chance cards contain real life situations that can occur without warning, such as a flat tire.



### *Program Outcomes*

Over 200 students participated in “Welcome to the Real World” simulation during the 2007-2008 school year in District II from a variety of high school classes; such as consumer economics, math, careers, school to work, and family consumer

science. A post survey was given to students who completed the program. Students were asked to rate their level of agreement and 93% agreed or strongly agreed that participating in the program will help them in the future.

Students indicated new skills they learned:

Skills	Learned
How to budget your money	86%
How to balance a checkbook	52%
How to open a savings account	47%
Career choice and income	43%
How to write a check	25%

### Participant Comments

Students were asked how has your view of life in the future changed as a result of participating in the “Real World” program:

- Money and career choice matter, if you have a bad job, you can’t pay for the things you need.
- Learned to pay myself first and prioritize items that are most important.
- How important it is to budget your salary and put money into savings.
- I’ll start using my check register.
- I learned that right now since I’m not responsible for paying bills I didn’t realize how many expenses there are.

Students indicate this simulation helped them to think into the future about finances. Balancing their checkbook and budgeting their money were the two skills a greater number of students reported learning.

Future plans for District II include teaching more students, revision of resource information to reflect current prices, and enhancement to the evaluation tool.



### For More Information

Barbara Abo, Extension Educator  
 University of Idaho Extension—Ada County  
 5880 Glenwood Ave.  
 Boise, Idaho 83714  
 208-377-2107  
 Fax: 208-375-8715  
 Email: [babo@uidaho.edu](mailto:babo@uidaho.edu)

Marsha Lockard, Extension Educator  
 University of Idaho Extension—Owyhee County  
 P.O. Box 400  
 Marsing, Idaho 83639  
 208-896-4104  
 Email: [mlockard@uidaho.edu](mailto:mlockard@uidaho.edu)

Beverly Healy, Extension Educator  
 University of Idaho Extension—Ada County  
 5880 Glenwood Ave.  
 Boise, Idaho 83714  
 208-377-2107  
 Email: [bhealy@uidaho.edu](mailto:bhealy@uidaho.edu)

Joey Peutz, Extension Educator  
 University of Idaho Extension—Canyon County  
 P.O. Box 1058  
 Caldwell, Idaho 83606  
 208-459-6003  
 Email: [joeyp@uidaho.edu](mailto:joeyp@uidaho.edu)