



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Robert Higgs
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COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel used a high-tech high school in downtown Columbus to unveil a set of online resources school districts across Ohio can use to help their students master personal finances.

Mandel, speaking in a class at the Columbus Downtown High School, unveiled Financial EDge, an interactive online set of resources which schools can use for free. The program is part of a state initiative to bolster personal finance skills and is expected to come to Cleveland and Akron.

"You have a whole generation of people graduating from high schools and colleges who can't manage their own checkbook, who don't completely understand the repercussions of running up a huge credit card debt and who, unfortunately, have been taken advantage of by predatory lenders," Mandel said.

The hope is that this program will "ensure that these teenagers, when they're graduating high school and going into the real world, can make good decisions when it comes to managing their checkbook, when it comes to credit cards, when it comes to debt and other important kitchen table financial issues," Mandel said.

"I think for students it'll mean that, hopefully less and less will have fallen into high levels of student debt and credit card debt," he said. "The more educated people are, whether its young people or adults, on the financial realities of today's economic world the better decisions they'll make"

A bill approved in 2006 by the General Assembly mandated financial literacy education as a condition for graduation, beginning with this year's high school seniors. It was part of a larger education bill that also established the Ohio Core curriculum of 20 specified units of study as the minimum curriculum required for high school graduation.

Financial EDge provides a collection of resources for schools, parents and students to use that were made available through partnerships with the National Endowment for Financial Education and the Ohio Bankers League.

Other materials are available for districts that do not have the computer equipped classrooms. And, districts also are free to pursue their own financial literacy programs.

Mandel said the initial push to get the program established will involve working with several of the state's urban school districts, including Cleveland and Akron, as well as Columbus. The online resources, though, are available for all districts.

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