



Questions Financial Institutions Should Ask Before Investing in School-Based Financial Literacy

School-based financial education can expand access to trusted financial guidance, strengthen long-term brand relationships, and support community development priorities. But not all programs are designed to deliver measurable impact — or strategic value.

Before committing resources to a financial education program, ask these critical questions.

1. Does This Program Reach ALL Students?

Why it matters:

Many financial education initiatives rely on voluntary participation, after-school workshops, or opt-in programs. That approach often reaches students who are already supported and engaged — not those most in need.

If your goal is equitable impact, universal classroom integration matters.

What to look for:

- Integration into required coursework (not just optional clubs or workshops)
- Alignment with state standards and/or graduation requirements
- Delivery during the school day
- Data showing demographic reach across entire districts or regions

 **Red Flag: If participation depends on students signing up, reach will be uneven.**

2. How Is Impact Measured Beyond Students Served?

Why it matters:

Reporting that “10,000 students completed a module” is not the same as demonstrating behavior and attitude change or financial capability growth.

Boards and regulators increasingly expect outcomes — not just activity metrics.

What to look for:

- Pre- and post-assessment data
- Demonstrated gains in knowledge and confidence
- Longitudinal or behavior-based indicators where available
- Reporting dashboards aligned to institutional KPIs

 **Red Flag: If success is defined only by seat time or logins, impact is likely shallow.**

3. Can This Scale Across Our Entire Market?

Why it matters:

One-off sponsorships create good PR moments. Scalable partnerships create systemic change and consistent value.

You need infrastructure that can support multi-state or region-wide deployment without multiplying operational burden.

What to look for:

- Proven implementation in multiple districts or states
- Turnkey onboarding processes
- Centralized reporting capabilities
- Dedicated partnership management

 **Red Flag: If expansion requires rebuilding the model from scratch in every new community.**

4. What Support Exists for Teachers and School Administrators?

Why it matters:

Teachers are already stretched. A program that requires heavy prep, complex training, or constant troubleshooting won't sustain adoption.

Ease of implementation directly affects classroom usage and your investment's effectiveness.

What to look for:

- Ready-to-use lesson plans and digital modules
- Minimal prep time
- Ongoing educator support and training resources
- High teacher satisfaction or renewal rates

 **Red Flag: If educators must create significant supplemental materials to make the program usable.**





5. How Does This Investment Advance Community Development?

Why it matters:

Financial education should not sit in a silo. The strongest partnerships align with broader community development priorities — including financial inclusion, equitable access, youth empowerment, and long-term economic mobility.

For credit unions and banks alike, this alignment strengthens community positioning and reinforces mission-driven commitments.

What to look for:

- Demonstrated reach in underserved communities
- Clear alignment to financial inclusion objectives
- Executive-ready reporting for leadership and board visibility
- Opportunities for authentic community engagement (without requiring heavy lift from staff)

Red Flag: If the value is limited to brand visibility without measurable community impact.

6. BONUS - Does This Investment Strengthen Your Community Reinvestment Act and Regulatory Positioning?

Why it matters:

For institutions subject to the Community Reinvestment Act, school-based financial education can support service test considerations and demonstrate equitable access in LMI communities. But this should be additive value — not the sole rationale for investment.

If compliance is the only lens, you're likely underestimating the broader strategic opportunity.

Red Flag: These investments create infrastructure for long-term impact and trust — the kind of foundation that is critical for sustainable community and organizational value.

The Right Partnership is Infrastructure, Not a One-Off

The strongest school-based financial literacy investments don't just "show up." They:

- Reach entire classrooms
- Demonstrate measurable capability growth
- Build trust with future account holders
- Scale efficiently
- Advance community development goals
- Support regulatory positioning where relevant

