

Williams students working to spread financial literacy through Coins & Connections



Financial literacy can be a challenge at any age, but a pair of Grade 11 students from Dr. G.W. Williams are pooling their expertise to help their peers make sense of it all.

Coins & Connections: Empowering Financial Literacy is a free weekly financial literacy event for students in Grades 6 ? 10. Hosted at the Aurora Public Library, the initiative is the brainchild of Andrew Huangjin and Ryan Wang.

?Finances are extremely important in everyday life, but it's not being taught at school when you get your primary education,? says Andrew. ?During that time, there's a limbo effect where you don't know what to do with your funds. Sometimes you tend to not spend it the most wisely, so that is why we thought we would be able to help them a little bit more.?

Both students come to the table with a record of excellence in business courses within Williams and at competitions further afield.

?Financial literacy is just becoming more and more relevant for youth today,? says Ryan.

Among the areas of financial literacy the students tackle are taxes, budgeting, and credit. While they welcome the Province's move to instill more aspects of financial literacy into the curriculum in future years, they say they believe it's never too early to learn and get a running start.

?It's important for youth to learn about the importance of credit, especially now,? says Andrew. ?Right after you graduate from university, it's extremely hard to have that initial lump sum to buy a house directly; you need to borrow money from an external source, maybe a bank, maybe something else ? that's where credit comes in and I don't think that is being taught in schools at the moment. It's a big topic we're excited to cover, but not only that, we're looking for feedback from our participants on any specific topics they'd like to cover. Anything related to financial literacy, we would be more than happy to host and teach them that.?

Andrew and Ryan got Coins & Connections off the ground this past May after presenting their idea to an organization called Promise 1000, which gave them \$1,000 to use towards the materials they needed to make it a success. In doing so, they drew upon their own budgetary expertise to maximize the investment.

The result is a free and non-profit program that meets each week, starting with a 10-minute lesson before applying that lesson in group workshops designed to tackle real-world scenarios.

By participating, registrants earn 'fake currency' that can be used to earn prizes along the way.

'It's kind of an incentive for youth to participate in our workshops and apply their skills and knowledge to previous lessons,' says Ryan. 'Our main emphasis is on building a community oriented around financial literacy. This is why it's all oriented about youth and making connections? We're excited to make a long-term impact on youth around York Region and more widespread than that. We hope that this program continues.'

For more information about Coins & Connections, visit sites.google.com/view/coins-and-connections.

By Brock Weir