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## **Students Gaining Financial Savvy Could Lead to Successful Careers**

At a time when Americans are grasping to understand the causes and effects of an economic downturn, Missouri students are picking up their financial education.

Enrollment in personal finance courses offered in Missouri schools saw an increase of more than 10,000 students from last school year to the current one, increasing from 32,309 to 42,568. The boost can be credited largely to a new graduation requirement, which will begin with next year's seniors, the class of 2010. Missouri is one of just three states in the nation requiring high school students to take at least a semester of personal finance, according to the National Jump\$tart Coalition.

Meanwhile, a strong proportion of Missouri students are indicating interests well-suited to careers in finance. In fact, in terms of student interest, finance is right now the No. 1 career field.

This finding comes from a career-interest assessment taken by nearly 50,000 Missouri high school students on MissouriConnections.org, a site sponsored by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The assessments found that 12.7 percent of Missouri students (or 1 in 8) have interests that fit well with a finance-related career. The next most popular field was health science with 11.8 percent of students.

Despite the current cloud covering the financial industry, students who are interested in a finance career ought to feel good about their prospects, said Betty Brown, a research analyst with the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center.

"MERIC data shows there are good opportunities in finance careers," she said. "The finance field includes jobs that score well in terms of employment outlook, growth and average wages. Definitely, students who have an aptitude for finance and who develop their interest through education and experience will have a great advantage in achieving both professional and personal success."

Students can explore careers and learn more about opportunities in the financial field and many others at [www.MissouriConnections.org](http://www.MissouriConnections.org).

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Full-length news release, quotes and fact sheet are available at [www.dese.mo.gov/divcareered/missouri\\_connections\\_news\\_room.htm](http://www.dese.mo.gov/divcareered/missouri_connections_news_room.htm)

*The Missouri Connections Public Outreach Partnership workgroup represents a collaboration of state agencies concerned with education and workforce development who are helping inform and build awareness among the public, particularly students and potential students, of targeted careers, educational and industry trends, and workforce development priorities. Workgroup members represent the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Department of Higher Education; Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development and Missouri Economic Research & Information Center; Missouri Center for Career Education; and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Freelance writer is Anita Harrison.*