

I wanted to talk about two classes that we are considering adding, though the details aren't all worked out yet, because they both involve things many people deal with every day.

One is a keyboarding class. I remember taking typing in high school, and knowing how to navigate a keyboard, especially by the touch system, is now a very useful skill with the way that computers, the Internet and e-mail have entered our lives.

Currently, our students get some preliminary keyboarding instruction in the fourth grade, and then more when they reach the Middle School. At the high school we offer an elective keyboarding class.

What we're considering now is offering a full quarter of keyboarding instruction, to our fifth-graders at the Intermediate School. That school has four quarters in the school year, and students take one quarter each of art, music, and physical education. Then they take another quarter of one of those three subjects, randomly selected. Our thought is to instead have keyboarding as the fourth subject.

We have had a lot of discussion about what's the right age to teach keyboarding. Children are using computers, it seems these days, almost from the moment they're born. But they really don't develop the finger length and manual dexterity to properly keyboard until the fourth- or fifth-grade years, though of course it varies with each child.

One minor benefit of a keyboarding class – it offers us a way to get a little more mileage out of our oldest computers, which can't connect to the Internet with a high-speed connection. Keyboarding, of course, can be done just a keyboard and a monitor...no Internet connection needed.

Another subject that we'll be teaching is personal financial literacy. Ohio Senate Bill 311 requires schools to teach personal financial literacy to students who will graduate with the class of 2014. Checking accounts, 401Ks, IRAs, stocks and bonds, credit cards, insurance – all the realities of adult life. Knowing how to make appropriate personal economic choices is too often learned by trial and error, which can get very expensive.

There are two options we're looking at. We can embed this material as part of a social studies, business, or family and consumer science class. Or we can create a new class. There are advantages and disadvantages to both ideas, and we're working on which is the better way to proceed. Next year we'll begin training the teachers who will teach this new material, and the year after that, the 2010-11 school year, students will start receiving instruction in this subject. The law requires that all students, beginning with today's seventh-graders, be taught personal financial literacy.

I strongly support this. It will help students be prepared to manage their personal finances as they move into adulthood, and it's knowledge that one has to have to understand the economic news that pervades our lives today.

*Published in the Fairfield Echo, April 2, 2009..*