

The idea for Gayle Skiera's Money Academy, a financial education program for elementary school children, was sparked when her daughter became curious about money. Gayle hosted investment club meetings at home and her daughter, then only eight years old, asked if she could have an investment club of her own just like mom. After looking around for a suitable investment program for young children, she realized that most programs only focused on how to manage money. She wanted her daughter to benefit from a deeper understanding of money that challenged the "borrow and spend mentality of mainstream American culture," so she decided to organize and lead her daughter's investment club herself.

She says, "[Children] don't need to know how to manage a checkbook as much as they need to know, 'why money?' They need to know that money is an exchange of resources and the basic resource traded to get money is time."

Gayle's unique approach to the investment club was a success and led her to open the Money Academy in 2004. The first program the Academy offered was the Grow Your Money Afterschool Program, an investment club of 10-15 elementary school children that meets once a week. The first half of the program covers the way money works in the world and the second half focuses on way money can be used. Gayle says that she stresses "using money" as opposed to "spending money" to teach the kids that money is a tool to create wealth.

Since 2004, the business has expanded to include more teachers, a formulated curriculum and standards for club leaders, and an Entrepreneur Camp. The Camp operates during the spring and summer and gives a group of 20-25 children the opportunity to run a real business and learn the value of money and creativity of entrepreneurship.

Part of Gayle's success is due to the help and support she found at BiGAUSTIN. "BiG was really helpful in getting me to understand all the elements it takes to have a business grow effectively and profitably," she says. Gayle has attended numerous BiGAUSTIN training & counseling sessions and has received a technology grant.

As the 2008 Business Plan Winner, Gayle will receive a business development package worth over \$15,000. The package includes legal, accounting and technology services and \$5,000 in cash.

