

## The LifeSmarts Educational Pedagogy

LifeSmarts is the youth educational program of the National Consumers League that develops consumer and real-life skills in teens grades 6-12 and provides them with a competitive venue to showcase the knowledge they've gained. The program complements any curriculum in middle and high schools and is used in classes, groups, clubs, and community organizations. Students earn scholarships, mentor and teach others, travel, conduct community service outreach and educational events, and develop into leaders while mastering the essential life skills of healthy living and safety, consumerism, financial literacy, environmental stewardship, workforce readiness and technology proficiency.

### Knowledge students gain

LifeSmarts focuses on knowledge that teens need to know to function effectively and competently in today's fast-paced, global marketplace. Specifically, students learn about:



4-H'ers already learn about all five of these topic areas through Consumer Decision Making / Family and Consumer Science Judging / Quiz Bowl or Skill-a-Thon, other 4-H judging and competitive events, 4-H project work, 4-H healthy living and STEM programs, and community service. LifeSmarts complements, supports and strengthens current 4-H programs and projects and unlocks new opportunities for growth and achievement.

Teenagers are active consumers but often lack the skills and know-how to evaluate risks and opportunities and make informed decisions. Schools, teachers, county extension agents, chapter advisors, club leaders, and adult mentors who want to provide students with practical, real-world skills don't always know where to start. LifeSmarts fills this void by strengthening literacy skills and expanding students' consumer knowledge. Coaches tell us it works. As one 4-H agent and LifeSmarts coach told us,

“Through LifeSmarts, my 4-H'ers have learned socialization, leadership, built up their confidence levels, and are equipped with knowledge and skills that will be 100% relevant to their lives as adults. I am confident about their future as a direct result of what they have learned in LifeSmarts as part of our 4-H program.”

LifeSmarts successfully meets the needs of educators by providing materials that supplement classroom and club curriculum while providing a fresh take on important current issues. By providing fun competition combined with challenging learning activities for students, LifeSmarts provides significant ways to engage with students on important life skills and issues.

LifeSmarts lesson plans are developed by our educational consultants / LifeSmarts educational program staff. Many are developed with and supported by our industry expert sponsors. A current example of this is the new [Laundry 101 LifeSmarts U](#) lesson unit sponsored by Tide.

LifeSmarts lessons and resources align with [Common Core](#) and [21st Century Skills](#).

LifeSmarts is also an invited partner with Share My Lesson. Share My Lesson, owned and operated by the American Federation of Teachers, has a membership of over 2 million educators worldwide. Their website shares over 400,000 PreK-12 resources and includes LifeSmarts lesson plans and resources. Their focus is providing educators with effective, high-quality lesson plans which are aligned to educational standards.

LifeSmarts curriculum is adaptable and can be used in both in-person and virtual formats which appeals to urban, suburban, and rural 4-H programs.

### **LifeSmarts Educational Strategies**

Goals for students include:

- Learning new concepts to take with them into their “real” life.
- Creating a framework or scaffold to use to “store” the new input for future retrieval.
- Engaging in active learning.
- Responding to critical thinking questions in lessons and in competition.
- Moving along the continuum of higher-order thinking from “knowledge” to the “evaluation” of consumer and financial information in the marketplace.

### **We work with educators**

To help students achieve these goals, we assist educators by:

- Providing free educational resources at [LifeSmarts.org](#).
- Aligning our materials with Common Core so that teachers across the country can easily see how our materials fit into a standards-based program.
- Producing current educational materials that integrate with and supplement high school curricula.
- Hosting no-cost online team competitions and contests, as well as in-person state and national competitions.

### **Our program reach**

During the 2021-22 program year, LifeSmarts:

- Reached 1240,000 students in classrooms and extracurricular settings across the country.
- Provided 3,000 coaches with free, high-quality educational resources.
- Conducted active programing in 50 states and the District of Columbia

- Asked 3.5 million competition questions.
- Ran online competitions for more than 40,000 students.
- Directed live competitions for more than 1,250 student participants, including the state champion teams (250 students) who competed at the 2022 National LifeSmarts Championship.

## **Impact**

LifeSmarts evaluates impact by quantifying student usage of educational resources and measuring student progress throughout the program year.

- Participants take a pre-test when they register each year, and a post-test as they exit the program for the year. These tests provide an excellent opportunity to quantify the learning that happens on all LifeSmarts subjects during the year.
- In surveys, we query students using the “post then-pre” format, where they respond to a series of questions to measure how much they have learned.
- A series of team-based online quizzes are offered throughout the year through the LifeSmarts web site and we capture statistics to show how often each question is used, how often each is answered correctly, and how this changes throughout the program year with more engagement.
- Using web statistics LifeSmarts monitors the use of new lessons through page views and downloads.
- Educators and student participants are surveyed every year. These instruments ask educators what they found most useful and for suggestions to expand LifeSmarts.

## **Components**

LifeSmarts is totally free to every educator. The LifeSmarts educational model designs program and competition materials to lead students and educators to explore in-depth each of our five core topics.

Components include:

- Content vocabulary to guide all content; interactive LifeSmarts U lessons and activities including slide and/or video presentations, educator scripts, and student learning activities.
- Critical thinking competition questions in online and in-person competitions.
- Team learning activities for state and national competitions.
- Special individual and team competitions, lesson plans, and study units, often supported and reviewed by our industry expert sponsors.
- Free, replicable materials for every educator.