

Students take tax literacy to teens

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As the April 15 income tax filing deadline looms, most Americans are focused on how much they owe or are owed by the government. That doesn't mean they understand taxes.



To help change that, 10 [Tulane Law School](#) students spent a week in March helping seniors at New Orleans Charter Science & Mathematics High School confront basic but thorny issues. For instance, what would happen in a tax-free world? How would you live in a community without government to fix the roads or prevent thieves from robbing you on your way to the hospital after you got sick from drinking milk that was bad because no safety rules were enforced?

High School Tax Teaching Week was the first event from TaxJazz, The Tax Literacy Project, an effort to provide Americans with accessible, non-partisan information so they can better take part in debating tax-related policies.

Tulane law professor Marjorie Kornhauser initiated the tax education project and developed its curriculum, with input from social studies lead content teacher Caroline Snyder.

The law students, teaching in Snyder's Civics and AP Government classes, examined sources of taxing power and why they're collected. They took the high school students through exercises involving what to tax: concert tickets? gas? property? income? They also discussed fundamentals such as how to distribute the tax burden

fairly and what rate structure to use.

“These are the issues that have no right answers and every good citizen should grapple with,” says Kornhauser, who taught public school before becoming an authority on tax law.

With the help of a small grant from Teachers College, Columbia University, she plans to post the materials online for other teachers to use. Her grand vision is to develop TaxJazz into a resource that includes computer games, videos and other components that can be available to schools at all levels and community groups.

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