

Introduction

This document presents the proposed Personal Financial Literacy (PFL) standards for educator and stakeholder review. The framework expands Maryland's current 6 standards (grades 3–12, adopted 2011) to 8 topic strands across 5 grade bands, beginning at kindergarten. PFL is an integrated program of instruction — every student experiences all eight strands at each grade band, woven across the subjects they already take.

The framework organizes PFL into 8 topic strands across 5 grade bands. Each strand progresses developmentally from kindergarten through grade 12; each strand-grade-band cell carries indicators, three cumulative proficiency descriptors (Developing → Proficient → Distinguished), a family touchpoint, and an assessment approach. Beginning in grade 6, students build a 6-Year Career-Financial Plan.

THE 8 STRANDS (CONTENT STANDARDS):

S1 — Earning & Income. Students understand all forms of income, connect education and credentials to earning potential, and plan strategically for career-based financial security.

S2 — Spending & Consumer Skills. Students make informed spending decisions, understand consumer rights and protections, and build budgets and spending plans that align with values and goals.

S3 — Saving. Students build saving habits, set short- and long-term savings goals, use tax-advantaged savings accounts and emergency funds, and understand how interest grows their savings.

S4 — Investing & Building Wealth. Students evaluate investment options, understand risk and return, and build long-term wealth through informed, diversified strategies.

S5 — Credit & Debt Management. Students evaluate credit as a tool, understand borrowing costs, navigate higher-education financing, and build creditworthiness intentionally.

S6 — Risk Management & Protection. Students understand insurance, access government safety-net programs, and plan for financial resilience and recovery through all life stages.

S7 — Financial Decision-Making & Behavioral Finance. Students understand how cognitive biases, emotions, social pressure, and systemic factors influence financial decisions, and apply metacognitive strategies to make and manage their own financial choices.

S8 — Financial Identity & Digital Safety. Students navigate financial technology, protect personal data, evaluate digital financial products, and build a secure financial identity online.

EACH STANDARD USES THE FOLLOWING NOMENCLATURE:

PFL.S1.GB1.101 =	Abbreviation	Meaning
	PFL	Personal Financial Literacy
	S1	Strand 1
	GB1	Grade Band 1
	101	Indicator 1

S7 — Financial Decision-Making & Behavioral Finance

Students understand how cognitive biases, emotions, social pressure, and systemic factors influence financial decisions, and apply metacognitive strategies to make and manage their own financial choices.

PFL.S7.GB1 — K-2 (Foundations)

- A. PFL.S7.GB1.I01: Recognize that feelings (excitement, sadness, wanting something) can drive a choice about money or things.
- B. PFL.S7.GB1.I02: Recognize that friends and peers can influence a choice, and use a "stop and think" pause before deciding.

PFL.S7.GB2 — 3-5 (Building)

- A. PFL.S7.GB2.I01: Explain opportunity cost as a reasoning frame ("choosing X means giving up Y").
- B. PFL.S7.GB2.I02: Recognize that trade-offs are part of every financial decision and apply opportunity cost to a multi-option choice.
- C. PFL.S7.GB2.I03: Recognize that advertisements are designed to influence feelings, and name persuasion techniques (emotional appeal, urgency, celebrity endorsement).

PFL.S7.GB3 — 6-8 (Expanding)

- A. PFL.S7.GB3.I01: Identify at least four cognitive biases (present bias, anchoring, loss aversion, bandwagon/social proof) with financial examples.
- B. PFL.S7.GB3.I02: Explain how personal values and goals can override an impulsive financial decision.
- C. PFL.S7.GB3.I03: Recognize social media's and influencer marketing's role in spending pressure and "FOMO."
- D. PFL.S7.GB3.I04: Analyze a personal financial decision using a bias-awareness framework, naming which biases were present.

PFL.S7.GB4 — 9-10 (Applying)

- A. PFL.S7.GB4.I01: Apply commitment devices (automatic savings, cooling-off periods, accountability partners) to counteract known biases.
- B. PFL.S7.GB4.I02: Analyze one's own spending triggers and select a counteracting behavioral strategy for each.
- C. PFL.S7.GB4.I03: Explain how systemic factors (redlining, predatory lending, food deserts, banking deserts) create unequal financial environments.
- D. PFL.S7.GB4.I04: Design a personal "choice architecture" system (pre-commitment, defaults, environmental design) for one's finances.

PFL.S7.GB5 — 11-12 (Independence)

- A. PFL.S7.GB5.I01: Integrate active behavioral strategies (automated systems, bias checklists, cooling-off rules) into independent financial management.

- B. PFL.S7.GB5.I02: Evaluate marketing, lending, and financial products for manipulative design.
- C. PFL.S7.GB5.I03: Analyze a community's financial infrastructure (banks, lenders, payday loans, credit unions) and propose evidence-based improvements.
- D. PFL.S7.GB5.I04: Lead a structured peer financial-coaching conversation using bias-aware, non-judgmental facilitation.

S8 — Financial Identity & Digital Safety

Students navigate financial technology, protect personal data, evaluate digital financial products, and build a secure financial identity online.

PFL.S8.GB1 — K-2 (Foundations)

- A. PFL.S8.GB1.I01: Identify personal information that should be kept private (full name, address, phone number, a parent's workplace).
- B. PFL.S8.GB1.I02: Recognize suspicious online requests for personal information, passwords, money, or prizes, and ask a trusted adult.

PFL.S8.GB2 — 3-5 (Building)

- A. PFL.S8.GB2.I01: Create a strong passphrase and explain not sharing it (except with a trusted adult) and not reusing it across accounts.
- B. PFL.S8.GB2.I02: Explain that digital activity creates a "footprint" that companies can see.
- C. PFL.S8.GB2.I03: Identify online financial scams (phishing emails/texts) by their red flags (misspelling, urgency, suspicious links).

PFL.S8.GB3 — 6-8 (Expanding)

- A. PFL.S8.GB3.I01: Explain what data financial apps (Venmo, Cash App, gift cards) collect and how it is used.
- B. PFL.S8.GB3.I02: Evaluate a financial app's permissions and data sharing before granting access.
- C. PFL.S8.GB3.I03: Identify identity-theft methods (phishing, data breaches, social engineering, SIM swapping) and recognize when a trusted adult should help place a credit freeze or fraud alert.

PFL.S8.GB4 — 9-10 (Applying)

- A. PFL.S8.GB4.I01: Evaluate fintech products (neobanks, robo-advisors, cryptocurrency platforms, BNPL) for security features, data practices, custodial/regulatory status, and FDIC/NCUA/SIPC coverage verification.
- B. PFL.S8.GB4.I02: Secure personal financial accounts with two-factor authentication and read/respond to a data-breach notification.
- C. PFL.S8.GB4.I03: Conduct a personal data audit (using a simulated profile or with family supervision) — identify what companies hold personal data and how to request deletion.

PFL.S8.GB5 — 11-12 (Independence)

- A. PFL.S8.GB5.I01: Maintain a secure digital financial identity (unique passwords, 2FA, credit monitoring, minimal data sharing).
- B. PFL.S8.GB5.I02: Evaluate new financial products and platforms using a structured ****security**** rubric: breach/security history, account-protection features, regulatory/custody status, data practices, and complaint/enforcement signals.
- C. PFL.S8.GB5.I03: Identify deepfake and AI-generated financial scams.

- D. PFL.S8.GB5.I04: Evaluate emerging financial technologies (AI financial advisors, blockchain, decentralized finance) by assessing their security, custody, identity, privacy, and regulatory-protection risks — explicitly **not** expected return or portfolio suitability.