

Kids say show me the money

"Do you think money grows on trees, falls out of the sky?"

This is the battle cry of weary parents whose children know the cost of everything and the value of nothing.

For ours is a world of unlimited access to information and consumerism gone wild – it's the only world many children know.

And it's a world Justine Thomson and Robyn Iommazzo are seeking to change; one valuable dollar at a time.

If knowledge is power and financial literacy can be learned, Justine and Robyn have hit upon an idea whose time has come – developing the money management skills of children through a financial literacy program specifically developed for children from the age of seven.

"Education and action at a young age can form good money habits that give children a head start," says Justine Thomson, a qualified CPA with more than 14 years of experience in the finance sector.

"As a parent, and with my background, I am passionate about teaching children financial literacy from a young age," Justine says.

This is why she has teamed up with Robyn Iommazzo, a business and life coach who helps people reach their goals, to provide a solution.

These Adelaide mums and businesswomen have developed enRICH KIDS™ which provides a series of entertaining novels revolving around a group of wacky kids using financial literacy as an underlying theme.

The novels can be used in conjunction with a workbook entitled Big Win Financial Literacy Program suitable for parents and teachers to help children as young as seven learn the value of money management.

"It is important for children to believe in themselves and understand about hard work, budgeting, saving, and how banks work," says Robyn.

"The Big Win Financial Literacy Program is a comprehensive workbook that provides a fun environment for learning, stimulating imaginations and challenging kids to think outside the square."

Says Justine: "Most kids don't really know where money comes from because there is such a reliance on credit cards – it's like money doesn't really exist. But understanding saving and spending responsibilities will give children,

and teenagers, a better opportunity to have an enhanced financial life."

It's no secret that children learn the best when they are having fun.

"Prior to developing the resources we ran focus groups with children aged 7 to 12 to get an understanding of factors that would engage them to read our resources," Justine explains.

"One prominent factor was the need for children not to know the resources were a learning tool.

"One of the results from the focus groups was to engage an artist to design characters that would appeal to children and encourage them to read the novels.

"Primary teachers were also surveyed and a school trialled the program. The focus groups appeared to have helped as the feedback from kids has been great, they are learning but don't know they are."

In keeping with Robyn and Justine's desire to provide fun but effective learning material, they have sought the approval of Curriculum Corporation, an organisation jointly owned by all Australian Ministers for Education.

Curriculum Corporation has assessed enRICH KIDS™ resources to meet all the quality and educational requirements to be listed on the Financial Literacy Foundation website.

"We developed the body of knowledge we wanted to incorporate in the financial literacy resources very early on," says Robyn.

"With the benefit of hindsight, we would have run the focus groups right from the start, prior to developing the basics, as this would have saved us much back tracking.

"However, once we engaged feedback from children, parents and teachers the rest flowed from there. We are very happy with the outcome and the best part is when a child tells you how you have helped them understand money."

enRICH KIDS™ and The Big Win and enRICH KIDS™: Keep on Track by Robyn Iommazzo & Justine Thomson are available for purchase online at 'in-business' BOOKS in our Personal Finance & Investment section.

Visit www.in-business.com.au/store/books

Justine Thomson & Robyn Iommazzo founders of Big Win Financial Literacy Program for children (with Chloe - centre)

