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## HOME ECONOMICS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**C**HANGES in the purposes and range of home economics have been almost as great in the last twenty years as the changes in travel. For the old-time cooking, sewing, and housekeeping, the field has come to include studies of food, clothing, household furnishings and equipment, interior decoration, household budgeting and accounts, home management, child care and family relations.

The part of both women and men, of boys and girls, in home making and home life have changed with the changes in methods of food preparation, garment making, household furnishings and equipment, general education, travel, larger money incomes, attention to health needs, higher standards of family life and general social life. To provide the education needed to meet the new conditions, home economics has come to be a field of large educational importance for both men and women. There are now a considerable number of home economics courses for boys in high schools and a few such courses for men in colleges. The problems of the proper selection of food and of clothing are just as important for men as for women. The problem of budgets—of expenditures for food, clothing, shelter and other material supplies—is quite as real for boys and men as for girls and women. Both sexes are interested in health, economy, and beauty of person and surroundings. Both men and women are vitally responsible for the physical and mental care of their children. The quality of home life as to convenience, comfort, recreation, thinking, moral tone and general family relationships depends upon the cooperative participation of both father and mother together with other members of the

family group. Emphatically, those who think of home economics or household arts as dealing chiefly with cooking and sewing are far, far behind the times. As the newer field is developing, it is becoming one of the most fundamental in contributing to the larger and better upbuilding of personal, family, and community life.

But these several lines of study making up the field of home economics are not exclusively high school or college subjects, any more than are English, mathematics, or science. There are elementary but fundamental phases of the work appropriate for children of even kindergarten age as well as for other grades of the elementary schools. Problems of food, clothing, shelter, and home life are quite as general for all of whatever age as are reading, writing, and arithmetic. Indeed they are with us from birth. Their neglect is responsible for many of our avoidable misfortunes and failures. No elementary school of today that calls itself progressive omits study of these problems of such far-reaching importance.

Of course, if one thinks of the work merely in terms of cooking, sewing and housekeeping, he may quite reasonably conclude that they would have small place for children up to twelve or thirteen years of age. But, when one sees the purposes and content of the work as it is appropriately developed to meet children's needs, he can not question its right to a place in every elementary school program. Let us consider what is done in the best elementary schools.

Foods, clothing, and shelter are studied with reference to the actual questions which confront us in their selection and usage, and in social questions which concern us relative to their production and distribution. As for all subjects in the elementary school, we include only questions which are of com-

mon value to all—to boys and girls alike and without reference to prospective occupations. The questions common to us all about foods are those of selection, cost, and attractiveness. We all eat foods and we all have some freedom in choosing what we shall eat. Our health depends very fundamentally upon what we eat. To select intelligently and satisfyingly, we need a very considerable amount of knowledge about food principles and food values. Of course with young children we would not use very many technical terms in teaching these matters. There are foods of equal intrinsic value for bodily needs that vary greatly in cost. The economic aspect of the study helps us to know how to eat properly balanced meals at low costs. Some foods are more palatable than others of equal food value, and the appearance of foods as served, together with linen, china, cutlery, decorations and the like, bring in the question of art or æsthetic values which have also an economic aspect—it costs something to have foods most attractively served. But we learn to have some measure of beauty in our food service without much expense if need requires it. Besides these factors of health, economy and beauty, there is one other which concerns us all as citizens, an inclusive social question. Where do the foods which we eat come from? How many different regions and peoples of the earth helped us to have the foods we are eating today? How many people are engaged in producing these foods, transporting them, manufacturing the raw food materials into finished food products ready to use? How many people are keeping stores and shops to make foods conveniently near for us? Do these grocers, bakers, and butchers keep everything sanitarily clean? How much time is given in our homes to preparing and serving foods? Are any workers who help to grow these foods in the fields or prepare them in the factories required to work too long hours or under conditions bad for their health, or for less than a fair wage? Are

any young children being exploited in producing foods? Are any inferior or adulterated foods being sold through misrepresentation? What is the pure food law and why do we have it? These questions concern us all since we all have a responsibility for making regulations that will secure fairness and justice to all. We all have to work together to bring about the best conditions, so we call these social questions and regard learning about them as having social values.

If we consider clothing, we shall find that these same values are important. There are a number of health questions about clothing. Think how much ill health results from wearing improperly fitting shoes! And probably many deaths from tuberculosis and pneumonia are traceable to exposure which proper clothing would have prevented. The economic problems connected with clothing are also very important since both intrinsic and cost values differ very greatly with different clothing materials. In the art values of clothing lie most of the art problems of personal appearance. For reasons both of economy and art we need to know a great deal about different fabric materials, different textile designs, and the whole field of design as it relates to the form and color of garments and costuming. There are also questions of fabric adulterations, inferior substitutes, deceptive advertising, and conditions of child labor and sweat-shop production which call for social regulation or control. More and more textiles and clothing products are made outside the home so that the chief problems are those of selection, use, repair and care. Questions of similar character apply also to housing, furnishings and household equipment, requiring studies in sanitation or health values, economic values, art qualities, and social regulation.

These kinds of value may all be studied with interest and profit by elementary school children, and such studies are needed by all elementary school teachers, both for the

sake of their worth to them, personally, and for their uses in teaching. Most teachers have themselves had no training in these matters as they have had in arithmetic, English, geography and other subjects in the schools when they were pupils. Study along these lines is therefore needed by all teachers as a part of their education and training while in the teacher-training institution.

A matter of great importance relative to these problems of food, clothing, shelter, and social life not often given consideration is the relationship of their study to other subjects, particularly arithmetic, geography, the social studies and fine art. Most of our problems in arithmetic are those relating to values and costs of these every-day supplies. Many of the important questions of geography relate to the sources of food, clothing and shelter materials, the routes of travel by which they come to us, the problems of exchange with other countries, and the centers of manufacture and distribution. Many questions of history and citizenship likewise relate to the discoveries, inventions, conquests, and problems of regulation in connection with needs for material supplies. Our most important and frequent art problems are those of personal appearance as determined by clothing, and the beauty of our homes as affected by architecture, interior decoration, and furnishings. By using these every-day, common situations of life as avenues of approach and motive, the other school subjects become meaningful and significant to children. The abstract and isolated character of their work changes and the teaching of all subjects becomes more natural and easy because of the relationships to daily life found in work based upon the practical needs and activities of home and community. The use of these conditions and activities familiar to children makes the problem of the interrelationships of subjects relatively simple and attractive.

One other very important factor is given proper consideration by the use of these studies of materials and their uses. That

factor is the utilization of the natural impulses and desires of all children to do and to investigate. Children have strong impulses for manipulation and experimentation, great curiosity, and strong desires to express themselves in constructive and art forms. Work with the materials of food, clothing, housing and furnishings provides means of using these impulses to physical and mental activity with valuable educative results. It affords the the starting point for taking up questions concerning the four kinds of value—health, economic, art and social—as these enter into problems of daily selection, use, care and enjoyment of the supplies and equipment in our common surroundings.

The practical activities through which many home economics values may be approached and considered in ways natural and interesting to children include such enterprises as these: For foods, preparing and serving simple luncheons or refreshments for teachers or others; making charts from magazine or other forms of advertising of balanced meals by cutting out pictures and mounting them; making posters relative to food needs and food habits; making collections of food products used in the community, classified by countries from which they come; making a play grocery store or bakery or meat market, using excursions to help in getting needed facts; having luncheons representing the food customs of different countries and different times; studying the food habits, the methods of cooking and the methods of food preservation of other peoples; studying present-day methods of food preservation and storage; and so on—making use of every possible means of appeal that will help children to develop interests, acquire useful knowledge, and form good habits about foods and their proper uses. For shelter and clothing, the making and furnishing of a doll house; the dressing of dolls; the making of simple products by weaving, knitting, cutting, and sewing, including simple garments; the

dressing of dolls to represent people of different lands; the making of costumes for plays and pageants; the study of different kinds of textile materials, making collections of representative samples as to material and design; learning about the processes of spinning, weaving and designing fabrics of different materials; learning about rubber, leather, felts, furs, and other such materials as are used for clothing; making clothing budgets; considering problems of clothing selection for the pupils themselves with reference to seasons and occasions; visiting clothing and furnishing stores and shops; making simple forms of pottery and studying table china wares as produced in different parts of the world; investigating household equipment and labor-saving devices for the home; considering different ways of lighting and heating houses; and so on—the possibilities being almost endless when one begins to look about to see the wealth of interesting problems that meet us face to face on every hand. Through these practical activities we may guide the work to questions of vital importance in home and community life and find children learning about them with interest, enthusiasm and appreciation of their worth.

Whatever is learned about foods, clothing, and furnishings with reference to health, economy, art, and social control in childhood is of permanent value throughout life. How can one be regarded as educated who can not select his food in accordance with bodily needs for health, who can not select clothing and costume himself economically and in good taste, who can not select and arrange the furnishings of his home with economy and satisfying effect, and who can not help as a citizen in regulating the production and distribution of material supplies in fairness and justice? These matters have been sadly neglected in our education. They must be taken up in the elementary schools or most children will not get them, since relatively few children

continue to attend school beyond the elementary grades. Of course, not everything of value can be accomplished with elementary children, but very excellent beginnings may be made.

The tendency today is to combine in the elementary schools all work relating to materials into one subject, most commonly called industrial arts—a study of the changes we make in materials to increase their values for use and how to use and care for them properly. Included with such study is also a study of the social problems relating to production and distribution. This brings together the three lines of work that have often been carried on separately—home economics, manual arts, and fine arts. The tendency also is to have this work taught by the regular grade teacher and not by specialists. This means that all elementary school teachers should be trained for the work in their respective grades.

To prepare teachers for this phase of their teaching, the close coöperation of the departments of home economics, industrial art, fine art and the training school is needed in the teachers' college. It is not necessary to require elementary school teachers to develop the same degrees of technical skill required of high school teachers in these fields. The work for elementary school teachers should cover specifically the kinds of learnings which elementary school children should accomplish. For them, emphasis is upon simple forms of construction, experimentation and investigation which will bring out the desired values relative to health, economy, art and social regulation. Little emphasis need be placed upon developing skill in cookery, garment making, or construction of furnishings for children of from five or six years to twelve or thirteen years of age. The development of skill belongs to a later period. The problem is the elementary school is to secure values common to all children, boys and girls alike. The book called "Industrial Arts for Elementary Schools," by the writer and Pro-

fessor Mossman, published by the Macmillan Company, gives a comprehensive line of work in each phase—food, clothing, shelter, and so on—for each of the first six grades, and indicates many of the relationships to other school subjects.

To teach this work, of course it is desirable that teachers have a background somewhat more extensive than the mere content to be taught in the elementary school. For elementary school teachers, a course in home economics one year in length, distributing the work appropriately among studies of food, clothing, shelter, child care, and family relationships, should be adequate to give students a fair background for the work in the first six grades. If such teachers have also additional work in some other phases of industrial art and in fine art, they should possess a minimum background for conducting the practical activities appropriate for the elementary school. But with this background should go specific work and training in organizing, adapting and directing the work in the grades. Such work should center about a training school in which the teaching of these lines is an integral part of each of the grades. The work of one term as a methods course would enable teachers to see how the work is adapted to different grades, to become acquainted with the best sources of materials and references, and to learn how to use the activities and resources of the homes and the community. Instead of a special term's work in teaching method, the adaptation of the different units to elementary grades might be taken up with the courses given for the background content. Just how the adaptation of the work to elementary school needs is made is not important, but that it is made in some efficient way is very highly important. Those teachers' colleges in which all of the phases—household, industrial, and fine arts—are organized into one course of at least one year's length for teachers of the elementary schools seem to get best results in actually

getting the work under way in the grades.

The home and its place in community and national life are important in a degree not fully appreciated. The schools can do a great deal to improve the conditions and influences of home life. So far they have almost ignored the problem. To make a substantial contribution in improving the health, the thrift, the beauty, and the citizenship qualities of the members of each home and therefore of the whole community is the opportunity and the challenge to the broad field now represented by home economics. Through the elementary school all children and nearly all homes may be reached. Every elementary school teacher should therefore be educated and trained to appreciate and to teach those elements of home and family life which make for these higher values and which will make the teaching of all subjects more simple, more efficient and more joyous.

F. G. BONSER

### A PUPIL ACTIVITY SURVEY AS A BASIS FOR THE HOME ECONOMICS CURRICULUM

LAST fall when the home economics teachers at the Harrisonburg High School decided to reorganize the home economics curriculum of the junior high grades they found that much preliminary work must be done. First, it was necessary to be clear in their own minds just what the aims of home economics in junior high school are; second, the best methods of attaining those aims must be determined; third, the material must be arranged in proper sequence and form for teaching.

If home economics is to make its rightful contribution toward a sane well-rounded curriculum for the junior high school girl, its aims and purposes must be the same as the general aims of education. The committee therefore accepted the following defi-