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The Advantages of Home Economics In The Elementary School

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THE ADVANTAGES OF HOME ECONOMICS

IN THE

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



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THE ADVANTAGES OF HOME ECONOMICS
IN THE
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Home Economics! Just what do we mean by the word Home Economics? What does the word imply and what does such a study involve? We hear of some of its advantages, its purposes, and its vast importance being stressed in the schools, in the home, in the community, in fact in every phase of life. These facts of this subject are very often brought out, in text books and explanation, but very seldom do we hear a definition of Home Economics and know, or understand it, and have a clear meaning of this broad field in our minds. The word itself does not mean simply cooking and sewing, although this field, when in its infancy, only dealt with the technics of cooking and sewing. The scope has now broadened to include every phase of home life with emphasis on attitudes, appreciations, and spiritual values.

A close analysis of the subject of Home Economics shows that it is a broad field and embraces all subjects relating to the activities carried on within the home. Such a complex subject affords a study of food, its preparation, cost and service, care, outside and within the home, conservation in use and the production of food materials; clothing, its constructions, care, conservation in use and the production of clothing materials; shelter, its ideals and appreciations in establishing a home, the budget, selection of the home and

its decorations, how to select and purchase household furnishings, the system involved in the care and repair of household furnishings, division of labor in the home, care of members within the home, hospitality within the home and the relation of home to community life. Naturally, it will be impossible to teach in detail such a broad field in the Elementary School. On the other hand, each subject can be touched upon, principles, foundations and lasting impressions formed. In general, Home Economics embraces a study of the manner in which man provides himself with food, clothing and shelter. We find the child in contact with each of these from early childhood. The child is accustomed to help supply its daily needs before entering school; then, it is the duty of the school to take the created interests of the child and direct them into channels that will have educational value. Thus we see that the school's particular function in such education is to strengthen the home's contribution, to interpret all the child's experiences at home and in school in terms of family living, to help him to understand his home experiences, and to provide opportunities in school which he may apply to his present home life. In some cases the child's own family life might be inadequate, so that the school has the additional responsibility of setting up new ideas and ideals.

Man is a social being. He lives in a world which influences him and upon which he exerts his influence. To be properly prepared to move in this society he must parti-

cipate in it, share responsibilities, render services to others, performance of which will give him a realization of satisfaction and enable him to live a balanced and harmonious life devoid of all friction with his fellow-men.

In turning back the pages of history which give us the activities of men from past ages and which give us the background for contrasting modern life with that of ancient and medieval times, we find that the Elementary School had its beginning in medieval times. It is evident that the position of women in society was far different from that of men. Women were confined to the home but as time has passed on the attitude of society toward women has changed. In the early days, education was limited to boys. Girls received their religious and industrial training in the home--intellectual training was not considered essential. But now, with the ever increasing demands of society, our Elementary Schools are bearing responsibilities of qualifying women for their places in the social world.

In the home social contact was narrow, responsibilities were limited and self-expression was confined to the four walls of the home. With the change of position and the ever increasing demands of society upon women, it is essential that Home Economics be taught in the Elementary School. The advantages of such a course are as follows: first, it allows girls to participate in a broader social world; second, it trains them to share responsibilities; third, it inculcates the desire to render service; fourth, it increases the

ability to perform worthwhile duties; fifth, it increases the scope for self-expression. These are the aims which must be fulfilled in order that education be complete and give to the child all that he needs for life.

We will see later that Home Economics does fulfill these purposes of education, but taught in the Elementary School it has the added advantages of forming life habits and directing interests while the child is in the formative or plastic stage. The habits may be perfected and the interest may be more highly developed in the Secondary School or College, but the foundation upon which higher education is to be built must be laid down in the Elementary School where the child does not merely receive the key or the tools to use in life, but where he actually opens the door on his position in life and begins his process of learning to do by doing.

The girls of to-day are the home-makers of tomorrow. We cannot expect to find the citizens of a nation any better than the homes from which they come, and the success of a nation depends on the citizens therein. It is essential that all girls receive some training in Home Economics, in order that they will be able to conduct their homes on an intelligent basis. They should not only know how to cook but they should possess a scientific knowledge of food values in order to promote the health of the individual members of the family. Previous investigations show that the average school child is very much in need of nutritional betterment.

He needs a better diet with more fruit, milk, vegetables, eggs, meats, potatoes, whole cereals, and other wholesome food. He needs a better breakfast and a less hurried lunch. He needs less indiscriminate eating of candy, and other confections between meals and more regular habits of eating, sleeping and general living. He needs these conditions in order that he may grow into a normal physically fit individual with sound bones and teeth, in short, a well built body. With training in nutrition such conditions would be brought to their minds and could be avoided by both children and parents.

The intelligent expenditure, of time and energy may be considered one of the most important factors in home making. Careful consideration of her daily routine will consequently save her and make work a pleasure instead of drudgery as it appears to many housewives. You might say, who consider such problems in the Elementary School? College is still for the favored minority and many children do not even finish high school. Moreover, these young people are among the first to establish homes of their own. Also Education for family living is so much a matter of developing attitudes and personality favorable to family living that it should begin early and be continuous. Finally, the child lives very intensively in his own family, and if there is to be a program for family life as well as for it, these early years should be utilized. It is most necessary that a girl possess some knowledge of how to manage her household on scientific

and artistic principles. Imagine the success to be obtained with a system of managing organizing and a definite knowledge of the principles of planning. In order to accomplish this one must be well trained. All of such training cannot be obtained at home; therefore, it is the duty of the school to lay stress on the important problems that every woman is to meet sooner or later. Such emphasis will aid mothers of the coming generations in training their children to become better citizens, mentally, physically and morally strong.

An efficient housewife should have a knowledge of the manufacturing processes of household commodities, in order that she will be able to select and purchase them wisely. She should be trained to recognize the inferior goods from the best, because in this economic age there are some articles cheapened by adulterations. She should know the tests by which to identify all fabrics, whether cotton, wool, silk or linen. They should be able to appreciate things that are useful and well made in preference to the things that appear beautiful and attract the eye only. They should also be trained to know the standard of all commodities. They should acquire the attitude of carefully examining those commodities they buy or make from its economic values and qualities as a result of such work taken up in school. One should select permanent and standard designs and should know the reason for their choices. Habits of thoroughness and carefulness should be visualized in the mind from beginning to end before attempting their execution. If good results are to be

obtained nothing can be done in a haphazard way.

All the information and attitudes desirable for the making of clothing, the selection of food and the managing of a home were once taught the children at home by their participation in the home, we had production and consumption, from the raising of the wool or flax to the weaving and making of the cloth into a garment. We also had home canning and preserving. With the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th Century, women were forced to go into the working world, and even increasing numbers are found in factories, offices, and department stores. How, then, will the children receive this training which is so vital to his well being and the community at large? The answer is it must be done by the school. Throughout the work in Home Economics, emphasis is laid upon the fact that intelligence and appreciation are needed for the selection and the care of the home through a knowledge of its materials, its purposes and its evolution. It is possible to instill the idea of the home in the minds of children as early as the first grade by the construction of rooms or small houses from soap boxes or even drawing paper. The furnishing of doll houses and the making and dressing of paper dolls are also helpful hints in conveying this idea. Once these principles are instilled in the minds of small children, they are never forgotten.

Since different localities necessitate different home environments, the work in Home Economics must be adjusted

in such a way to meet the needs of the surrounding children. In fact the work must vary in order to meet the needs of the children for whom they are intended.

One finds a vast majority of the women in the world today, as wage-earners. Most women wage-earners have double responsibilities; you find them homemakers as well as wage-earners. In order to help the members of her family as she should, she must be trained to perform her duties as efficiently at home as in her daily occupation. She must have a knowledge of simple housekeeping and a knowledge of budgeting, not only her income, but her time as well. She must know how to select the proper clothing for the whole family. She must be able to select the best possible food for her money, food yielding the best results in energy and tissue building material. A knowledge of the proper way of living must be hers also, such as keeping in touch with the world's progress, keeping the members of the home together in the way of their happiness, comfort and development.

Teaching Home Economics in the Elementary Schools helps to vitalize the childrens' rest and bring them directly in contact with the world and the reality of things. Through the constructive activities, which are so useful in effective teaching of Home Economics may be made the center of all studies and radiate into life itself, by beginning with the home, which is related to all life and interesting to all children. Through the practical side of this work and a study of its relative theory children become acquainted

with materials and process which have made social life exactly what it is. As I mentioned before that in colonial times all activities were centered in the home, children saw the development of a home problem and participated in it. Now the training which is given to children in the Elementary School should be so efficiently planned that it will prepare them for an almost strictly industrial society.

Home Economics in the Elementary School directly connected with home interests and with the evolution of the social industrial interests is a step in the right direction of making children familiar with the things which make for true culture and liberal education. Home Economics teaches the children the wisdom of foresight, the first essential step toward success. It is easier to interest the children in life by dealing with things pertaining directly to life; by actually doing something it remains in the memory longer. The children begin to feel useful because they can make things for themselves and assist others to do home responsibilities. Thus begins the development of social consciousness, which is such an important factor in one that is educated. Such a study helps in a selection of a desirable occupation for life and makes an individual appreciative of good work. Naturally this will affect supply and demand, as woman is the buyer and the consumer of most of the commodities of the home and the clothing used therein, thus affording a larger demand for goods and well made articles. Such a demand effects the salary and conditions of the wage

earners. This proves that this work shows the very close relationship between the attitudes of the child and the serious activities of society that would not on the other hand be recognized.

In order that women meet their responsibilities they must be trained for this end. In order that a woman have leisure time to serve her community she must have a knowledge of short cuts in housekeeping. To be able to repair and renovate garments for her use or those of others requires education along this line. The high price now set on foods and other commodities requires a consumer to have a thorough knowledge of the economics of foods and textiles. A girl thus trained can assist in serving her community, by enlisting in the great army that give freely of their time and energy to the service of their least fortunate fellowmen. They can help in the organization of sewing circles, helping their needy fellowmen in their communities.

By projects in various materials--paper houses and furniture, paper dolls, for sand tables, habits and constructive ability is developed. Home Economics in the Elementary School considers the problems of selection of materials and methods of construction. It provides that information develop those habits and attitudes and cultivate those appreciations which will make intelligent consumers and citizens. It affords problems in construction to develop skill in production, to develop insight and appreciation, which cannot be secured without active participation in the use of

materials. To begin with problems are usually simple, growing more complex and difficult as the child advances in age and grade. By the time they reach eighth grade they should take up more direct and technical phases of household arts. The work should be unified and forceful in order to obtain these results. Usually the children in the Elementary School are of such an age that it is better for them to receive a general survey of the field of Home Economics rather than work out in detail a small portion without regard to its relation to a larger whole.

However, the execution of a project is but one phase of Home Economics work; the understanding of materials used, their suitability for that particular project, their quality and the proper method of judging it, the process of manufacturing. The cost of such a project will be of greater importance in the lives of children than the mere construction. In order to gain the best results discussion, experimentation and technical processes are also considered as well as the practical side. That is to say, if the making of a garment was a project to be undertaken, the first consideration should be a study of the fabrics best suited for the garment, the stitches and seams to be used in the construction of the garment. The amount of time consumed in the construction of the garment. In considering the cost of the garment a comparison should be made to a similar one already made. Thus we have all phases seen and their proper relationships.

There is no definite program as to just how much work should be covered in Home Economics in the Elementary School. However, the work should be so planned as to meet the needs of the students in their respective communities. It is not necessary for the methods of all schools to be similar but the results obtained must be identical. Even from first to sixth grade the achievements should be varied and enormous. At the end of such period the students should have a definite appreciation of the activities, a certain store of valuable subject matter, and a degree of skill in the technical processes according to the ability of pupils at their age. In textiles they should be able to distinguish one fiber from another; they should know something about the production and manufacturing or converting of raw fabrics into cloth; also different materials in the construction of simple garments. They should know the very simple stitches and be able to construct useable articles in the household. The simple construction of garments, mending and darning of clothes should also be known.

In foods they should have an elementary knowledge of the composition of foods, uses of various foodstuffs in the body and an idea of the combination of foods in a meal to make a balanced diet. They should be able to prepare simple dishes and serve simple meals. A knowledge of the proper care of the kitchen and dining room should also be given. Habits of orderliness and cleanliness should be formed. Of course their knowledge will be simple and crude

but at least the field will be open to them and a realization of it as a whole and not a part will be seen; thus, furnishing an appreciation for the world's work and developing sympathies for their fellowmen.

In the seventh and eighth grades the training received in the first six grades is elaborated upon. In foods planning on the basis of a meal is emphasized. In sewing making a garment that the girls will wear is more beneficial than separate lessons. The relationship of one dish to another the construction of a garment to meet individual needs is more clearly seen. Cost should be considered at all times. Often excursions to markets and dry good stores reap untold benefits. In these two grades the children should be given definite situations to meet, definite problems to solve. Wisely spending the family's income or budgeting is taught. In foods the application of the various cooking processes to foods, the making of market, care of food before and after cooking and its conservation should be taken into consideration. They should have an elementary knowledge to select, prepare and serve food so that they will be of assistance in their own homes, also the choice of foods for various occasions. In regards to clothing they should know the construction of their clothing and care of them. The choice of materials and the laying of a pattern economically are very essential. The cost of the making of a garment and their relation to ready made garments must be taken into consideration. The proper laundry of simple garments and the hygiene

of clothing must be studied. The repair and renovating should be stressed in this economic age. In laundering, the removal of spots and stains should be also considered. The study of shelter involves many home activities that can be utilized in the school. The care of their own bedrooms, and the correct method of making a bed and the care of linens are very important and must be given careful consideration. Their assistance in helping keep the house clean, the washing of dishes and the care of the stove and cooking utensils must not be forgotten. They should also receive some training in the care of babies and their hair, to assist the mother in helping to care for the younger members of the family. In order that the children see the close relationship, it is necessary to deal with everyday problems, such as preparing a meal for a family of six economically, the cleaning of a bath room and its related problems to science wholesome recreation for the family and the selection of home furnishings.

You may say, why is such a broad field to cover and will take up too much of the children's time not allowing enough time for their other subjects. But in teaching these subjects in the Elementary School, they may be taught separately but it is better to teach them in correlation with other subjects. There would be no necessity of presenting Home Economics in a school of any kind were it wholly detached from the other subjects of the curriculum. But Home Economics has a definite place in the curriculum and is

related to the other subjects. A knowledge of fundamental processes facilitates the computation of caloric values in the preparation of healthful food. It enables the homemaker to plan a budget for economic buying and saving. Accurate measurements of materials will save funds which may be directed into other channels. Children who may have found history boresome and uninviting may be unconsciously led to delve its pages by a study of Home Economics. The study of such a subject will send them back to primitive and medieval times to find how man supplied himself with food and clothing and move in his society. He can study changes and developments of the habits of man and thereby improve his own. Having learned the ideas which Home Economics presents to him the child must then use his English grammar and composition, spelling and penmanship in order to convey those ideas to his fellow companions and those with whom he is brought into contact. What child has not even borne by the wings of fancy into lands about which he learns in Geographical study. Geography too has its place in a study of Home Economics. The child must learn the lands from which different products come and how climatic conditions and surface features affects the production and manufacture of the products which he uses. Thus we see Mathematics, History, English and Geography are not merely taught as tools but develop the subject matter which bears upon the pupils family life. Therefore, Home Economics should be introduced into the Elementary School curriculum where the correlation can begin at the same time that

the child begins a study of other subjects. In all probability if it is introduced in the curriculum of higher learning the child may look upon it as a new subject which has no direct connection with his other studies.

One might ask the question, "What relation exists between Home Economics and education?" First, I will give the definition of education that is most generally accepted. "The education of the individual is the process of adjustment to or participation in the world of social relationship and in the fund of social experience, the ideals and methods which those relationships conserve." In the Elementary School we are dealing with small children. They are to be brought to a realization of themselves and their places in the social world and to see their relation to the progress of events. Different phases of Home Economics properly applied may become a potent factor in the mental development of children. Most every individual has original ideas and expressions and he must be given a chance to express them. This natural activity can be utilized and turned into channels which will lead to gradual physical, moral and intellectual development of a child. Some phases of Home Economics affords means of expression such as sewing, cooking and home designing or decorations. Most children are intensively interested in such subjects, because they tend to keep them alert. These subjects in themselves are educationally effective.

Children love to act, act and express what they see in a constructive way. They love to see quick results, to make

something all by themselves. A small child appreciates and admires the actual production and gives very little thought to the process by which it was made. Both are considered essential in an ideal education. Children naturally imitate all phases of adult activities, but to the child, they are play and not work. Nevertheless, the development of a child deals with his activity in play, games, and occupations. Usually the active child at play is the bright student at school. As the child gets older he must be shown the relation between the two and must learn that the products of work have an economic value. Thus the Home Economic subjects use these early tendencies of children of doing things at random and without a definite reason and direct them into beneficial channels where real value is the result.

Thus in summing up the advantages of Home Economics in the Elementary Schools, where it plays so vital a part in the child's training in fitting the child to meet the needs of society, we find Home Economics playing an important part in the school curriculum of to-day. The greatest advantage is the development of the child for future citizenship and the knowledge of the responsibility of every individual to mold the character of our national life through a successful home. The Elementary School cannot train boys and girls fully for such responsibilities as we saw in the foregoing paragraphs, but it may instill into their minds and hearts appreciation of the importance of their lives as individuals and their responsibility for the home life in their present and future

homes. Under the strain that the world now faces girls as homemakers would be at a loss without some knowledge of managing a home on economical basis.

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B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Place of Industries in Elementary Education

.....Katherine Elizabeth Dopp.

Teaching Elementary School Subjects

.....Louis W. Rapeer.

Domestic Art in Woman's Education

.....Anna M. Cooley.

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New York, The Macmillan Co., 1925.

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