



Family and Consumer Sciences Alliance Responds to the Call to “Revive Home Ec”

First, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) published an article "Bring Back Home Economics Education" in its May 11, 2010 issue, and now the New York Times has issued a similar call in its September 5, op-ed "Time to Revive Home Ec." Dr. Helen Veit, author of the Op-Ed article, was also interviewed on National Public Radio's "Talk of the Nation" program by Neal Conan.

- Click [here](#) to read the JAMA article.
- Click [here](#) to read the NY Time Op-Ed article written by Dr. Veit.
- Click [here](#) to listen to the audio or read the transcript of the NPR interview.

The following response was sent on behalf of the Family and Consumer Sciences Alliance to Dr. Veit and Mr. Conan regarding the article and interview.

Dear Dr. Veit:

Your article “Time to Revive Home Ec” in the September 5, 2011 issue presents a logical argument for strengthening instruction in our nation’s schools about nutritious selection and preparation of food. No doubt this would be a route to addressing the obesity epidemic and other chronic diseases. We are grateful to you for shedding light on the discipline and its vital role in educating school-age children.

As you noted during your interview on Talk of the Nation, the field of study that was founded as *home economics* changed its name in 1994 to *family and consumer sciences*. The field has changed dramatically over the years to address the current issues that impact our quality of life. Family and consumer sciences is an evidence-based field grounded in national standards and research. And, there is a national testing program to validate instructional effectiveness and student outcomes, including competency application, critical thinking, and problem solving skills acquired in family and consumer sciences courses.

More than 5.5 million secondary students across the U.S. take family and consumer sciences classes and are learning the essential living skills you mention. But that means that many more millions of students are missing out on the opportunity to take classes that help them to successfully live and work in our complex world.

The Family and Consumer Sciences Alliance is a group of nonprofit and educational organizations striving to do exactly what you suggest—“revive” the focus nationwide on the need for family and consumer sciences curriculum in the classroom. In presenting the “new” face of the profession to consumers, parents, educators, administrators, policymakers, and health professionals, we can show that the curriculum today addresses multiple critical issues such as obesity and poor nutrition, the economic crisis, bullying, teen pregnancy, and many other contemporary societal issues.

One aspect of the comprehensive curriculum utilized today by family and consumer sciences educators in the schools (and in the community through the Extension system) teaches students about the scientific and applied aspects of food and how to prepare it. Incorporated into the curriculum are math and science concepts -- food safety involves science principles and food preparation utilizes math. It's the perfect applied science. Family and consumer sciences curriculum also recognizes that there are economic, emotional and cultural reasons for what, why and where people eat with the ultimate goal of creating healthy and sustainable families.

As you said, it is time to refocus national attention on these core issues that are costing society a fortune. Indeed the economics of home food preparation go hand-in-hand with the nutrition and wellness aspects you address in the article. By replacing the stereotypical image of "home economics," we can educate our citizens and administrators about the value of *today's* family and consumer sciences principles, and encourage students to take family and consumer sciences courses in middle or high school.

We invite you to take a look at family and consumer sciences courses today where students are growing vegetables and studying the advantages and disadvantages of organic foods, studying the added nutrient value of popular foods by preparing whole wheat pizza bagels and fruit and yogurt smoothies, and performing food science experiments with beakers and scales for measuring ingredients. You might also find students observing the impact of various diets on laboratory rats.

That's more likely what you'll find in today's "home economics" classes!

Family and Consumer Sciences Alliance
<http://www.aafcs.org/AboutUs/FCSAlliance.asp>

