

What would be the cost to America, and to the world, if there were no Family and Consumer Sciences classes?

What if there were no courses to provide youth with tools for achieving quality of life? What if there were no courses to prepare students to:

- Be good parents?
- Manage their finances?
- Select and prepare nutritious meals?
- Manage their food, clothing, and housing needs?
- Make informed decisions and solve problems?

How would the workplace be affected if there were no courses to whet appetites for learning and jumpstart careers in early childhood education, fashion design, food science, interior design, and financial education? Think about it . . .

Let's take a closer look at costs. Consider these dollar amounts:

- Teen births cost taxpayers \$7 billion in 2000 (Sawhill, 2001).
- Bankruptcies cost the banking industry \$40 billion in 1999 (National Consumer Law Center, 1999).
- Underage drinking cost America \$61.9 billion in 2001 for medical expenses, loss of work, etc. (Miller, Levy, Spicer & Taylor, 2006).
- Child abuse costs America \$94 billion a year (Fromm, 2001).

But not all costs are in dollars.

- Adult obesity rates are continuing to rise in 31 states (Trust for America's Health, Washington, D. C., 2006).
- The price tag for obesity, drinking, smoking, substance abuse, child abuse, etc. carries with it major health costs as well as economic losses.

What impact do Family and Consumer Sciences programs have?

A report by Victoria Moore, College of Education, Purdue University (2007) conservatively estimated at 1% the economic returns on an investment in family and consumer sciences education programs:

- When 2 students in every high school are educated to resist or quit smoking, America saves over \$100 billion a year.
- When 2 students per school quit drinking, America saves about \$2 billion.
- When one student per school receives training in parenting, over \$4.6 billion is saved in costs related to child abuse.

What would be accomplished if there were MORE Family and Consumer Sciences classes? An investment in Family and Consumer Sciences is an investment in the health and wealth of the American people. Support Family and Consumer Sciences Education.

Family and Consumer Sciences Education supports 21st century skills . . .

Learning and Innovation Skills

Learning and innovation skills are now recognized as skills that distinguish 21st century students. These skills are the mainstay of Family and Consumer Sciences classes across the nation.

Critical thinking, problem-solving, and resolution of work-life issues are taught both in personal and career contexts --- from responding to emergencies while caring for children, to selecting apparel to meet special needs, to healthful food substitutions. Students learn to use positive communication skills in the workplace and in personal relationships. They learn to manage life/work issues. Creativity and innovation are fostered and honed in apparel and interior design classes, entrepreneurial units, and food technology labs. Collaboration and contextual learning abound as students work in authentic situations and simulations.

Life and Career Skills

The 21st Century Skills list of life skills, seen by anyone familiar with Family and Consumer Sciences classes, could serve as a list of "Everything I Learned in Family and Consumer Sciences Class." The accuracy of this claim can be affirmed by almost anyone who took a Family and Consumer Sciences class in high school.

Family and Consumer Sciences Education has served as a vehicle for students to learn life skills since it was founded over one hundred years ago. Life skills include such "soft skills" as adaptability, initiative, self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity, accountability, leadership, and responsibility.

Many pages would be needed to "do justice" to the breadth and depth of Family and Consumer Sciences contributions to life and career skills. It is through working in lab groups, on partner assignments and team projects, as well as independent studies, that students learn the importance of life and career skills and begin to develop them. Family and Consumer Sciences is a place where students want to be because they know they will be studying and working with topics that are real to them and participating actively in the learning process. They have opportunities to share in decisions and develop a sense of ownership for their own learning.

Information, Media and Technology Skills

The 21st century environment is filled with rapidly changing technologies and a myriad of media for accessing information. Family and Consumer Sciences classes teach students to be resourceful and discriminating in their use of technologies. The emphasis is on developing distinctly human abilities while managing technologies in the context of rapid change. As students balance human and machine technologies, they learn management and leadership skills and develop good judgment.