



Ontario Home Economics Association

Ontario Family Studies Leadership Council (OFSLC)

Ask a Professional Home Economist

For Immediate Release

Family Studies in Elementary Schools in Ontario

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TORONTO, ON - Our children spend six hours per day, five days per week, forty weeks per year, fourteen years (including junior and senior kindergarten) in total in our elementary and secondary school system. In that time teachers have a lot of curriculum to cover. One area that is not included in the curriculum in the elementary panel is Family Studies (formerly home economics). There is no formal curriculum for Family Studies for our students in Grades 6, 7 and 8. The Toronto District School Board has provided an integrated curriculum for Grades 6, 7 and 8 using expectations from Health and Physical Education, Mathematics, Language, and the Arts documents to create authentic tasks related to Family Studies. Not all of these tasks need to be taught in a Family Studies lab. The focus of the Family Studies program in Grades 6, 7, and 8 is to enhance and support student achievement in literacy and numeracy through a dynamic, integrated, hands-on program.

The purpose of Family Studies education is twofold. Firstly, students are provided with the knowledge, skills, and management strategies necessary to meet the needs of family members with respect to food, clothing, shelter, and nurturing. Secondly, Family Studies promotes in students the development of self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and awareness needed to function well in a family context and in a climate of social, cultural, technological, and scientific change.

Family Studies is the social science of people's relationships with each other in the primary social unit, and their relationships within society. In today's increasingly complex world, there is a growing need to understand family diversity, family change dynamics, and family resource management, and to develop skills related to those areas. Family Studies promotes in students the development of self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and the awareness needed to function well in a family context and in a climate of societal, cultural, technological, and scientific change. Family Studies also prepares students for employment and post-secondary education.

Family Studies education supports and enhances the well-being of individuals, families, and society by addressing challenges that are faced daily by each generation. These challenges include meeting basic human needs, nurturing human growth and development, and acquiring and managing resources. Circumstances vary for individuals and families over time; therefore, individuals need to be able to continually evaluate and modify their behaviour and actions.

The view of Family Studies education includes basic philosophies for Family Studies education in Ontario, and internationally. The first philosophy is to emphasize ways to meet the challenges that

affect the functioning of families, in addition to the traditional focus on meeting the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and nurturing. By addressing a broad range of issues affecting individuals and families, students are empowered to better address changes in society.

The second philosophy is to continue to help students develop their cognitive processes. The dynamic nature of social, economic, political, environmental, and technological changes requires the use of interpersonal and critical-thinking skills to address challenges of everyday life. Hands-on skills have meaningful, practical application when they are used in conjunction with reasoned decision making.

The third philosophy is to continue to expand the study of family issues to span Kindergarten through Grade 12. This ensures that all students have practical experiences that enable them to meet the challenges of everyday life.

The goals of Family Studies education in Grades 6, 7, and 8 follow from the nature of the subject and from the needs of Ontario students outlined above. Goals are intended to ensure that all students acquire a basic philosophy and understanding of families and their functioning before entering secondary school. The goals for students are to:

- understand the basic forms and functions of families;
- develop the skills, strategies, and habits required to meet and nurture the needs and wants of family members;
- understand the diversity of cultures and their effects on individuals, families, and society;
- develop skills, strategies, and practices which enhance interpersonal relationships within the context of families and society.

These goals are equally important. They can be achieved simultaneously through learning activities that combine the acquisition of knowledge with both inquiry and design processes in a concrete, experiential context. At the same time, these learning activities must enable students to develop the communication and relationship skills that are an essential component of Family Studies.

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OFSLC (Ontario Family Studies Leadership Council) is composed of representatives of boards of education throughout the province of Ontario. Its purpose is to assist school boards with jurisdictional responsibilities for Family Studies/Social Sciences in the curriculum management process, to provide a forum where the broad educational issues that impact on existing and future Family Studies/Social Science curricula, programs and guidelines may be investigated, analyzed, and appropriate action initiated and be knowledgeable about and contribute to, the educational programs and pedagogy related to the preparation of new members entering the teaching profession. OFSLC is grateful for the support from the Gwennyth Bailey Simpson Communications Award from the Canadian Home Economics Foundation (CHEF), and support from the Ontario Home Economics Association (OHEA) and the Ontario Family Studies Home Economics Educators Association (OFSHEEA). Its' members have been instrumental in professional development by teachers for teachers. <http://www.ofslc.org/>