

RESOLUTION
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

**LIFE AND CAREER CHOICES CLASS BE REQUIRED FOR
ALL STUDENTS IN MIDDLE/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS**

Whereas early adolescence is a time of turmoil, resilience, productivity, cognitive growth, generosity, and increasing involvement in social, academic and emotional tasks, and

Whereas adolescents in middle/junior high school need education for character building, teamwork, socialization, goal setting, and interpersonal skills, and

Whereas adolescents in middle/junior high school may not have family support to help in their teen socialization as the US society changes, and

Whereas middle/junior high students are at a critical point in their social, emotional, mental and physical development at a time when they begin the transition into young adults, and

Whereas middle/junior high students in middle/junior high school will benefit from the opportunity to begin exploration of careers and the world of work, and

Whereas middle/junior high students will benefit from and enjoy opportunities to apply their classroom learning to real life situations, and

Whereas Family and Consumer Science middle school and junior high programs have the capacity to provide classes to educate young adolescents in Life and Career Choices, and

Whereas a Life and Career Choices class teaches basic skills that all people need to develop a sense of family, to be an educated consumer to make financial decisions, and to understand health sciences necessary to function in today's world, and

Whereas a mandatory Life and Career Choices class in middle/junior high will give students the skills necessary for successful entry into high school and for use in their future lives, and

Whereas Family and Consumer Science educators have the academic and professional training to teach classes for middle/junior high students in Life and Career Choices,

Therefore, be it resolved that the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences endorses classes in Life and Career Choices taught by Family and Consumer Educators be mandatory for all middle/junior high students.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Life and Career Choices Class Be Required for All Students in Middle/Junior High Schools

The American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences is an organization where the majority of stakeholders are educators who teach life skills to improve the lives of individuals, families and communities. An important issue for this organization is supporting a requirement that a Family Consumer Science course in “Life and Career Choices” be required. This life skills education course would target students in middle/junior high school. Life and Career Choices would be recognized and accepted as basic and as important as math, history, English, etc.

Consider the following facts as they relate to the Family and Consumer Science (FACS) education:

- Enrollment has significantly dropped at universities for graduates with degrees in FACS education. A better job promoting and marketing a FACS education degree would be helpful to raise enrollment. For example, Florida State University (FSU), the only school in the state of Florida offering the FACS education degree, had three graduates in 2005.
- Enrollment has significantly dropped for high school students taking FACS courses. AAFCS members know first hand the funding issues to keep the Carl Perkins Act alive and continue to justify the worth of these programs, knowing quality programs with laboratory experiences and hands-on learning are expensive to operate. It is in high school where educators help students become excited about the potential career opportunities and college programs in FACS. If students don't enroll in high school programs, who will share this opportunity in college?
- Many FACS middle school/junior high programs have been eliminated. This is where AAFCS needs to focus attention. This age is a critical time in the lives of young people as they transition into young adults. A required “Life and Career Choices” class in middle/junior high school gives students an introduction to classes they can take in high school while giving students the “life skills” needed for successful entry into high school.

Middle/junior high school youth need an opportunity to begin exploring careers and the world of work. This age group benefits from and enjoys opportunities to apply their classroom learning to real life situations. Family and Consumer Science (FACS) “Life and Career Choices” is a good example of how a practical arts class provides interesting, fun and practical ways to teach and further re-enforce math and language arts skills. For example, when teaching 8th graders about budgeting and managing their money, their interest level is high and they are eager to “do the math”. Why? Because this is real life and they can identify with it.

The FACS “Life and Career Choices” curriculum places a major emphasis on creating and developing a positive mindset about the world of work. Once students turn 13-14 years old, it is realistic to believe many will take their first job in less than a year's time. Equipping students with basic job skills from filling out an application, the “how to ” of interviewing, being punctual, learning to take direction, and that hard work is rewarding are all part of a middle/junior high FACS curriculum. Employers express concern that youth entering the work force lack interpersonal relationship skills. If educators can help young teens establish a positive work ethic, in most cases, that healthy outlook will follow into adulthood.

Students in middle and junior high school are transitioning from children to young adults. It is at this time that they begin to exhibit the ability to use higher-level critical thinking skills. Creating a greater awareness of one's social conscience is taught through virtues or character education and topics related to responsibility, honesty, and self-discipline become important. Youth this age are becoming more independent and daily they begin to make critical choices about work, integrity, self-discipline, taking personal responsibility for self and becoming good citizens and contributing members of society. This is a critical time in a young person's life as many times they are at “the fork in the road”. The choices and decisions they make may change the course of their life forever. Why not give them the skills and character coupled with knowledge to hopefully make good choices and decisions. By ages 15-16 (high school), many times it is too late.

Lastly, the Family and Consumer Science “Life and Career Choices” curriculum teaches basic life skills that contribute to success in life:

1. Developing a sense of **Family** with topics that include communication, social relationship skills – anger management, conflict resolution and how to get along and work together, character building, parenting and child development, manners and etiquette at home and in the workplace.
2. Becoming an educated **Consumer** by learning about financial literacy including creating and balancing a budget and checkbook, comparison shopping, unit pricing, the difference between a need and a want as it relates to buying power and career exploration.
3. Learning about health **Sciences** through nutrition, menu planning and food shopping. As educators we recognize there is a direct correlation between nutrition and school performance, and we know that poor nutrition impacts behavior, school performance and overall cognitive development of children.

Today’s priority in education places emphasis on literacy, math, science and reading. Middle/junior high “Life and Career Choices” curriculum puts this need into the everyday work and home life of youth. Students always ask the question “Why do I need to know this and how will this help me after school – in the real world?” In the “Life and Career Choices” class everyday, students incorporate and expand the learning from other classes such as math, science, and reading comprehension into the real world of sound nutrition, cooking, and job interviews, financial literacy -- basically what it takes to survive and succeed in the real world.

What can AAFCS as a national organization do? Develop consistency in the curriculum framework for “Life and Career Choices”. The curriculum needs to be reviewed to determine if the same concepts, competencies, and skills are being taught in all middle/junior high “Life and Career Choices” classes across the country. This is extremely important because it gives credibility and ownership. As an organization, we must be able to defend the need for federal financial support. This middle/junior high school course involves hands-on learning and therefore, requires additional funding.

Across the nation, district school boards are being asked to address student health and fitness issues, and adopt policies to improve the existing standards. Launched by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in January 2000, “Healthy People 2010”, a comprehensive, nationwide health promotion and disease prevention initiative has a number of objectives designed to serve as a road map for improving the health of all people in the United States during the first decade of the 21st century. AAFCS has a role as youth enrolled in FACS classes such as, “Life and Career Choices”, learn about eating healthy and establishing good eating habits.

This is the 21st-century and it is time to acknowledge that young people need the life skills taught in Family and Consumer Sciences. As an organization, there is need to push to strengthen the public school education system and help legislatures see the necessity of teaching basic life skills and requiring “Life and Career Choices” for middle/junior high students across the nation.