

## Societal Issues - Family and Consumer Sciences Education Solutions

In our technologically sophisticated and diverse global community, work is becoming more complex and demands solid academic skills. Contemporary family and consumer sciences education programs help reinforce high-level academic skills that are essential as youth and adults prepare for both careers and life management. It is no longer easy to separate work from family life roles. Success in life involves balancing various roles in the workplace, family, and community. Family and consumer sciences education programs help ensure successful working lives by addressing critical life issues such as:

**Issue:** *Obesity Epidemic* – In the past 10 years, “...obesity increased in every state, in both genders, and across all ages, races and education levels (1).” It is estimated that more than 50% of adults and 15% of children and adolescents in the United States are overweight. Approximately two-thirds of deaths each year are diet related (2).

**FCS Solution:** Nutrition and Wellness curriculum taught by family and consumer sciences (FCS) instructors throughout the school system educate students and staff in healthy life-span dietary practices. FCCLA members use the national program Student Body to educate their peers about the importance of eating right, exercising, and making healthy lifestyle choices.

**Related FCS National Standard:** Analyze the factors, which influence personal and family wellness across the life span.

**Issue:** *Consumer Debt/Family Financial Crises* – Individuals and families at every economic level have difficulty living “within their means” and managing their resources while planning for future financial needs. More than 40% of American families spend more than they earn. Credit card debit continues to be a major stumbling block for many individuals and families. The number

of personal bankruptcy filings has increased by more than 200% during the past ten years (3).

**FCS Solution:** Consumer and Family Resources/personal financial management education provided through the FCS curriculum can help prepare individuals in developing financial management skills for meeting individual and family goals, preventing debt and preparing for future financial security. FCCLA leaders can build their peers’ financial literacy and teach them skills for managing their finances today and in the future with the national program Financial Fitness.

**Related FCS National Standard:** Demonstrate management of financial resources to meet the goals of individuals and families across the life span.

**Issue:** *Lack of School Readiness* – A national study “Getting Ready,” was conducted to find out how well the nation’s children are prepared for school. To reduce the deficits among the children, the study said, society must take a comprehensive approach that goes beyond academics and **delves into the family aspect** of a child’s readiness to learn (4).

**FCS Solution:** The Parenting curriculum taught by FCS instructors will prepare future parents and caregivers with the skills to nurture children so they will have the ability to reach their full potential. Through Families First, a unit of the national FCCLA program Power of One, students learn about the importance of growing up in a stable family.

**Related FCS National Standard:** Evaluate parenting practices that maximize human growth and development.

**Issue:** *Child Abuse* - In 2000, approximately 879,000 children were victims of maltreatment: 63% suffered neglect, 19% physically abused, 10% sexually abused, and 8% psychologically mistreated (5).

**FCS Solution:** Positive human relationships within families are essential for becoming a contributing member of a family and community. The family provides a foundation for establishing these relationships. Balancing Career and Family curriculum addresses the challenges of developing positive human relationships. FCS educators can help youth examine the root causes of inappropriate relationships and help them find ways to develop and maintain positive human relationships

**Related FCS National Standard:** Analyze functions and expectations of various types of relationships.

**Issue: Dropouts** - Each year's class of dropouts costs the nation during their lifetime in terms of lost earnings and unrealized tax revenues. Personal cost for the dropout include one-half the annual income as a high school grad by the time prime working age is reached (6).

**FCS Solution:** Personal life choices made now determine the quality of life an individual will attain. Individuals make better career choices if they are guided through opportunities available in the Career and Life Planning curriculum taught by FCS educators. They will explore careers options in the context of personal interests, skills and goals.

**Related FCS National Standard:** Demonstrate management of financial resources to meet the goals of individuals and families across the life span.

**Issue: Shortages in the Service Industry-** By 2010 three out of every five new jobs created in the U. S. are expected to be in the service industry (7).

**FCS Solution:** Child care and education and Food Service and Hospitality programs are two of the fastest growing career and technical education programs that are reporting higher than average employment growth (8). Both programs are in the FCS occupational area.

#### Sources Cited

1. Whitney, Eleanor Noss & Rolfes, Sharon R. (2005). *Understanding Nutrition*. CT: Thompson Wadsworth. p. 279
2. National Center for Health Statistics [NCH]. (2004) *Health, United States, 2004, with Chartbook on Trends in the Health of Americans*. Retrieved from <http://www.Cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/hus04.pdf>
3. Keown, Arthur. (2004). *Personal Finance*. NJ: Prentice Hall.
4. Rhode Island KidsCount. (2005). *The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative: Making Progress for Young Children*. Retrieved April 10, 2005, from <http://www.GettingReady.org>
5. U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2002). *National child abuse and neglect data systems*. Summary of key findings from calendar year 2000. Children's Bureau Administration of Children, Youth and Families. Retrieved November 27, 2002, from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/factsheets/ncands.cfm>.
6. Castellano, M.; Stringfield, S.; and Stone. J. R., III. *Career and Technical Education Reforms and Comprehensive School Reforms in High Schools and Community Colleges: Their Impact on Educational Outcomes for At-Risk Youth*. Minnesota National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, University of Minnesota, 2001. (ED 461 720) <http://www.nccte.org/publications/projectReport>
7. U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (October 27, 2003), *Occupational outlook handbook 2002-03 edition*. Available: <http://www.bls.gov/oco>.
8. Silverberg, Marsha, Warner, Elizabeth, Fong, Michael, & Goodwin, David. **National Assessment of Vocational Education: Final Report to Congress**. Washington, DC: Office of the Under Secretary, Policy & Program Studies Service, U. S. Department of Education, 2004. pa. 33.

**Developed by The National Coalition for Family and Consumer Sciences Education**

Local Contact Information: