

idea corner

Team Teaching—An Idea That Works for Me

It's unrealistic to assume that any one person (home economist) has the skills, expertise, imagination, or time to focus on the difficult problems of today's society—to plan, teach, and implement an educational program relevant to present and future needs of individuals and families.

Home economists have experienced much autonomy in the past as they plan and implement programs on their own. Now, the scene is changing. They're coordinating programs with varied agencies, organizations, and other resource people. Team teaching is one way of maximizing the benefits of resources.

Working with community members and other agencies is a team role performed by the home economist who is

concerned with solving community problems. Working with paraprofessionals is one of the most widely used techniques of team teaching. The paraprofessionals can help the home economist reach people with differences in background and different patterns of living, as well as help her focus on the difficult problems in society, those for which no one person has the answer.

The team approach assumes several things about program participants, teaching, and learning. It assumes that increased learning can result if "teachers" (home economists) pool their strengths and areas of expertise. For example, if one home economist is particularly effective at leading small group discussions, it's more sensible to allow many program participants to benefit from that home economist's expertise than make each home economist a discussion leader regardless of competence, or, alternatively, to forego small groups because of the home economist's reluctance to make a positive decision.

Team teaching possibilities are endless. However, the role of the home economist and team member presents many questions. If an experienced professional shifts to team member, will her sense of autonomy decrease and some of her former pride be lost? Or will she grow and develop as she experiences new satisfactions in a free give-and-take of ideas with other colleagues.

We don't have all the answers to team teaching. However, we do know that the shifting of an experienced home economist to team member and the decrease of autonomy hasn't resulted in the negativeness of the accomplishment. One is likely to be most successful and happy in a commitment when functioning as an integrated whole, unified, self-actualized individual.

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