

manitoba home economics teachers' association

M. H.E. T.a. JOURNAL

Volume 46, No. 1 Fall 2013

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The MHETA Journal is the official publication of the Manitoba Home Economic Teachers' Association. Opinions of the writers are not necessarily those of either the Manitoba Home Economics Teachers' Association or The Manitoba Teachers' Society. Contents Indexed in the Canadian Education Index ISSN 0315-9329

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President's Message

Sheryl Berglund

The longer I am a professional home economist and a teacher, the more passionate I am about the value of what we teach. I don't think it's just my age telling me this, but I think our students need us more than ever.

People are choosing to eat away from home much more often or describe cooking from scratch as opening a box and heating up the contents. Clothing manufacturing has left this continent to places where the labour is underpaid and overworked so clothes are very cheap and home sewing looks to be a poor economic choice.Families are under stress from overspending, lack of parenting knowledge and skills, and increasing media influences on children and parents. That's the way I see it, anyway.

My students appear to know much more than I do about certain things—information from the Internet (much of it bad), popular music and the lives of celebrities, hockey and football and baseball scores, online games, Facebook, twitter, and on and on. But do they know how to feed a toddler? Can they really listen to what another person has to say? Can they make the leap from idea to practical application? Do they understand the value of whole foods, quality clothing and where they come from? Can they keep their homes clean?

For many of my students, the answer depends on the SES of the family from which they come. But even some "educated" parents are swayed by poor information available at the touch of their fingertips at any moment of the day. The websites that come up first are not necessarily the websites with the best answers, are they?

That's my community. What about the teachers?

I have experienced frightening "news," including unsolicited nutrition advice given to my students by other teachers, just as off-handed comments and not within their area of expertise nor curricula. Yet everyone is suddenly an expert on nutrition, clothing care, child development, food safety, and many other parts of our courses.

I have also heard about teachers <u>teaching</u> our courses who do not have the theoretical background to give students the correct information.

Many under-qualified teachers have enough passion for their students, professionalism or for the course content and seek out the best answers for their students as I had to do in those years I found myself teaching courses for which I had little or no training (junior high art and grade 9 science, for examples).

I hope they will join MHETA and look to us as a reliable source. If you know one of those teachers, please steer them our way. If you have students who would make excellent home economics teachers, direct them to enroll in appropriate courses. (Yes, people still sew!)

With rumours that the Faculty of Human Ecology is on the chopping block, our experience and knowledge will become more valuable than ever.

I will retire soon. Despite my passion for what I do, there comes a point where you just want to do something else, although in my heart I will always be a home economics teacher. I can't choose who will follow me. For my part, I trust that MHETA members will continue to be as helpful as they can, through example, gentle correction and steering newer teachers towards the best professional practices. International Journal of Consumer Studies

International Journal of Consumer Studies ISSN 1470-6423

Is cooking dead? The state of Home Economics Food and Nutrition education in a Canadian province

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Keywords

Food literacy, food skills, health promotion, home economics, nutrition, youth.

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doi: 10.1111/ijcs.12042

Abstract

High population rates of obesity and nutrition-related chronic diseases warrant an examination of the role of food and nutrition education in health promotion. Using a mixedmethods approach, this study explored student enrolment trends in, and perceptions of, Home Economics Food and Nutrition education in a Canadian province. Enrolment in Home Economics Food and Nutrition courses for grades 7-12 was examined from 2000 to 2010 using administrative data. Perceptions of Home Economics Food and Nutrition education by home economics teachers and superintendents were investigated through in-depth interviews using a grounded theory approach. Results revealed that, although enrolment, including boys, increased slightly over the study period, the majority of children do not take Home Economics Food and Nutrition classes. Further, enrolment decreased significantly from grades 7 (45.77%) to 12 (7.61%). Home Economics Food and Nutrition education faces significant challenges to its future viability. These include: many school administrators, non-home economics teachers and some parents do not value Home Economics Food and Nutrition education: Home Economics Food and Nutrition education is seen as less valuable than math and science for future career planning; outdated curriculum and teaching infrastructure; reduced numbers of new home economics teachers; decreasing student food knowledge and skills; and changing social norms regarding food and eating (increased use of convenience foods across population groups, a youth 'fast food culture' and fewer family meals). Results also indicated that Home Economics Food and Nutrition education is seen as critically important for youth, given that one third of Canadian children are now overweight or obese, fast and highly processed foods make up an increasing proportion of Canadians' diets, and there are increasing dilemmas being faced with food production and food safety. These results signal a growing tension between societal trends towards technological solutions in education and everyday living, and the growing acknowledgement of the externalities associated with these trends including poor health and environmental impacts. Consequently, evidence-based food and nutrition education that is relevant for today's food environment and busy lifestyles is warranted to improve the health of current and future generations. This should be based on a comprehensive food and nutrition framework including functional, interactive and critical 'food literacy'. Policy measures are urgently required to ensure all youth have access to food literacy education.

Introduction

There has been a reduction in food and nutrition knowledge and skills in the general population, which has contributed to serious public health concerns including obesity and other nutrition-related chronic diseases (Caraher and Lang, 1999; Cutler *et al.*, 2003; Jaffe and Gertler, 2006; Øvrebø, 2011). This collection of knowledge and skills is frequently conceptualized as 'cooking' and its diminished societal role has led to a culinary 'de-skilling', which has arisen in part from changing social norms regarding food, 'time-poverty', greater participation in the paid workforce by women, longer working hours, and less in-home food

mentoring (Caraher and Lang, 1999, Jabs *et al.*, 2007; Slater *et al.*, 2012). These trends have arisen concurrently with, and are reinforced by, proliferation of ultra-processed (Moubarac *et al.*, 2012), convenience and fast foods (Kant and Graubard, 2004; Seracon Management Consulting, 2005; Larson *et al.*, 2008; Bauer *et al.*, 2009), which have reduced the need for in-home food planning and preparation from fundamental ingredients (Guthrie *et al.*, 2002). These phenomena have significantly altered the way we eat, and our relationship with food.

Girls, and more recently boys, traditionally received pedagogical training in 'cooking' through home economics courses. These were offered through the public school system and strived to

Table 1 Sample guide questions for in-depth interviews

What do you think about home economics education food and nutrition education for Manitoba students? How has home economics in Manitoba schools changed over the past two decades? How are students 'prepared' for home economics foods and nutrition education today compared with 20 years ago? What are the challenges to maintaining or increasing home economics in your Division? Is home economics food and nutrition education necessary for Manitoba youth? Are there consequences of not having food preparation skills?

include theoretical and applied elements. There is concern, however, that these opportunities are under threat, and this may be contributing to decreased food and nutrition knowledge and skills (Lichtenstein and Ludwig, 2010, Smith and de Zwart, 2010). There is also concern that there is less home-based food and nutrition mentoring occurring, rendering current and subsequent generations increasingly dependent on mass-produced convenience and fast foods (Larson *et al.*, 2006; Beagan *et al.*, 2008; Fulkerson *et al.*, 2011. Höijer *et al.*, 2011). These trends have been speculated to be linked with serious public health issues, most notably, unprecedented adult and child obesity, and extremely high rates of nutrition-related chronic diseases (Swinburn *et al.*, 2011; Roberts *et al.*, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2012).

Given the important role of food and nutrition education on health, it is critical that in-depth research be undertaken in this area. There appears to be limited data within Canada and internationally, which examine the state of, and changes to, food preparation skills within populations, children and families (Chenhall, 2010). Consequently, this study was undertaken to examine trends in, and perceptions of, Home Economics Food and Nutrition (HEFN) education in a Canadian province.

Methods

This mixed-method study was conducted in 2010 in the province of Manitoba, Canada using administrative records and in-depth interviews. The study analyzed student enrolment in HEFN classes over a 10-year period. The study also examined the experiences and perceptions of HEFN programming by teachers and school officials. Enrolment data was anonymized, and interview participants signed a consent form. The study received approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba.

Student enrolment in home economics courses

Data on student enrolment in grades 7–12 in all public schools in Manitoba were obtained from the Professional Certification and Student Records Unit of Manitoba Education (provincial department of education) for the years 2000–2010 inclusive. Enrolment in HEFN courses was determined using specific course codes assigned by Manitoba Education. HEFN programming is offered almost exclusively in grades 7–12. In 2010, there were 498 public schools with grades 7 and/or higher in Manitoba. Enrolment data were extracted into a SAS database for analysis.

At the provincial level, mean annual student enrolment in HEFN and the female : male (F : M) enrolment ratio by grade for the years 2000–2010 were calculated. The data were also divided into three provincial subregions: 'Winnipeg' (four school Divisions within the province's largest city); 'Northern and Remote'

(four school Districts/Divisions in the province's far north and remote areas); and 'Rural and Other' (all other rural and smaller urban school Districts/Divisions primarily in the southern portion of the province). At this level, the mean annual student enrolment and the F : M enrolment ratio were calculated by year and grade.

Experiences and perceptions of HEFN programmes

Experiences, beliefs and perceptions of HEFN public school home economics teachers, and school division superintendents were examined using a qualitative approach based on grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory focuses on social processes and human interactions, and is suited to investigating practical social problems as proposed in this study (Sbaraini *et al.*, 2011). In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals, pairs or triads (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

Sample

A total of 13 teachers and three superintendents were interviewed. Participants from these groups were selected because they are different stakeholders in HEFN education, within the same system (public schools). As the purpose of the study was primarily exploratory, participants were chosen through convenience sampling techniques. Participants were notified through e-mails and telephone calls.

All teachers were female; 5 were from urban schools; 6 were from rural schools; 2 were from northern/remote schools; 9 had more than 10 years of experience teaching HEFN, while 6 had more than 20 years of experience; and 11 of the teachers selfidentified as having specialist training in home economics. Two of the superintendents were from urban school divisions, while one was from a rural school division.

Qualitative data

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the author. Field notes were taken by a research assistant. Guide questions were developed to focus the interviews around concepts and features of interest (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Sample guide questions are shown in Table 1.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by a research assistant. Data analysis was inductive, as the study sought to understand perceptions of HEFN rather than conform data to preconceived categories or theories (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). Qualitative data analysis began after the first two interviews using the constant comparison method (Glaser, 2002). Transcripts were read

and re-read and compared with field notes to gain familiarity with the data. Initial notes, ideas and thoughts were recorded manually. Data were broken down, examined, compared, conceptualized and categorized using open coding (Corbin and Strauss, 1998). This process was done using NVivo 7 software (QSR International, 2008). Theoretical sampling was employed to focus further data collection and find further incidents of the categories of focus.

Memos were constructed around the categories being explored. These focus categories were systematically compared and grouped into more complex themes. Data from new cases were compared with existing cases, and categories and themes were revised (Dye et al., 2000). Emergent theories were developed until no new themes emerged and saturation was reached (Charmaz, 2006). Rigour was demonstrated through the use of verbatim transcription, constant comparison, member checking, exploration of negative cases and reflexive journaling.

Results

Quantitative results

Student Enrolment in HEFN Courses

Between 2000 and 2010 the average enrolment in HEFN classes in Manitoba was 26.90%, with the enrolment increasing by year from a low of 25.67% in 2000 to a high of 29.75% by 2010 (Table 1). Enrolment increased throughout the time period for all grade levels with the exception of grade 8, with grade 10 showing the largest enrolment increase over the study period (15.71% in 2000 to 24.69% in 2010). Rates of HEFN enrolment decreased significantly by grade level, from a high of 46.32 and 48.74% in 2000 and 2010, respectively, in grade 7, to a low of 6.03 and 10.55% for the same years in grade 12.

HEFN enrolment also varied by region (Table 2), with the average highest enrolment rates (all grades) over the study period occurring in Winnipeg (27.80%), followed by Rural and Other Urban (25.50%), and Northern and Remote regions (17.63%). HEFN enrolment increased in regions over the study period, with the largest increase occurring in the Northern and Remote area, doubling from 12.84 to 24.45% between 2000 and 2010 respectively. By 2010, enrolment in the Winnipeg, and Rural and Other Urban regions were almost equal (29.02 vs. 28.87%), while enrolment in the Northern and Remote regions was slightly lower (25.5%).

The F: M ratio (all grades) for the study period averaged 1.32, with the F: M ratio observed to increase by grade level and decrease by ascending study year (Table 2). Over the 10-year study period, the F: M ratio for grade 7 students averaged 1.05 compared with 1.49 for grade 12 students. However, between 2000 and 2010, the F: M ratio was observed to narrow in all grade levels, from 1.06 to 1.0 in grade 7 students, and 1.85 to 1.16 in grade 12 students. By 2010, the F: M ratio for all grades combined had dropped to 1.12 from a high of 1.48 in the year 2000. Across regions, the F: M ratio was observed to be the highest in the Rural and Other Urban region (1.22), and the lowest in the Northern and Remote region (1.15). In all regions, the F: M ratios were observed to narrow by year, decreasing by the year 2010 to 1.01 in the Winnipeg region; 1.15 in the Rural and Other Urban region; and 1.19 in the Northern and Remote region (Table 3).

	% HEFN	F : M ratio	% HEFN	F : M ra								
000	46.32	1.06	44.82	1.09	30.46	1.53	15.71	1.63	10.7	1.73	6.03	1.85
2001	47.05	1.14	45.5	1.12	32.31	1.63	16.97	1.54	10.27	1.75	6.76	1.68
2002	40.73	1.1	42.98	1.11	26.44	1.39	17.27	1.45	10.33	1.54	6.03	1.69
2003	38.15	1.06	40.8	1.12	27.02	1.59	17.05	1.39	11.11	1.59	6.23	1.55
2004	45.24	1.08	44.72	1.1	30.77	1.53	17.23	1.59	8.94	1.5	6.5	1.7
2005	51.81	1.03	49.75	1.05	32.16	1.43	18.39	1.59	10.73	1.41	7.3	1.55
2006	50.0	1.09	50.77	1.07	34.21	1.46	21.33	1.49	11.12	1.27	7.97	1.6
2007	40.67	1.05	37.99	1.05	32.52	1.39	21.75	1.44	11.55	1.3	8.4	1.29
2008	47.32	0.95	45.21	1.05	36.7	1.35	22.97	1.34	14.29	1.24	8.05	1.22
2009	47.49	0.96	42.34	1.04	36	1.19	22.86	1.39	15.13	1.23	9.9	1.07
2010	48.74	1.0	43.75	0.96	35.87	1.22	24.69	1.16	14.89	1.22	10.55	1.16
All years	45.77	1.05	44.42	1.07	32.22	1.43	19.66	1.46	11.73	1.43	7.61	1.49

M ratio grades

All a

All grades % HEFN

12

Grade

Grade

Grade

Grade 9

00

Grade

Grade

Table 2 HEFN enrolment and gender ration by grade and year

<u>.</u>

48 38 38 38

38 .42 34 .33 .25

25.67 26.48 23.96 23.39 25.57 25.57 28.36 29.23

News

32

.19 . 15 .12

25.48 29.09 28.95 29.75 26.90

2008 2007

All years

	Winnipeg		Rural and Other		Northern anf Remote	
	% Enrolled in HEFN	F : M ratio	% Enrolled in HEFN	F : M ratio	% Enrolled in HEFN	F : M ratio
2000	26.24	1.30	23.74	1.25	12.84	1.23
2001	27.82	1.33	22.85	1.31	17.08	1.25
2002	24.36	1.24	24.15	1.27	11.68	0.97
2003	24.95	1.17	23.23	1.26	11.04	1.08
2004	26.67	1.27	24.16	1.26	19.22	1.3
2005	31.12	1.24	25.12	1.15	17.62	1.19
2006	32.33	1.27	26.14	1.19	14.95	1.0
2007	24.26	1.22	26.99	1.18	20.0	1.15
2008	30.39	1.12	27.1	1.18	22.05	1.18
2009	28.66	1.07	28.18	1.19	23.05	1.1
2010	29.02	1.01	28.87	1.19	24.45	1.15
All years	27.80	1.20	25.50	1.22	17.63	1.15

 Table 3
 HEFN enrolment and gender ratio by region

F: M, female : male; HEFN, Home Economics Food and Nutrition.

Qualitative results

Three major themes emerged from the interview data. Firstly, there exist significant external challenges to HEFN programming, which threaten its continued viability and effectiveness. Secondly, there has been a reduction in food and nutrition knowledge and skills in students over the past two decades, which makes HEFN education more difficult and challenging to implement. Thirdly, HEFN programming is more important than ever to prepare youth to effectively navigate the increasingly complex modern foodscape in a healthy way. These are described later.

Theme 1: significant challenges to HEFN programming

HEFN education is undervalued

It was felt strongly that HEFN education is not valued. Teachers identified that it is undervalued by school administrators (principals), other teachers and some parents. Superintendents also reported that many parents and other teachers do not value HEFN education. One of the main reasons is that HEFN is perceived as a 'non-academic' subject that teaches 'lower-level' skills unlike math and science, which are considered important for future career options. Further, where offered, HEFN education is optional in grades 9–12, reinforcing the idea that it is less important.

'Do we still have the same stereotypes of these courses being less important? I think we're changing that. I don't think we're there yet. I think we've got some work to do, and part of it is educators themselves who have opinions that maybe the Western Civilization course is more important than the Nutrition course'. (Superintendent)

'I find students are very thirsty for this subject area, but I feel they're really being drawn to the other sciences and math, because their parents say, "Well this will keep your options much more open." ' (Teacher)

Even though HEFN education is compulsory in some middleschool grades (7 and 8), there has been pressure from the growth of other optional programming, and the number of classes and duration of classes has decreased in recent years. 'I used to be able to teach a full, like a half-year... That has now been watered down, because they've decided to trimester courses. So now you're going down to half a year to a third of a year'. (Teacher)

Teachers felt that administrators did not understand the purpose and outcomes of HEFN education. One stated that her principal described it as a 'frill' while another reported a school where HEFN was offered over the lunch hour.

'I see a definite trend of devaluing it. And . . . the last principal . . . how he devalued it. He did not understand what was going on. He thought we would be catering some activity, and it just hit me, you know, how he didn't understand'. (Teacher)

'Cause this should be familiar stuff! Everybody, anybody can do this, come on! I mean, we do this in our daily life, right? Anybody can teach cooking.... And you'll hear those words'. (Teacher)

Several teachers felt their classes were a 'dumping ground' for behaviourally and intellectually challenged students.

A few participants did report instances where HEFN education was seen as valuable. One superintendent described a case where parents organized a letter-writing campaign to the School Board asking that a non-permanent Home Economics teacher be made permanent.

'In our School Division we do a mall display every three years . . . and like, many people came and said . . . this is great. This is so good that the kids are learning this. And, I had parents that, 'Well, why is my child not learning this?'

... And, you know, I remember this one man saying, 'I want my child to have this!' (Teacher)

All participants stated that traditional gender stereotypes about HEFN education had largely, but not completely, disappeared. Most teachers felt that their profession was still viewed as almost exclusively a career choice for women.

HEFN curriculum renewal has been neglected

All participants stated that the curriculum was outdated (more than 20 years old) because HEFN is not viewed as an important subject

area by the provincial Ministry of Education. It was felt that the curriculum needed revising to reflect changes in nutrition knowledge and societal trends, as well as the learning needs of diverse students (i.e. 'life skills' to more advance science and techniques). It should also have both theoretical and applied aspects.

'I think ... that the [provincial] government has not had respect for the [HEFN] curriculum. And if you look at the dates on the curriculum that we are using ... it's very hard to argue that we are valued ... or we'd have a new curriculum!' (Teacher)

'If the [HEFN] curriculum were updated to reflect society

right now, that would be very helpful'. (Superintendent) A major challenge identified by several teachers was that HEFN programming 'lost ground' to physical education when it became a mandatory core subject in the mid-2000's and added nutrition content.

Teachers were concerned about fewer new teachers entering the field. They also described poor career counselling at the provincial university, difficulty in recruiting new HEFN teachers, especially in northern and remote communities, and were worried that more programmes will be shut down. They felt the shift by some schools to 'food services' or 'culinary arts' programming, which do not have a nutrition focus, was a concern.

The wider food and nutrition landscape undermines HEFN education

Teachers felt that the wider food and nutrition landscape, including family/home and school environments, had a significant impact on perceptions of HEFN education, and what happened in their classrooms.

Family/home food environment: Teachers reported many students coming from homes with dual-income parents, one-parent or blended families, and many were in extracurricular activities and had jobs. This contributed to family food norms, which centre on greater use of convenience and fast foods; decreased time spent preparing foods; fewer family meals; and decreased mentoring of children in food skills.

'No one has a stay-at-home parent anymore. So, everybody's going home tired and hungry, feed the kids, get them off to soccer, so there's no time where parents are spending time with their kids in the kitchen'. (Teacher)

'But they're coming up with those products, and I think, you know, it's kind of a catch-22. They're coming up with those products, all of the processed, all of the ready to eat, ready to heat, you know, crap. Because people are so busy. And so, it's kind of the consumer's driving what's being offered. And we're getting into this vicious cycle where that's all we're eating, because that's available'. (Teacher)

'I remember one boy saying "this is how you eat, right?" I said "what do you mean?" He goes "I don't know, I always sit in front of the TV." '(Teacher)

School food environment: Teachers described the school food environments as contradicting or undermining what they were trying to teach, which negatively affected student and staff attitudes towards HEFN. For example, school celebrations frequently featured high sugar/fat/salt foods (baked goods, salty snacks, soft drinks, pizza and other fast food) and teachers and principals often use 'junk' food as rewards.

Theme 2: reduction in student food related knowledge, skills and attitudes

All but one teacher who had taught for more than 10 years identified that many more students are entering HEFN classes with no or little knowledge of food, food preparation, basic equipment usage and food-related hygiene compared with the past.

'Kids have a harder time. The basic cooking skills – when I first started out, the student was the exception who didn't know basic operation in the kitchen. And now, it's coming around where kids that have good solid strong skills in the kitchen stand out. And what I've noticed in the last couple years, that the cleanliness is more of an issue.... I find that kids don't come in with as many of those skills form home'. (Teacher)

Teachers indicated that there has been a decrease in food exposure and mentoring at home. Many of their students were not permitted to use equipment (stove/oven, knives) at home because parents may be working and viewed the kitchen as unsafe, or it is too much work to clean up after them. Further, many homes lacked basic equipment, leaving students unable to translate the knowledge and skills they learned to the home environment. One teacher described how a student did not know what a 'pitcher' was, because all beverages in his house came ready-to-drink in disposable packaging.

'Now, many students don't know how to read a recipe; have never used a knife; don't know how to use the stove'. (Teacher)

'Parents say "I know I should do that with them, but it's just quicker if I can get it done myself. And I can clean up." 'And in the same token, you're getting ticked because your kids

and your husband aren't helping you out!' (Teacher) Some teachers described that these changes in family food norms and expectations negatively impacted their standards of teaching and evaluation.

'Well, one of the projects I give the grade nines, is they have to cook . . . a meal at home and do a write-up and plan the menu . . . make the grocery list. And every year it's getting harder and harder to get them to do that. I found myself accepting ramen noodles. That was the end of it for me! Ha ha! But I'm finding it harder to get the kids to do that and do the write-up. And you know, mom says it's too much trouble'. (Teacher)

Several teachers described exceptions, such as students choosing healthy snacks and lunches (i.e. grapes and snap peas), and one superintendent felt that students were more nutrition-conscious than in the past. One teacher described her students being 'thirsty' for the knowledge and skills they were gaining in HEFN class, because they were not learning this at home.

Theme 3: HEFN education is critically important for preparing students to navigate the modern foodscape

All participants felt that HEFN education was important for Manitoba youth, but needs to reflect current food and nutrition knowledge, issues and contemporary lifestyles. Increasing rates of nutrition-related chronic diseases and obesity (especially in

children), as well as dilemmas being faced with food production and food safety, were cited as important indicators of why HEFN education is critically important.

'If obesity's an epidemic in the world, it's an epidemic in Manitoba, and we're dead last'. (Superintendent)

Teachers expressed that HEFN education was essential for developing important life skills that included food planning, preparation and hygiene, following directions, financial management, teamwork, but went beyond these to include food and nutrition science, and awareness of more complex food system issues (i.e. effects of food production on the natural environment). They also felt that many students may not be learning these skills at home, and that HEFN education should start early and be mandatory in at least some grades.

'They're not learning those basic things at home. They're not learning how to eat properly . . . and there is more of a need, even though there's less opportunity for them to take it'. (Teacher)

'Yes, it should be mandatory. It should be mandatory and it should be available in every building. And in my school it is not available for anyone above grade 10. Grade 10! I have no time on my timetable'. (Teacher)

'Young people who have taken optional courses in Human Ecology or Home Ec over the senior years are leaving with life skills that have them prepared to be better citizens. We need to offer young people experiences where they learn to work with others as they do in Home Ec. Where they learn to develop a skill that's going to be there for their life'. (Superintendent)

Discussion

The results of this research demonstrate that Manitoba children may be at significant risk of not acquiring the food and nutrition knowledge and skills they require to navigate the contemporary foodscape in a healthy manner. The majority do not have an opportunity to receive HEFN education or do not avail themselves of it. They also do not appear to be adequately mentored at home. Although, overall, HEFN enrolment, including boys, has increased slightly over the past decade in Manitoba, enrolment decreased dramatically from grades 7 to 12. The breakdown in transfer of critically important food knowledge and skills, which this study suggests is now occurring, may be predisposing youth to significant negative health issues as they become increasingly reliant upon nutritionally poor mass-produced convenience and fast foods. The fact that one-third of Manitoba youth are now overweight or obese highlights the gravity of the current situation (Yu et al., 2010).

Provincial education ministries establish educational policies in Canada. The high variability of HEFN education programming throughout Manitoba is likely due to differential priorities, teaching resources and facilities at the Divisional level. Greater increases in the North may reflect Divisional policies towards promoting optional programming. The more equitable enrolment between boys and girls in urban centres observed may reflect more progressive societal attitudes towards male involvement in food-related activities (Harnack *et al.*, 1998; Sayer, 2005; Marshall, 2006).

This study provides a number of clues into why 'cooking' and HEFN education have become diminished, as well as why their revival may be necessary. First, it appears that HEFN is seen as less important than subjects such as math and science, which are considered essential for future career options. These views have been observed in other Canadian provinces (Smith and de Zwart, 2010) and other countries including Britain where attempts to make home economics a 'foundation subject' were not successful (Murphy, 2011). Secondly, the Manitoba HEFN curriculum has not been updated in over 20 years, and does not reflect current nutrition knowledge. Thirdly, the wider food and nutrition landscape is inundated with nutritionally poor fast and convenience foods, which support busy family lifestyles, yet diminishes interest in and valuing of home food preparation skills that are core to HEFN education. As a result, students entering into HEFN programmes increasingly do not even have the most basic of food preparation skills to build upon. Finally, results paradoxically indicate that HEFN education is overwhelmingly viewed as critically important for maintaining the long-term health and well-being of Manitoba's children.

The devaluing of HEFN education found in this study reflects wider societal norms regarding food. Reduced time spent planning and preparing food in the home, ubiquitous use of ultra-processed convenience foods increasingly consumed outside traditional meal structures, school food practices that contradict healthy eating guidelines, and the 'fast food culture' of youth all present significant challenges to the transfer and promotion of 'cooking' and fundamental food skills. And while HEFN can be a potential solution to 'home deficiencies' with regard to food skills (Höijer et al., 2011), it can also be seen as less relevant in the context of the modern foodscape. A vicious cycle ensues that threatens to accelerate the loss of fundamental food and nutrition knowledge, further distancing students from educational opportunities and critical knowledge and skills (Caraher and Lang, 1999). While there is not a causal relationship between lack of 'cooking' skills and obesity, there is growing evidence that the lack, or sporadic availability of, school- and home-based food and nutrition education is detrimental for youth health and should be revitalized (Larson et al., 2006; Lichtenstein and Ludwig, 2010; Smith and de Zwart, 2010; Lai-Yeung, 2011; Øvrebø, 2011). Øvrebø (2011) cautions, however, that course content must be relevant and address both nutrition theory and practice.

Results of this study suggest an emerging tension between societal trends towards technological solutions in education and everyday living, and the growing acknowledgement of the externalities associated with these trends. The current discourse on career and academic success favours achievement (especially female) in subjects like math, science and computer technology (Alphonso, 2012). At the same time a technology-driven food system is increasingly being recognized for its detrimental effects on human health (Guthrie et al., 2002; Larson et al., 2008; The Conference Board of Canada, 2012). HEFN education might seem a nostalgic nod to the benefits of 'home cooking' that is out of step with a fast-paced world of different priorities, were it not for the deeply concerning state of health among Canadian youth. Overweight and obesity rates in 5–17-years-olds are at an all-time high of 31.5% (Roberts et al., 2012), and only 5% of male and 7% of female grade six studentss meet the minimum servings for four food groups (Rossiter et al., 2012).

Table 4 Food literacy framework

Functional food literacy: basic communication of credible, evidence-based food and nutrition information, involving accessing, understanding and evaluating information

- Interactive food literacy: development of personal skills regarding food and nutrition issues, involving decision making, goal setting and practices to enhance nutritional health and well-being
- Critical food literacy: respecting different cultural, family and religious beliefs in respect to food and nutrition (including nutritional health), understanding the wider context of food production and nutritional health, and advocating for personal, family and community changes that enhance nutritional health

Adapted from the B.C. Health Literacy Framework (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2011).

At the nexus of this tension is the need to examine the role of fundamental skills and technologies that can help re-balance health and socio-economic imperatives. These results highlight the need to 'close the loop' between food and nutrition education, and health and well-being, and the need to reinvigorate discussions on how to best translate these essential knowledge and skills. Home economics education is a suitable vehicle for this knowledge translation, as home economics emphasizes critical thinking and holistic approaches to solving complex social problems (Smith and de Zwart, 2010). Therefore, cooking does not appear to be 'dead', but is in serious need of resuscitation and transformation to fit with today's lifestyles, and food and education environments. One step in this direction would be the development of a food and nutrition curriculum based upon a comprehensive food and nutrition framework encompassing applied and theoretical aspects of functional, interactive and critical 'food literacy' (Table 4).

Limitations

This study has several limitations. Firstly, the study participants provided perspectives from the view of teachers and superintendents, while other stakeholders, including students and parents, may have different perspectives. Secondly, there were some errors in the enrolment data provided by Manitoba Education including missing data that had not been submitted to the Professional Certification and Student Records Unit. This missing data, however, represented a small portion of the overall data and likely do not impact the trends observed. Finally, the enrolment data did not include independent schools or First Nations on-reserve schools.

Future research should include in-depth examination of food and nutrition education practices in homes and schools, as well as perceptions of youth and other stakeholders regarding key focus areas for food and nutrition education and subsequent curriculum development. In addition, other policy measures to augment HEFN education should be examined including restricting advertisement of low-nutrient foods to children and subsidizing healthy food options.

Conclusion

The contemporary foodscape is growing more complex and difficult to navigate in a healthy way. This study lends evidence to the growing body of literature suggesting that rapid proliferation and normalization of fast and convenience foods, paired with a timeimpoverished and increasingly de-skilled population threaten the health of current and future generations. While by no means a single solution, it is essential that young people are equipped with the knowledge and skills to interact with this foodscape through appropriate educational opportunities in order to have selfdetermination over their food and health. These opportunities must not be left to chance, choice or to the corporate food sector. School-based food and nutrition education, as a cornerstone of health, should be promoted as being of equal importance to math and science, and essential for long-term academic and career success. Unfortunately, too many children are missing out on the opportunity. Leadership from provincial governments and education authorities, and appropriate policy measures are urgently required to ensure all youth have access to foundational, evidencebased education in food literacy.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the University of Manitoba Research Grants Program, the Manitoba Home Economics Teachers Association, the Professional Certification and Student Records Unit of Manitoba Education, Jennifer Bewza, Aynslie Hinds, and all the study participants.

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U of M study looks at state of home economics programs in Manitoba schools

Nutritional sciences professor Joyce Slater wants educators and parents to better appreciate the value of home economics education

by Lorraine Stevenson in Country Crossroads

Nutritional sciences professor Joyce Slater wants educators and parents to better appreciate the value of home economics education.

If the student in your family takes home economics when school resumes this fall, they'll be in a minority.

A new study in Manitoba shows the majority of schools don't offer it and if they do, few students beyond Grade 9 take it.

"I think there's an impression that all middle years students (Grades 7 and 8) in Manitoba are receiving home economics education. They're not. Less than half of them are," said Joyce Slater, an assistant professor in the human nutritional sciences department at the University of Manitoba.

In a study of enrolment trends between 2000 and 2010, Slater found that only 26 per cent of students in Grades 7 to 12 took home economics. And while the program is mandatory in some middle schools, others don't offer it at all.

And after Grade 9, when home economics becomes an optional course, enrolment drops sharply. Only 10 per cent of Grade 12 took home economics in 2010, says Slater's study, entitled, Is Cooking Dead?

Slater also interviewed 13 teachers and superintendents in rural and northern Manitoba, as well as Winnipeg. She was told home economics tends to be an "undervalued" and "lower-level skill" subject, with many parents and even other teachers viewing it as far less important than math and science.

"There's pressure from parents and sometimes educators to encourage students to go into what's perceived to be more of the higher career path choice courses," Slater said.

"There's this view: 'You don't need this other stuff."

Home economics must also compete with a greatly expanded number of optional courses nowadays, there's

a shortage of qualified teachers, and the curriculum in Manitoba is also badly out of date.

"The curriculum is almost 30 years old," said Slater. "It's really old. It's probably one of, if not the oldest, in terms of not being renewed."

Teachers say the curriculum needs revising to reflect changes in nutrition knowledge, societal trends, and a more diverse student population.

Paradoxically, the other significant challenge is that an increasing number of children lack even a rudimentary understanding of how a kitchen operates. Many students don't know how to read a recipe, and some had never handled a kitchen knife or turned on an oven. Many don't have a basic understanding of food or nutrition, let alone food preparation or proper hygiene and safety in the kitchen.

"There's some serious issues out there with a deskilled generation," said Slater. "Actually, I think there is a couple of deskilled generations out there."

Other concerns raised by teachers include how the school food environment can contradict or undermine what they're trying to teach about healthy eating. School celebrations often feature high-sugar baked goods, salty snacks, soft drinks and fast food. As well, 'junk' food is often used as a reward in schools.

Her study has given her a new view of the role of home economics education, said Slater.

"I find I've changed my language when I talk about this now," she said.

"I'm not talking about basic skills anymore. It's about fundamental knowledge and competencies. Examples would be knowing how much food you need to eat, and having a basic understanding of what you're eating, knowing how to grocery shop, and how to read a food label."

Her main concern is that the opportunity to learn

these valuable life skills is diminishing simultaneously in schools and homes.

With childhood obesity at an all-time high, and the incidence of nutrition-related chronic diseases also rising, kids need to become food literate, she said.

"We need to give people fundamental knowledge and skill sets so that they can go out and engage out there in the food environment, which is a really complicated food environment," she said.

"It's not just about cooking. It's about knowing how to survive in the current foodscape." Slater said she hopes her study, the first of its kind in Canada, will prompt educators to rethink their view of home economics courses.

"Educational authorities are responding to different things and this has become marginalized," she said. "But I think we're coming around to where people are seeing that this is not what people thought it was, and has potential to become something really important."

Bring back home ec!

The case for a revival of the most retro class in school

By Ruth Graham | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT OCTOBER 13, 2013

What's wrong with young people today? It's a perennial question, but a certain pattern can be detected in the concerns being aired right now. There's health and nutrition: Almost a third of Americans under age 19 are now overweight or obese, habituated to a diet of cheap processed food. There's financial literacy, with debt spiraling up to unsustainable levels as students juggle increasingly complex burdens of credit payments and student loans. And there's the general issue of self-sufficiency, with record proportions of young adults living with their parents, unable to patch together the means and the will to set up house for themselves.

These are symptoms of a rocky economy, of course, but they suggest another diagnosis as well: Many young Americans now lack the domestic savvy that it takes to thrive. The basics of cooking, shopping, and "balancing a checkbook"—once seen as knowledge that any young woman, at least, should have—are now often not learned by young people of either gender, even as we've come to understand their major societal implications. And for adults, these skills have receded as well. In the family of 2013, more than 70 percent of children live with two busy working parents or a single parent, which means more takeout, cheap replacement goods instead of the ability to fix or mend, and fewer opportunities to learn essential home skills within the home itself.

One solution to these 21st-century problems sounds surprisingly retro: a revival of home economics class. The words "home economics" likely conjure visions of future homemakers quietly whisking white sauce or stitching rickrack onto an apron. But to a handful of people thinking big about these problems, they evoke something different: A forward-thinking new kind of class that would give a generation of young people—not just women, but everyone—the skills to shop intelligently, cook healthily, manage money, and live well. The historian Helen Zoe Veit has argued that home ec has a key role to play in treating the obesity epidemic. "A beautiful way to start solving this problem would be to get more people cooking," she said recently. "We have a blueprint of how to do this, and it's through home economics."

A domestic science class at the Horace Mann School in Tulsa, Okla., in 1917.

Michael Moss, an investigative journalist whose best-selling recent book "Salt, Sugar, Fat" traces how food companies hooked Americans on processed foods, also wants to see a revitalized home economics. In his book, Moss writes that companies including General Foods "infiltrated" home ec classes in the 1950s, turning teachers into veritable saleswomen for convenience foods. Moss sees this as the beginning of the end of a culture that valued home-cooked meals made

with "real" ingredients. "The decline of home economics is a huge part of the shift in this country to mindless eating," he said. Its revival could help undo that damage. Given its potential impact, why isn't such a revival underway? In part, home ec has become a victim of education trends: School budgets are contracting, many more students are preparing for college, and class hours are increasingly devoted to a narrow core of academic subjects and testing. Home economics also has to conquer its associations with training noncollege-bound girls to be good wives. Then there's the pesky fact that home economics hasn't technically disappeared: It still exists, rebranded with a clunky and still largely unknown new name, and has expanded its umbrella, in the knowledge it covers, nearly to the breaking point.

Still, it wasn't so long ago that we had a model for setting our young people on the road to self-sufficiency. Could a reimagined home economics teach a new generation of children how to thrive?

If any single person could be said to be the founder of home economics, it is the formidable Ellen Swallow Richards, a Bostonian who was the first woman admitted to MIT. She served as the first president of the American Home Economics Association and was instrumental in coming up with the term "home economics," officially adopted at a conference "for the betterment of the home" in 1899, just in time for the dawn of a scientifically minded century. Though it may now seem impossible, the discipline was originally rooted in progressive and even feminist thinking. The idea was to bring scientific rigor into the home, and to professionalize women's domestic work, bringing dignity and efficiency to both.

Elite colleges like NYU, Penn State, Cornell, and the University of Chicago soon had home economics departments that trained professionals working for corporations and the government, including the federal Bureau of Home Economics, founded in 1923. Those departments also began turning out a steady supply of school teachers, which helped turn home economics into a standard subject in grade schools and high schools around the country. During the Depression, Eleanor Roosevelt urged all girls to take home ec to learn how to run an efficient household; students in nutrition classes were said to be "combat troops" against malnutrition. In 1959, about half of all American high school girls were enrolled in home ec, where they learned how to cook, sew, make a budget, and, crucially, how to shop. Boys were occasionally included-"Boys Take Home Ec, Too!" trend stories have been around since at least 1930-but they were more often shuttled into shop class.

A boy tries out home ec in Denver in 1970.

By the 1960s and 1970s, however, once-revolutionary ideas about sanitation and nutrition had become conventional wisdom. Home economists, including teachers, had also become hopelessly entangled with the interests of food and appliance companies, promoting convenience foods and consumerism in the classroom. And as the women's movement picked up steam and women moved in-

creasingly into the workplace, the notion of teaching girls to cook and sew while boys hammered on wooden tie racks came to seem not just old-fashioned, but reactionary. When activist Robin Morgan addressed the American Home Economics Association in 1972, she said, "As a radical feminist, I am here addressing the enemy," and accused home ec classes of producing young women who were "a limp, jibbering mass of jelly waiting for marriage." She might have been the most colorful critic, but she was far from the only one.

With these shifts, a class that had once taught the essentials was now seen as anything but essential itself. Where home ec had once generally been required, classes gradually became optional. Many college-level programs disbanded completely in the 1960s, or changed their names to things like "human ecology" or "human sciences." The shift took longer to reach middle and high schools, but in 1993, members of the American Home Economics Association (which represents teachers, academics, and professionals) convened at a major conference in Scottsdale, Ariz., and voted to change their name to the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.

Rebranding didn't end up changing the discipline's image much. Though all states still offer Family and Consumer Sciences, or FCS, in some form and in some schools, the numbers are grim. As of a 2006 survey, only three states still required any kind of FCS class in junior high or high school. Home ec once lasted a whole year; today, classes are often just nine weeks long. The number of secondary

students enrolled in FCS programs has declined by 45 percent in the last decade, to about 3 million students, according to new, still-unpublished research by Carol Werhan, a professor in family and consumer sciences education at Pittsburg State University in Kansas.

Part of the problem may be that no one seems to know what FCS is, exactly-or who it's for. The AAFCS describes its domain as a body of skills and knowledge "that helps people make informed decisions about their well being, relationships, and resources to achieve optimal quality of life." In practice, it covers an astonishing range of subjects, and increasingly, it means vocational training for high school students interested in careers in hospitality, tourism, social work, food science, child care, fashion design, and other fields. The class is almost always an elective at the high school level, and about twothirds of students are female. (In middle schools, which are likelier to have all students take the same classes, the breakdown is closer to 50-50.) If home ec prepared women to be good housewives, then FCS now prepares its students for lowpaid work in traditionally feminine parts of the service sector.

Within the world of "family and consumer sciences," there are few voices agitating for a dramatic reimagining of what the classroom could look like. (The FCS experts all women—I interviewed for this story were unfailingly polite, but I've never reported a story in which more sources asked to be taken off the record before saying anything even remotely critical.) Instead, the voices speaking up loudest on behalf of a revived, revitalized home ec belong to outsiders. If the community itself is stuck handwringing over branding, it's hard to escape the conclusion that one of the biggest enemy of home economics may just be home economics.

What do we really want kids to learn in school, anyway? Although we don't test our graduating seniors on whether a carrot is healthier than a Cheeto, many of us would still like to be sure they finish school knowing the answer. In recent years, the focus on better nutrition and health, from Michael Pollan's "Omnivore's Dilemma" to Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" initiative, has drawn attention to how we're teaching our kids to eat-and the resulting societal shift has made the idea of in-school cooking classes (and even school gardens) once again attractive to both wealthy and low-income school districts. "We're at this tipping point where more and more people are caring about what they put in their bodies," Moss said. "That includes kids, too."

Many of the advocates for a home ec revival are focused on this question of how and what we eat. Alice Lichtenstein, a professor of nutrition science and policy at Tufts, was the lead author on a 2010 Journal of the American Medical Association commentary titled "Bring Back Home Economics," which argued for home ec's role in combating obesity; she imagines a "comprehensive curriculum" covering "basic cooking techniques; caloric requirements; sources of food, from farm to table; budget principles; food safety; nutrient information, where to find it and how to

use it; and effects of food on wellbeing and risk for chronic disease." A class could include a field trip to the grocery store, where Moss suggests students could be "taught not only how to read the fine print, but how to interpret the touting that goes on on the front of packages like 'added calcium.'"

If anything, today's recessionscarred young people need these lessons more desperately than their grandmothers did. "Home ec when I was [enrolled] was less important societally than it is today," said Ann Cooper, director of nutrition services for Boulder Valley School District in Colorado and a major voice for school-food reform. She learned how to cook from her grandmother, but many young people today aren't so lucky.

In the ideal, home ec might be more than a shopping and cooking class. Most people may not balance a literal checkbook these days, but basic financial literacy is arguably more important than ever: As pensions disappear, Americans are increasingly responsible for setting up their own retirement plans; credit card offers and student loans are complex decisions with lifelong repercussions. Even sewing is gaining a certain relevance, as consumers grow increasingly wary of disposable garments made in unregulated factories overseas. An ambitious class could also include things like basic household plumbing or car repair. And remember woodworking? In junior high, Lichtenstein ended up in a woodshop class with two other girls after home ec filled up. "That was fabulous," she said. "It showed me how pivotal a course like that could be." The skills she learned still come in handy around the house.

These are all basic skills, but they're not being treated as basic by our test-driven education system. The people advocating for a new home ec see promise in the idea of a home ec class for all, targeted at an audience broader than just women, service workers, or students interested in becoming professional chefs. "If it's required of everyone," Lichtenstein said, "then there's a message sent that this is basic, critical knowledge, and not something to fill up the time of kids who are not academically inclined." For a revitalized home economics to succeed, it will need to teach skills that all of us would want our kids to know.

No matter what the new home ec looks like in its particulars, advocates envision benefits beyond students's own lives: After all, their parents may not know how to cook, sew, or choose a low-interest credit card, either, and might pick up some information themselves. "When the government wanted people to stop smoking, or even more important, wear seat belts, the ads weren't geared toward parents, they were geared toward kids," Cooper said. "We're not going to turn it around overnight, but when we do, it absolutely has a trickle-up effect."



Back Row (left to right): Dr. Orest Cap, Tyler Zilkie (year 2), Oleksa Balko (year 1), Jonathan Klos (year 1), Maya Radunz (year 2)

Front Row (left to right): Shirley Ewanchuk (year 2), Asifa Bokhari (year 2), Samantha Einarson (year 2), Leanne Oakes (year 1)

Focus on Food



Waste Less—Enjoy More Fresh Produce

by Teresa Makarewicz, P.H.Ec.

It's a fact! Canadians waste food – especially fresh produce. With careful planning, and proper storage, families can save money and time and always have nutritious produce on hand for quick and healthful meals.

Tips to Reduce Waste, Save Money and Enjoy More Produce

- Think ahead. Plan meals, make a grocery list and stick to it.
- Buy only what you need, and use in reasonable time. A 20 lb bag of potatoes is no bargain if it spoils.
- Visit farm markets early in the day; freshly-picked greens and herbs wilt rapidly in the sun.
- Keep produce cool. Take along a cooler to safely transport produce home in a hot car.
- Before storing, remove elastic bands or twist ties to avoid bruising of produce.
- Store produce unwashed. With the exception of leafy greens, fresh fruits and veggies have a natural protective coating and should not be washed before storing which speeds up spoilage.
- Separation of fruits and vegetables is vital. As fruits ripen, they produce a colourless, odorless, tasteless

gas called ethylene that triggers ripening and causes vegetables to spoil.

- Pack produce loosely in perforated plastic bags. To perforate, snip several holes in the bag with scissors.
- Check refrigerated produce regularly. Remove spoiling items. It's true! 'One bad apple can spoil the whole bunch.'

Some Fruits and Vegetables Need Special Attention

- Apples ripen 10 times faster at room temperature. Store in a perforated bag in the crisper.
- Keep unripe fruits, such as peaches, nectarines, plums, pears, and melon on the counter at room temperature but out of direct sunlight, until they yield to gentle pressure and then refrigerate.
- Avoid bitter carrots by storing them away from apples.
- Leave corn husks on and refrigerate cobs in a perforated plastic bag. Husk when ready to use.

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- Store onions and potatoes in a cool, dark, dry place but not side by side. Potatoes decrease the shelf life of onions, causing them to rot prematurely. Light causes potatoes to turn green and bitter.
- Sweet potatoes should not be refrigerated as the core will harden. For longer storage, keep cool around 55° to 60°F (13 to 16°C) or at room temperature for one week.
- Broccoli and cauliflower can be stored whole in a perforated plastic bag or cut into florets and stored (unwashed) in a plastic bag—ready for quick use.
- Store tomatoes at room temperature away from direct sunlight. Refrigeration changes their texture and flavour.

- Cover herbs with a damp cloth or paper towel and refrigerate in a plastic bag or container. Or trim ends, place in a jar with water; cover loosely and refrigerate. Remember to change the water every couple of days.
- Can, pickle or freeze produce at its peak of freshness; If you do need to throw out produce—compost it back to the soil or use a green bin.
- Make a nutritious pot of soup to use-up veggies and to avoid waste.

Vegetable Garden Soup

This flavourful, nutrient-packed soup served with a thick slice of whole grain bread is sure to satisfy.

8 cups (2 L) 'low-sodium' chicken or

vegetable broth

- 2 large baking or yellow-fleshed potatoes, peeled and diced (about 3
- potatoes, peeled and
- cups/750 mL) 2 leeks, white and light green parts
- only, thinly sliced
- 2 cups (500 mL) thinly sliced green cabbage
- 2 cups (500 mL) small cauliflower florets
- 3 carrots, sliced
- 2 stalks celery, sliced
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 can (19 oz/540 mL) white kidney

beans, drained and rinsed

1/3 cup (75 mL) each, chopped fresh dill

and fresh parsley

1/4 tsp (1 mL) freshly ground pepper Salt to taste

- 1. In a large pot, combine broth, potatoes and leeks. Cover and bring to boil over high heat. Add cabbage,
- 2. cauliflower, carrots, celery and bay leaf. Cover and return to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer gently
- 3. for 20 minutes or until vegetables are tender-crisp. Add beans, dill, parsley, pepper and salt to taste.
- 4. Simmer, uncovered for 10 minutes or until beans are heated through. Remove bay leaf and serve.
- 5. To store, let cool for 30 minutes; refrigerate, uncovered, in a shallow container until cold. Cover and refrigerate
- 6. for up to 3 days. Reheat slowly. Makes 8 -10 servings.
- 7. Helpful Hints: Substitute kidney beans with 2 cups (500 mL) frozen lima beans.
- 8. Fresh herbs are a must in this recipe and can be increased to suit your taste.
- 9. No leeks? No worries. Use 1 cup (250 mL) chopped shallots or cooking onion.

Teresa Makarewicz, P.H.Ec. is an Ancaster-based Professional Home Economist and owner of Foodgroups Consulting. An expert in recipe development, testing, food styling and media presentations, Teresa has focused much of her food and nutrition career teaching consumers how to use local produce. She is a member of the Ontario Home Economics Association.

The Ontario Home Economics Association (OHEA), a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members so that they can assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life.

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Cellphone/iPod Case

Materials & Supplies Necktie Ruler Fabric scissors Large button (about 1-inch in diameter) Needle and thread or sewing machine Ponytail holder or 3 inches of elastic cord

Directions

1. Cut your necktie 12½ inches from the wide end. Set the upper, skinny portion of the tie aside for another project.

2. With the wrong side of the tie facing up, make a fold ½ inch down from the cut end. Sew in place with a running stitch.

3. Flip the tie back over onto its right side. Place a large button about 2 inches down from the sewn edge. Sew this button into place.

4. Flip the tie over so the wrong side is facing up and the pointed end points away from you. Fold up the bottom 4 inches of the tie and stitch up the left and



right edges to form a pocket. The button should be on the front and center of this pocket.

5. Attach the ponytail holder to the project by sewing the ponytail holder onto the inside edge of the pointed tip of the tie. The pointed end of the tie is now a top flap to the gadget case and the elastic cord is now the fastener. Flip down the flap and hook the cord over the button to secure your gadget in the necktie holder.



Felt Oogee Ornament

This tutorial, by Betz White from blog.betzwhite.com, is for personal use only. The instructions, photographs and items made from this tutorial are not to be reproduced commercially.

I woke up this morning with an image in my head of a felt snowflake. So I asked my kids to make a few traditional fold and cut paper snowflakes for me before they left for school. I wanted to use them as templates for my idea. Instead, my 10 yr old showed me a 3D paper snowflake they had made in his art class. I loved the beauty and simplicity of it, so I changed my course! After some quick google research, I've found that apparently this particular 3D Paper Snowflake is quite prevalent on the internet. (there is even a 3D Paper Snowflake Flickr Group!) I made a few prototype attempts, applying the 3D Paper Snowflake Tutorial to felt and came to the following conclusion.....it worked! I am in love with the curves and the "Ogee" shape of this design. It amazes me that it is created from a square and a few straight cuts. The original paper snowflake is made up of 6 of these shapes, each becoming one "arm" of the snowflake. I decided to stop at just one shape. The following design uses a thick 3mm 100% wool felt. I had been saving this piece for just the right project, and this was it!



Step 1: Cut one 6"x 6" square of felt. (For a piece this large, the felt needs to be pretty stiff, such as this 3mm wool felt. A 2mm thick felt would also work well, but I suggest decreasing the overall scale of the design for better stability.) Mark lines 3/4" apart, parallel to the perimeter, using a chalk liner pen. Mark a line diagonally across the square from corner to corner.



Step 2: Using a straight edge and an Xacto knife, cut along the first line from the corner to about 1/4" from the diagonal line. Make 2-3 passes with the blade, cutting a little at a time and keeping even pressure on the straight edge so that the felt does not creep while being cut. Repeat until all cuts have been made, keeping the felt intact at each corner on the diagonal line. Chalk lines can be brushed away.



Step 3: Lift the corners of the center square and hand stitch the ends together with matching thread. Secure and cut the thread, hiding the knot between layers.



Step 4: Turn the piece over and lift the corners of the second square. Overlap the points and stitch together at each point.



Step 5: Continue turning the piece over, overlapping points and stitching until all 4 squares are stitched.



Step 6: Create a hanging loop at one end with a clear monofilament thread. I added a few felt balls (natch) to mine.

This makes a large ornament, about 10" in total length. I hung it in our big kitchen window, but was unable to take any good shots of it today as it was too gloomy for nice photography.

I also experimented with 3" squares of wool blend felt (thinner) and marking the cut lines 1/4" apart. I was able to use Fabric-Tac glue instead of hand stitching the corners. This felt was not rigid enough to hold the shape of the 6 piece snowflake when I tried to put several of them together. So, I opted to string them together vertically.

Felt projects inspired by paper projects is a natural. They don't always translate, but the result can be surprising, evolving into something new altogether. Like, have you seen these felt bows? Even my ol' pomander rosettes *grew* out of a paper project!



Hoot for the Holidays felt owl ornament

- Cut one of each piece (excet 2 of body) from wool felt
- Sew pieces to body front as desired (use photos as guide)
- Wings and eyes overlap the belly and beak slightly
- Sew on button eyes
- sew on ribbon loop at top
- sew body back to body front around edge
- stuff and close edge



Hexie HANDBAG

Create a cozy tote for fall featuring custom piping and hand-stitched velvet hexagons.

Supplies

- 1 yard of suiting fabric
- 1¹/₂ yards of lining fabric (such as silk doupioni)
- 2 yards of stiff fusible interfacing
- ¹/₈ yard of lightweight fusible interfacing
- Velvet scraps in assorted colors
- Two 4"x25" strips of contrasting fabric (handles)
- Matching all-purpose thread
- Fusible cording (See "Source.")
- Zipper foot
- Hand sewing needle

Cut

Download the Hexie Handbag pattern and hexagon template from sewnews.com/web_extras.

From the suiting, lining and stiff interfacing, cut two large panels, two side panels, one base, two side pockets and two large pockets each.

From the velvet and lightweight interfacing, cut eight hexagons each.



Construct

Use 1/2" seam allowances unless otherwise noted.

Trim 1/2" from each stiff interfacing perimeter. Center each interfacing piece over the corresponding suiting wrong side; fuse following the manufacturer's instructions. From the lining fabric, cut enough $1\frac{3}{8}$ "-wide bias strips to create 70" of piping. Piece the strips along the short ends with right sides together; press open the seams. With wrong sides together, wrap the bias strips around the fusible cording. Following the manufacturer's instructions, press the seam allowance to fuse.



With raw edges aligned, align the piping on the right side along one large-pocket upper edge. Clip the piping seam allowance at the corner point to pivot. Trim the excess piping at the side edge. Position one lining pocket right side down over the front pocket, sandwiching the piping. Install a zipper foot onto the machine. Stitch the pocket upper edge close to the piping. Turn the pocket right side out; press. Repeat to create the back and side pockets.

With right sides facing up, place each pocket over the corresponding purse pieces, aligning the sides and lower edge; baste using a ¼" seam allowance. Stitch the front and back pocket along the widthwise centerline.

Align one interfacing hexagon

over each velvet hexagon right side. Stitch each perimeter using an $\frac{1}{8}$ " seam allowance. Trim the corners and cut a small slit in the interfacing center. Turn the hexagon right side out through the slit; finger-press.



Pin the hexagons over the front-pocket right side according to the photo above or as desired; hand stitch each hexagon perimeter using a small whipstitch.

With wrong sides together, press each handle strip in half lengthwise. Open the strips, and then fold each long edge toward the wrong side to meet at the center. Refold each strip along the center; press.

Beginning 2" from each short end,

stitch at a 45° angle from the fold toward the open edge. Pivot, and then edgestitch the open edge. End stitching 2" from the opposite short edge, and then stitch at a 45° angle toward the fold.

Cut the handle ends at a 45° angle from the fold toward the open edge (1). Open the first handle fold. Pin the handle ends to the purse front and back right side, positioning them $1\frac{1}{2}$ " from the side and the handle point 2" below the upper edge. Edgestitch the handle ends (2).

With right sides together, stitch each purse side to the front; press open the seams. Stitch the back to the opposite side edges. Stitch the base to the purse lower edge.

Repeat to assemble the lining, leaving a 4" opening along one base seam for turning.

Beginning 1" from the beginning, attach piping to the purse upper edge according to the pocket instructions. Lap the piping end 1" over the beginning, turning each end into the seam allowance; stitch. With right sides together, insert the lining into the outer purse, sandwiching the piping. Stitch the upper edge close to the piping. Turn the purse right side out; press the upper edge. Slipstitch the lining opening closed. \rightarrow

SOURCE

Clover provided the Wrap 'n Fuse Piping: (800) 233-1703, clover-usa.com.

http://www.sewnews.com/content_downloads/HexTote.pdf

Stashbusting for a Cause

Janice Skene, MHETA SAGE 2013

Note: I have listed the source whenever possible but there are times that I have found an idea and no longer know the source.

Item	Source	Comments
Breast pads	Quilter's connetion magazine issue #10	Quick easy and reusable.
Pink ribbon Comfort pillow	Connecting Threads http://goo.gl/Alwu9A	Click on ConnectingThreads.com and enter name into search box. This was originally designed for people fighting breast cancer to place between the arm and body or the shoulder belt and body in the car. It also makes a great cushion for the small of the back or behind your neck.
Charming Twist Bag	Old Times Pattern Company	Can be used for hygiene items, lunch, etc
Burrito Baby Wrap	Along Came Quilting (Calgary) www.alongcamequilting.com	This shaped baby blanket using 6 ½" squares wraps the baby like a burrito.
Pillowcase Dresses	littledressesforafrica.org/blog/	There are lots of sources. The dresses are made from pillowcases. Many of these go to 3rd world countries for the girls. Use up pillowcases that are too small for your pillows.
Incubator quilts and covers	norfolkquilters.org.uk/index. php/projects/?portPointer=216	Used to cover incubators to personalize them and reduce the glare. Check with your local hospital and see what size they would like
Charm square folded bag	Handout included	Can use scraps, charms, strips to make a conve- nient bag.
Puppy pillows/cat cushions		Fill old pillowcase with fabric scraps, sew the top shut and donate to a pet rescue centre. The cats or dogs use them while in care and then take them to their forever home when adopted. Manitoba Mutts is one organization
Baby Puzzle Ball	Sew Fun	Purchased from Along Came Quilting
Crabby Pals	Canadian Quilter	Animal shaped pillows for women's shelters
Easy mug rug		
Folded table runner	DJ Richards Djrichardsdesign.ca	
People, Puppets and Parapher- nalia	MacPhee Workshops http://www.macpheeworkshop. com/	
Puppet power	MacPhee Workshops	
Rag Time Quilt	Quilt country www.quiltcountry.com	Great use for scraps of flannelette

Zipper Christmas Cheer	Indygo Junction www.indygojunction.com	IJ945
My Garden Zips	Indygo Junction www.indygojunction.com	IJ894
Fleece Mitts, hats, toys, toques, handbands	Peak Fabrics by mail http://www.peakfabrics.com/ pattern/peak	Calgary company. Has Peak, Kwik Sew and Jalie patterns. Will put together kits for schools.
Post cards		Can either be done on the embroidery machine or made on a sewing machine

Quilter's Connection magazine

This is a Canadian quilting magazine published in Vancouver. http://quiltersconnection.ca/ See Free patterns on the website for more ideas.

Item	Issue	Comments
Star coasters	Winter 2012/13 # 14	Great Christmas gift
Breast Cancer Pillow	Fall 2011 # 9	Pillow with a bag
e-reader cover	Spring 2012 # 11	Uses men's ties

Connecting Threads – Free Patterns

Go to http://www.connectingthreads.com/patterns/free_quilting_patterns__l601021.html to find these patterns. There are a lot of pincushion patterns which could also be used as children's toys.

Item	
Flannel Receiving blanket and burp pad	
Flower Mobile	
Paper pieced bib pattern	
Gingerbread boy pin cushion	Could be a pin cushion or a toy
Flurry the Snowman	Christmas decoration
Peppermint Pincushion	
Star Pincushion	
Tree Pincushion	

Indigo Kitty	
Ornament gift box	

Embroidery Library

emblibrary.com/EL/ELProjects/Category.aspx?Category=Applique

Minkee baby block	Can be made with or without embroidery
Cozy button scarf	

What to do with old Denim?

Check with your local thrift shop, they may give you old jeans that are too ragged to sell for free.

Bags

Crazy jackets

Pillows

Purses

Quilts

Stuffed toys

Vests

Wallet



Contact us for pricing for	your school or board:
Web: www.foodfocus.com	Phone: 204-453-6060 Fax: 204-477-9906
Email: vprowse@foodfocus.com	Mail: 721 South Drive, Winnipeg, MB R3T0C2