

# Sustainable Living

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Introducing Home Economics Back Into School Systems

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## **Summary:**

When I think about home economics I think about sewing a stuffed animal together and baking chocolate chip cookies with my fellow classmates. When I think about health class I think about learning about why smoking is bad for a person's health and why junk food is not the best option for your body. When I think about a nutrition class I think about the food pyramid and what sorts of foods I can or cannot eat. As I was growing up and participating in these sorts of classes I always thought they were fun and enjoyable. Now that I am older I have come to realize that these sorts of classes didn't really teach me a whole lot about food and what it means to be sustainable in my food choices. This is when I decided that I need to do something about it. It is time to make a positive change in our school systems to help benefit the students and to help them actually learn and understand what it means to be sustainable and make sustainable choices in their daily lives.

## **Introduction:**

I remember my first day in my home economics class in sixth grade. I was very excited to participate in this class because I had grown up helping my mom in the kitchen and around the house. The two main projects we had in that class was to pick out an animal and sew it together to make a stuffed animal and we had to bake chocolate chip cookies with our fellow classmates. I was able to learn and experience a few things about cooking. When I moved on to high school, I participated in a health class my freshman year of school. I was able to learn about the parts of the body and what is unhealthy to eat. I enjoyed this health class and I have always enjoyed learning about the body. It wasn't until I decided to take a sustainability class in college that I realized how my health class and my home economics class were not very beneficial to me in

school. Sure I was able to learn how to bake chocolate chip cookies and was shown how smoking can damage my body and others around me, but what does that all mean? After taking my sustainability course I realized that we need more classes like that, but not just in college. Before college I had never even heard of the word sustainability and I had no idea what it meant and I'm sure most people could agree with me. This is a problem. So what can we do about it to make sure students are receiving good and correct information about sustainability and they are participating in acts to become sustainable? We must first start by addressing the problem.

### **Problem Definition:**

The main problem associated with home economics and health classes is that students are not getting quality information given to them. Students are not being educated on why it is good to grow their own foods or prepare food in certain ways. There are several problems associated with this and why it can be bad that students don't learn these simple skills. If students don't learn valuable information while taking these courses they could miss out on learning safety issues, nutrition, life skills, community skills, and even parenting skills. These are all valuable skills to know and learn for later in life. According to an article I found titled "Why is Home Economics an Important Subject for High Schools" written by Kristine Tucker she says, "Home economics is a valuable addition to a high school curriculum because it teaches students practical skills for daily living." The problem with that is that schools are now cutting these types of programs because they don't think they are important or they don't have the funding for them anymore. Another problem concerning home economics is that most people don't know how it all got started which is valuable information for students to learn. According to an article written by the University of Michigan titled "A Brief History of How Home Economics Came to Be" they state how home economics all started. They state, "However, the newly created land-grant

colleges were open to woman, and also offered courses that covered a much wider range of subjects that focused on more hands on skill based practices. They included ‘domestic science’ courses- those that aimed to teach management of the home and family through a more scientific approach. This was the beginning of the home economics discipline.” Students should be able to learn this information, but sadly schools do not teach this. A third possible problem associated with home economics is that students don’t know what it means to live in a sustainable way. Students don’t get information on what the triple bottom line is or what it means to practice the four system conditions that are involved in this process. They may learn why it is good to be sustainable in their food choices, but they don’t understand how or where to start. So the question is how do I get these sorts of classes like home economics and sustainability back into schools? How do I convince other people such as students and faculty that this is a good idea? I have come up with some steps to help me accomplish this goal.



### **High Level Solution:**

It is not going to be easy to accomplish my goal, but nothing comes without some hard work. I have come up with a few steps to help guide me along the way. My first step will be to get educated. I want to find out what classes would be most beneficial for the students. Second, I want to talk to local schools about the benefits and get them on board. Third, after I get approval from local schools I want to have a trial class to see how it goes and how the students enjoy it. Fourth, I want to incorporate ideas into the classes to make it more sustainable for the students. Fifth, I want to get approval from the schools to count these types of classes for credit. This way



the students would have an incentive to want to join the class. Lastly, I want to have the students sell the foods they grow and prepare to others in the community which will also help spread the word of what the students are doing. According to an article I found written by the University of Michigan titled, "Home Economics and its Importance to Students' Futures" one student gave their opinion on what they thought the class offered. They said, "In my opinion, the most important aspect of a home economics education is that students not only learn about subject matter that has relevance to their present lives, but will constantly be of use as they continue to grow." Home economics can be very beneficial for students in the long run and can be very important life skills to learn. They go on to say, "In addition to the development of valuable intrapersonal skills, the home economics curriculum also introduces the students to a wide variety of potential career paths. Students become aware of all the career opportunities relating to each domain, as well as being taught the skills associated with them." There are several positive aspects that home economics offers and if students are on board this process will be so much easier. Now that I have given my steps to accomplish my goal of bringing home economics back into schools, I would like to give more details on how I plan to go about these.

### **Solution Details:**

Let me begin by explaining my first step which is getting educated. I want to make sure I fully understand what I want to accomplish before I begin my process of getting home economics classes put back into the



school systems. I want to make sure I understand the triple bottom line which includes People, Prosperity, and Planet. To live in a sustainable way we must consider these three things and have them work together. I also must consider the four system conditions which are considered the Operating Manual for the Planet. The four system conditions include: Why worry what is removed from the Earth's crust, why worry what is produced by society, how can we contribute to degradation, and how does what we eat affect others. I want to be able to understand these rules before I move on to my next step. I also want to make sure I find what classes would be the most beneficial for the students and what would be best to incorporate into these classes. Once I feel prepared enough I will move on to my next step which is talking to local schools about the positives to home economics and sustainability courses in schools. I will give them personal testimonials from students who agree with me that home economics and sustainability courses would be a beneficial thing for schools. I would bring some fellow classmates who agree with me about home economics to these local schools to help and try to convince the local schools that this is a good idea. Once I have approval from some of the local schools my next step will be to get a group of students together from that school and start a trial class to see how it goes. I will talk to the student body and see how many students would be interested in joining a home economics class. Once I got enough students interested in the class I would continue on with my next step which is bring in ideas to make it more sustainable for the students. I would be sure to include in the curriculum what sustainability is and what it means to live in a sustainable way. I would be sure to make sure this home economics class is hands on for the students so that they can actually learn how to make sustainable choices. One thing I would like to do is make the students a garden so that they can grow their own foods and be able to pick it and prepare fresh foods. I would also like for them to learn how to reuse the soil in the garden. There are many

benefits in doing this and it is very sustainable for the environment. According to a blog post I read in my sustainability class titled “Research shows organic practices build healthy soil” they give an example as to why the reuse of soil is important. Leopold Center Director Mark Rasmussen states, “Soil health is critical to any agricultural production system, and organic practices are among many ways to improve the health of our soils.” The reuse of our soil is very important and sustainable for the environment which is why I want to incorporate that into the home economics course. I would also like to incorporate the use of organic crops into this class so that the students learn why it is more sustainable for them and for the environment. My next step in this process will be to get permission to count this home economics course as credit for the students. By doing this it would create an incentive for the students to try home economics and it would get more students into the class. Once my plan is in full swing I would like to incorporate one last step. My last step will be to have the students sell the foods they grow to others in the community. This would show the students how to participate in the triple bottom line because they are helping other people while they are also helping themselves along with helping the environment in a sustainable way. By starting this home economics course and sustainability class there will be many benefits that come along with this plan.

### **Business Benefits:**

There are several benefits to home economics class and sustainability classes in schools. Home economics teaches students so many different life skills that they can use later on in life. According to an article that I found online titled, “The importance of Home Economics in Schools” it gives some examples of benefits that home economic classes have to offer. One of the main benefits the article talks about to taking a home economics class is learning about nutrition. Learning how to properly prepare foods can be better for your health and you can learn

how to sustainably prepare meals. Knowing where your food came from and what ingredients are compiled in it can be very beneficial to know as well. This is also a benefit for the environment because you are cooking in a sustainable way. Another benefit to taking a home economics course is the safety skills a person will learn while participating in this class. Learning how to properly grow food and prepare it in a safe way is beneficial for everyone. Another possible benefit to taking a home economics class is learning community skills. When taking this course students often work together especially when cooking and preparing foods. This is a great skill to learn while in school and to continue to learn throughout life. Another benefit to taking a home economics course is the parenting skills that students will gain in this class. Students will learn how to prepare foods, sew, clean, take care of finances and much more just by taking this class. This is very beneficial for students because they can learn life skills that they can take with them through life. They can learn how to live in a sustainable way and help the environment become that way as well. As you can see there are many benefits to taking a home economics course or a sustainability class in school. By bringing back these types of classes we can help students learn about sustainability and begin to make our world a more sustainable place to live.

### **Summary:**

Home economics is a very beneficial course that needs to be incorporated back into schools. Home economics and sustainability show several skills to students such





as nutrition, safety skills, parenting skills and life skills that students can take with them throughout life. Students can learn about sustainability and what it means to live a sustainable life. Students can do hands on projects and experience life skills by taking this course which is very beneficial to them. Even though this plan that I have will take a lot of work, I hope to bring back home economics and other sorts of classes like these back into the school systems. My plan is for students to learn more about how home economics and sustainability besides sewing and baking chocolate chip cookies like I did. I hope that students can take away a lot more from these courses and learn a lot about sustainability. By teaching students about sustainability and how to live sustainably we can begin to make our world a more sustainable place to live.

**Call to Action:**

Now that I have given you my plan and the steps I want to take to accomplish this goal, it is time for you to take action. One thing that you can do to help move this process along is donate to your local schools to help fund these types of programs like home economics and sustainability. Every dollar counts and the students will only benefit from it. Another possible idea that you can do is start your own garden. Learn how to grow your own food and prepare it in a sustainable way. The more and more people start to do this the more we can make our world a more sustainable place to live.

## Works Cited

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