

RESOLUTION “LIFE CHOICES”—A SOLUTION FOR LIFE

Whereas, the Family and Consumer Sciences Life Choices course has the capacity to provide knowledge to help youth prepare for high school, family life and the world of work, and

Whereas, Family and Consumer Sciences educators have the academic and professional knowledge to provide quality training in Life Choices, and

Whereas, eighth grade students are at a critical point in their social, emotional, mental and physical development at a time when they begin the transition from children into young adults, and

Whereas, eighth grade students need the opportunity to begin exploring careers and the importance of a positive mindset about the world of work, and

Whereas, eighth grade students will benefit from and enjoy opportunities to apply their classroom learning to real life situations, and

Whereas, mandatory enrollment in a Life Choices class for eighth graders will give students the life skills needed for successful entry into high school and for their future lives, and

Whereas, a Life Choices class teaches basic life skills that all people must have to be successful in life, to develop a sense of family, to be an educated consumer and to understand nutrition and textile sciences necessary to function in today’s world, and

Whereas, the Life Choices class meets the middle grade promotion requirement in Florida Statute 1003.4156 for “one course in career and education planning to be completed in seventh or eighth grade” for all Florida students,

Therefore, be it resolved that the Florida Association of Family and Consumer Sciences endorses the requirement that Life Choices be a mandatory course for all eighth grade students in Florida.

RESOLUTION LIFE CHOICES—A SOLUTION FOR LIFE POSITION PAPER

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FAFCS Vice-President for Public Relations**

The Florida Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (FAFCS) is an organization where the primary stakeholders are educators who are teaching life skills to improve the lives of individuals, families and communities primarily at the secondary high school and post-secondary level. The number one issue in the field of education is making a Family Consumer Science course entitled “Life Choices” mandatory. This life skills education course should target eighth grade students, age 13-14. Students at this age have already been confronted with life changing issues.

Eighth grade students need the opportunity to begin exploring careers and the world of work. This age group will benefit from and enjoy opportunities to apply their classroom learning to real life situations. The Life Choices course is a good example of how a practical arts class can provide interesting, fun and practical ways to teach and further re-enforce science, math and language arts skills. For example, when teaching eighth graders about budgeting and managing their money, their interest level is high and they are eager to “do the math”. Why? Because this is real life, they can identify with it.

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

Thirteen and fourteen year old students are transitioning from children to young adults. It is at this time that they begin to exhibit the ability to use higher-level critical thinking skills. Creating a greater awareness of one’s social conscience is taught through virtues or character education, such as responsibility, honesty, and self-discipline to name a few. Eighth graders are becoming more independent and on a daily basis they are beginning to make critical choices about work, integrity, self-discipline, taking personal responsibility for self and becoming good citizens and contributing members of society. This is a critical time in a young person’s life. Many times they are at “the fork in the road”. The choices and decisions they make may change the course of their life forever. Why not give them the skills and character coupled with knowledge to hopefully make good choices and decisions. By age 15-16 (high school) many times it is too late!

Lastly, the Life Choices curriculum teaches basic life skills that all people must have to be successful in life. Developing a sense of **Family** with topics that include communication, social relationship skills – anger management, conflict resolution and how to get along and work together, character building, parenting and child development, manners and etiquette at home and in the workplace. Becoming an educated **Consumer** by learning about financial literacy including creating and balancing a budget and checkbook, comparison shopping, unit pricing, the difference between a need and a want as it relates to buying power. Career exploration is also discussed. Learning about nutrition and textile **Sciences** through nutrition, menu planning, food shopping and care of clothing. As educators we recognize there is a direct correlation between nutrition and school performance, which is why there is so much emphasis on proper nutrition leading up to and definitely throughout FCAT testing. As educators, we know poor nutrition impacts behavior, school performance and overall cognitive development of children.

The Life Choices course also meets the Florida A++ legislation middle grade promotion requirement for students entering sixth grade in 2006 and thereafter listed in Florida Statute 1003.4156, that “one course in career and education planning be completed in seventh or eighth grade” for all Florida students.

Today’s priority in education places the emphasis on literacy, math, science and reading. The Life Choices curriculum puts this need into the everyday work and home life of young people. Students ask the questions “Why do I need to know this?” In the Life Choices class, students incorporate and expand teachings from other classes (i.e., math, science, reading comprehension) into the real world of proper nutrition, cooking, job interviews, financial literacy, career exploration and decision-making... Basically what it takes to survive and succeed in the real world.