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Students Teach Adults

Triad in Education

by Ann Sindt, H.JL, 1

Iowa State’s Home Economics Education majors are being prepared to teach adults, as well as junior and senior high school students. They are learning the ways of adult-students by actually conducting adult classes on subjects geared to the homemaker.

A “triad in education” describes this system for instructing Ames women in the Iowa State Home Economics Adult Education Program. For the past thirty years the Home Economics Education Department has carried on a successful program for adult education brought about by a three-way relationship between adult-teachers, student-teachers, and adult-students.

Plan Launched

Thirty years ago Dr. Mary S. Lyle was brought to Iowa State to initiate a course to prepare teachers for instructing adults. The plan was launched with Dr. Lyle teaching the adult classes while education students observed. On this basis adult-students and Iowa State students were both on the learning end.

For several years Dr. Lyle presented each series of lessons to the Parent Teachers Association of one of the Ames schools during winter, spring and summer quarters. So in the course of nine months every area of the community had been provided with information ranging from “Management for Busy Homemakers” to “Meal Magic from the Food Dollar.”

Students Teach

Shortly after the program began, the girls were put into assistant teaching positions. Then in 1951 they began conducting all adult education classes using their own lesson plans. The group of student-teachers was divided into two sections. Each group presented a series of lessons on one of the two topics chosen to be studied. Along with their teaching responsibilities were linked publicity and coordination duties. Dr. Lyle and Merlene Nelson, assistant professor of Home Economics education, were instructors and advisers to the girls in their new teaching capacities.

Course Required

The course was given an official name, Adult Education 408. It became a requirement for all education students, and not just an elective for those qualifying for vocational teaching. It has offered additional classes to the Golden Agers, an organization of elderly men and women, and to Boone County extension members.

Store window displays and special clinics for meat and clothing selection can also be added to the ledger of 408 projects.

The adult-teacher, student-teacher and adult-student all have a responsibility in making the classes successful.

The greatest responsibility which falls to the adult-teachers is understanding the adult-students through application of their own experiences. This basis of understanding must then be transferred to the student-teachers, says Dr. Lyle. Whereas the adult-teachers have a reservoir of past experiences to draw from, the student-teachers must develop an insight into the thoughts of adult homemakers through working directly with them. And this, explains Dr. Lyle, is, in fact, the main objective of 408 students—to develop a philosophy about adults which includes recognition of their needs and interests and the importance of education classes to them.

Homemakers Choose Topics

The part the adult-student plays in completing the triad lies in effectively learning and applying the material presented. It is the adult-student’s responsibility to suggest the topics which are to be studied. An advisory council of five to ten women appraise the subjects previously studied, choose possible lesson topics, and then narrow the list to three or four from which the student-teachers select two. Because the topics are chosen by the adult-students, there is a desire to study the areas of home economics taught, and interest is easily aroused.

Quoting from a report on the two series of lessons presented last quarter, “An average of fifty women attended the meetings.” This fact in itself helps attest to the value of the adult education program.