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Problem Method of Teaching Home Economics

By VIRGINIA ALEXANDER
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It is not always the best for children: It is not always the best to serve food of one kind. As the season changes, so the diet should change. This should be taught. As the child grows older, he will have to learn to make a varied diet himself. This should be taught to the child in the right selection of foods, at a given meal, and in the daily diet. The child should be taught to be a good cook and to make a balanced meal:

The aim of the lunch room is to give a well-balanced meal, to provide a supplement lunch, to provide a clean place for those children who bring their lunches, to make the lunch a sociable one, to establish certain food habits necessary for the well being of the well nourished child, and to give an opportunity for the instruction of good table manners as well.

The foods that are planned for lunch are carefully arranged so as to avoid repetition of important food constituents as much as possible. The meal has been planned to be well balanced and nutritious. The dishes that are served are vegetables, scalloped dishes of all kinds, protein dishes, fruits, salads, sandwiches, bread and milk.

As the children are accustomed to meat and potatoes at home, this combination is avoided. Eggs, cheese, butter and the like are encouraged. It has been noticed by the leaders of the children in the right selection of foods. For instance, they will buy both bread and sandwiches, or two desserts or all protein foods. It is then the duty of the helper at the tables to give much needed assistance to the children. At the same time the helper tells the children why they should select certain foods. It is not always true that the foods best for children are the most expensive as most people seem to think. We find that we can make Hot Raisin pudding, serve it with cream and still clear expenses. Tomatoes and some other vegetables are not expensive if the season is right. Whipped cream is served whenever possible, and it is not only adds to the appearance of the food but it also furnishes the proper food nutrients.

Ice cream is not served in our lunch room, because the children, as would be expected will always choose ice cream in preference to any other dessert. This habit has to be discouraged because ice cream, although considered quite a delicacy by grown ups, is not always the best for children. It does not contain as valuable or as many nourishing food substances as the individual amount of other kinds of desserts such as rice pudding or custards.

Such favorable results have come from this project that it is a temptation to tell you a few of them. We find by actual observation, that the child who once carefully selected bread, rolls and sandwiches, now is blissfully content with one of the

School Lunch Room an Education in Food Selection

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When this situation existed, it was necessary to adopt a new plan of teaching, which would make the course a more practical one for the student. The problem method of teaching utilizing some of the suggestions of the Dalton plan seemed to appear to me as one way out of a most disturbing situation. So the following plan was carried out in my classes.

The very first step on the part of the instructor is to create an ideal for the pupil. This is a rather difficult undertaking as it involves a large amount of time and study for the already busy instructor. Each person must work out his own definite plan of creating an ideal for the pupil, but it seems to me that as the pupil is already prone to imitate her teacher, this would be a good opportunity for the teacher to live up to the pupil's ideals of her, living, breathing, talking in a way that would make the dreams of her, that the student surely has, come true. The accomplishment of this takes time as I have said before, but isn't your time spent worth any opportunity cost that may have been incurred if one pupil is made better by the example that you have set? And aren't you more likely to live a better and happier life, if you know that you are setting examples for the youngsters?

The methods and devices used for carrying out the problems in the classroom may be explained briefly by a few suggestions. Have the students make out shopping lists, etc. for particular problems in the work in order to avoid needless repetition. They then follow out their problems in the laboratories, noting the products with which they have difficulties. The student also makes out a score card, and grades her work accordingly. She also sees to the payment of her groceries for her own problem with which she is engaged that day. In this way, the student familiarizes herself with marketing. Conscientious criticism is given to each girl by the entire class including the instructor. The beauty of the plan is that each girl decides what she is going to do, orders her own food for the problem, grades with the help of the class her own product, and according to the results of the problem whether it is satisfactory or not. The teacher is a guide and not a dictator.

The advantages of this plan are as follows: The total progress of the entire group in actual work accomplished in terms of projects is slower because of loss of time for collecting equipment etc. for food problems. The products might not score as high in quality, as those of the old plan, but more is actually learned by the students.

This plan has only been used for a short time, but such marked results on the favorable side have been shown that we feel sure that this method is a safe way out of a difficulty that has long threatened the Home Economics teacher in the cooking laboratory, namely, that of necessity for the student in the preparation of foods. We find too that the girls following this plan are more capable, more interested and have more initiative than those of previous classes.