This article examines underlying ideas associated with Standard 8, Professionalism, of the National Standards for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences (National Association of Teacher Educators for Family and Consumer Sciences [NATEFACS], 2004). The history and philosophy of family and consumer sciences (FCS) provide a foundation for professional practice among prospective FCS teachers. Empowerment has been a core philosophical mission and practical principle of FCS for over a century and includes processes of determining worthy personal and social goals, dialogue in search of common meanings and valued ends, critique of oppressive constraints, and active engagement in the improvement of conditions. The application of ethical standards with consistent rules, reasoning, and consideration of consequences makes it possible to achieve the FCS professional mission. In order to continue the FCS legacy of social change and empowerment, important ethical responsibilities of teachers include participation in decision processes of change and advocating for public policies that will promote family wellbeing.

This article addresses Standard 8, Professionalism, of the National Standards for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences (National Association of Teacher Educators for Family and Consumer Sciences [NATEFACS], 2004). The Standards together provide an overarching framework for promoting the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teaching excellence among prospective family and consumer sciences (FCS) teachers (Fox, Stewart, & Erickson, 2008). Standard 8 specifically states, “Engage in ethical professional practice based on the history and philosophy of family and consumer sciences and career and technical education through civic engagement, advocacy, and ongoing professional development” (NATEFACS, 2004). The purpose of this article is to assist prospective FCS teachers in incorporating historical and philosophical awareness, ethical reasoning, and active policymaking engagement into their professional work.

The article begins with an overview of historical roots regarding a unique emphasis on families and philosophical beliefs in both self-determination and social activism that have shaped and continue to shape family and consumers sciences. Professionalism extends into the realm of practices that concretely exemplify our mission and beliefs. Therefore, the article includes a second section on ethical practices that employ principles for reasoning about the greater good and for determining the best course of action that prospective FCS teachers can apply to the real tasks and worthy
goals of professional life. The article includes a third section that addresses the significant role of professional development by actively engaging in community issues, advocating for public policies, and strengthening the larger social and political realms affecting families. Examples of ways FCS teacher candidates can actively learn about history and philosophy, ethical decision-making, and public policy are provided at the end of each section; several annotated resources are listed before the references.

**History and Philosophy of the Field**

Family and consumer sciences is a dynamic profession with deep philosophical roots affirming family life as a significant area in its own right and demanding intellectual sophistication and skilled practice. Each prospective FCS teacher benefits from the rich legacy of earlier professionals who were devoted, in the midst of social complexity and change, to enduring values underlying the strength of families. Solutions to everyday problems, for meaningful and empowered living, are best approached within an interdisciplinary perspective that focuses on critically and holistically assessing relationships among the parts of a task or problem (Vincenti, 1997). Families can be thought of as individual units with unique qualities, each participating within and influencing larger interrelated systems such as the biophysical, psychosocial, economic, aesthetic, and technological (Hook & Paolucci, 1970).

**Historical Roots of Empowerment as Philosophy and Action**

A significant theme throughout the profession's history has been the empowerment of families through reflective thinking and transforming action within a complex, relational, interdisciplinary framework. Empowerment—as a central concept that ties together history, philosophy, ethics, and public policymaking—is broadly defined here as the processes of clarifying worthy personal and social values and goals, obtaining theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to participate in the democratic process, and working together to transform oppressive constraints into freer and more satisfying conditions (Brown, 1985; Fay, 1987). Family and consumer sciences, originally called home economics, was defined as:

> the study of the laws, conditions, principles and ideals which are concerned on the one hand with man's immediate physical environment and on the other hand with his nature as a social being, and is the study specially of the relation between those two factors. (Statement of Committee on Courses of Study in Colleges and Universities, 1902, pp. 70-71)

Because the concept of empowerment within a complex environment was inclusive and flexible, the new profession opened up multiple opportunities to improve everyday life. Early home economists were social reformists who valued "understanding the processes, activities, obligations and opportunities which make the home and family effective parts of the social fabric" (Stage, 1997a, p. 28).

Early professionals believed that freedom was an ultimate goal attained by reflecting on the highest ideals of life, undertaking activities for personal growth and self-expression, and cooperating with others to improve social conditions (Brown, 1967; Richards, 1911; Stage 1997a, 1997b). In 1928, Bane wrote that home economists "should be able to bring together and weld into a powerful whole those constructive forces which make for wholesome human living" (p. 705) by developing ideals, appreciation, and discernment rather than by perfecting techniques. Several decades later, Bane (1950) specified "security, affection, recognition, new
experience, aesthetic satisfaction, and a sense of achievement” (p. 14) as significant dimensions of empowerment:

Let us not be afraid of the words freedom, democracy, peace, one world, spiritual energy—even truth, goodness, and beauty, remembering that, in miniature, many—perhaps most—of the problems that beset the world beset the family. As families try to solve their problems, so do nations try to work out their destinies. (Bane, 1950, p. 15)

The profession’s integrative and reformist ideals such as freedom and opportunity for all led to significant accomplishments. Ellen Richards, a pioneering scientist and the first female graduate of MIT, who is often called the founder of home economics, used traditional ideas about the role of women to do something unique and untraditional. Her application of scientific principles for resolving problems within the home and family led to the development of parallel career tracks for highly educated women at a time when it was not socially acceptable for them to enter historically male careers (Stage, 1997a).

The nutrition and sanitation work of Richards and others also led to radical improvements in the nation’s public health (Stage, 1997b). The profession sparked a burgeoning interest in children’s needs and behaviors, applied theories of child development to nursery schools, and "opened up a space for mothers to interject their voices into the discourse of child development" (Grant, 1997, p. 74). Home economists helped businesses reach out to customers and promoted education along with consumption of products (Goldstein, 1997). Long before civil rights became widely identified as a cultural movement, black home economics extension agents "helped their clients to challenge and not just to survive the system" (Harris, 1997, p. 227) by fostering leadership, enlightenment, resistance, and equality.

Empowerment and Confirmation of Identity in the Profession

Despite a history of innumerable accomplishments, a professional identity crisis became particularly acute during the 1960s and 1970s. Questions surfaced about the purpose and nature of the field, confusion about the role of women continued in both the profession and the general public, feminists challenged a profession so closely related to the home as new career opportunities emerged for women, and the loyalty of professionals themselves moved from a broadly conceived home economics profession toward more defined specializations (Richards, 2000; Vincenti, 1997). Indeed, the former label "home economics" was vigorously debated and the field eventually was re-named "family and consumer sciences" in the early 1990’s (American Home Economics Association, 1993). Although various debates have always engaged professionals over the decades, the mission has consistently remained a reformist one. In a classic and still frequently cited statement, Brown and Paolucci (1979) emphasized that FCS was and is a profession with an empowerment mission to:

Enable families both as individual units and generally as a social institution to build and maintain systems of action which lead to (1) maturing in individual self-formation and (2) to enlightened, cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them. (p. 23)

Brown (1980) delineated three systems of action—technical, communicative, and emancipative as described below—through which families gain meaning and empowerment. Although the systems of action have played a role in empowering families from the beginning, Brown challenged professionals to become more consciously aware of the values, purposes, and activities associated with each system.
Technical system and instrumental values. The technical system entails instrumental knowledge about how to successfully meet basic needs or specific goals, but it does not address the intrinsic worth of the techniques used or the ends to be achieved (Brown, 1980). When home economics emerged as a profession many people were living in abject physical conditions, and technical knowledge and instrumental skills were imperative for obtaining health, self-expression, and satisfying home life. With visionary ideals and reformist hearts, early leaders reasoned that laws of science, manual skill development, and principles of efficiency could improve realities of life and lead to better choices and elevated ideals (East, 1980; Richards, 2000).

Professionals made technically sophisticated improvements to basic health through the application of sanitation, food safety, and nutrition sciences; they eased the drudgery of household work by applying time and energy efficiency principles; and they promoted freedom through functional design of household items. Psychology introduced insights into development over the life span, economic downturns brought resource management while economic upturns brought opportunities to use new products, and divorce rates and blended families sparked interest in interpersonal relations (Simerly, Nickols, & Shane, 2001; Stage & Vincenti, 1997).

Today’s rapid changes continue to call for technical action on the part of prospective family and consumer sciences educators regarding emerging issues such as distance education (Poley, 2005) as well as old issues like nutrition with modern twists including obesity prevention (Masi, 2005). Because of advances and widespread consequences of technology and science, the professionalism of Standard 8 becomes critical in situating instrumental actions in terms of socially justified goals. For example, in conjunction with Standard 2, Consumer Economics and Family Resources, prospective FCS teachers are reminded that budget software offers technical help in monitoring income and expenses, but such software cannot itself ensure a meaningful life.

Communicative system and interpretation of valued ends. The communicative system of action involves reflection and dialogue in the family and community in order to arrive at agreement on meanings, beliefs, and valued ends of what ought to be. Although scientific principles took center stage for the early years of the profession, advocates have always called attention to communicative action concerning meaningful life, nurturing family relationships, and a just society. The early empowerment mission included "due subordination to ideals . . . which will most free the spirit for the more important and permanent interests of the home and of society" (Rader, 1987, p. 13). Norton (1904) listed a number of dimensions of meaning, value, and empowerment that were of particular interest to the early home economists:

- Control of environment; the power of initiative; a sense of personal responsibility;
- an appreciation of values that implies the ability to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials; an economic use of materials that includes the right expenditure of time as well as money; an appreciation of labor, and of its dignity.

(p. 15)

Goodrich (1902) wrote, "Home economics aims to bring the home into harmony with industrial conditions and social ideals that prevail today in the larger world outside the home" (p. 36). Early home economists endorsed attitudes and values that went beyond scientific application and materialism toward happiness in light of relational and expressive aspects of family life (Nystrom, 1932). They broadened the interpretation of marriage and family to include a variety of emotional as well as traditional economic functions (Truxal, 1932), and they supported adolescents' taking responsibility for their choices (Long, 1944).
Today, communicative action is as important as ever in determining which ends are most valuable regarding issues such as optimal balance of work and family (Delgado & Canabal, 2004), life-long learning (McFall & Mitstifer, 2005), or community partnerships (Friesen, Whitaker, & Piotrowicz, 2004). Professionalism emphasized in Standard 8 reminds prospective family and consumer sciences teachers that authentic communication and dialogue are necessary in order to clarify values and goals. Communicative action in search of common understanding can be applied to all 10 of the Standards. For example, teacher candidates who dialogue and eventually agree upon values and goals that help students enhance their lives through nutrition, food, and wellness knowledge and skills (Standard 4) are reflecting the philosophy of empowerment in their choices.

**Emancipative system and critique of conditions.** The emancipative system of action encompasses cooperation with others in critique of social structures that limit freedom for certain social groups and examination of personal and social consequences (Brown, 1980). Empowerment means that individuals and families address problems in a morally and intellectually justifiable way, and then work to transform conditions in ways that support meaningful life. These problems are often called “practical problems” because all families must decide what to do about basic issues such as rearing children or securing housing. However, when social structures render people as objects to be controlled rather than as subjects determining their own goals, critical investigation is needed to identify constraints to freely determined choices such as personal biases or false assumptions. “Determining the goals or desired state of affairs must be considered initially, followed by an interpretation of the context with which the practical problem is centered” (Gentzler, 1999, p. 26).

Over the decades, leaders valued helping others achieve self-determination. Hunt noted the human need to give outward expression to the inner life (as cited in East, 1982), and Richards (1911) emphasized the need for mutual helpfulness in spiritual, ethical, and economic matters. Stubbs (1979) critically questioned social policy that failed to provide suitable housing to people with low incomes and advocated that families have more decision power. Paolucci and Hogan (1973) argued that families could become empowered to handle serious problems by considering their own resources, attitudes, goals, and values in light of the surrounding human context. The past few decades have been characterized by a philosophy that embraces critique of many existing social structures and traditionally accepted values (Gentzler, 1999; Plihal, Laird, & Rehm, 1999).

The questioning element of Standard 8’s empowerment philosophy reminds prospective family and consumer sciences teachers to critique and actively work to change oppressive conditions in conjunction with other Standards in the *National Standards for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences* (NATEFACS, 2004). For example, middle and high school students who are members of the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) student organization (Standard 10) might notice that people with disabilities in their community (Standard 3, Family and Human Development) face difficulties with transportation (Standard 2, Consumer Economics and Family Resources). Members might decide to work with those affected to contact public and private officials for improved transportation services or affordable vehicles adapted to varying driving needs; such improvements would have positive benefits such as increasing job opportunities and facilitating independence.
Toward the Future as Professionals: Learning to Apply Philosophy and History

Hopefully, the previous section has illustrated how family and consumer sciences history and philosophy have changed the fabric of family and social life in life-altering and exciting ways. There are numerous ways to learn about history and philosophy of interest to teacher educators and teacher education students. FCS teacher candidates could (a) read original writings of historical leaders and current philosophers and discuss the leaders who most inspire them and why, (b) devise creative approaches to issues that remain unresolved to this day such as poor health decisions despite modern nutrition information, (c) develop personal philosophy statements, and (d) write reflective papers on topics such as the historical role of FCS in civil rights or product safety.

New technologies enable interactive ways to learn about history. Joyce Miles (2008), a family and consumer sciences professional, has written and produced a DVD—with historic photos and letters, interviews with historians, and narratives—that tells the compelling story and legacy of Ellen Richards. FCS teacher candidates can contribute to philosophical and historical development by adding comments to blogs, holding online discussions and debates, and creating their own role plays to depict various historical leaders and philosophers.

Standard 8 encourages prospective family and consumer sciences teachers to apply the three systems of action to all content areas so teaching is coherent, broad-based, justifiable, and transforming of conditions in positive ways. For example, teacher candidates might seek to empower middle and high school students by developing content for curriculum plans (Standard 5, Curriculum) and lesson plans (Standard 6, Instructional Strategies and Resources) based on “green” homes, neighborhoods, and communities (Standard 1, Career, Community, and Family Connections) and environmentally friendly lifestyles (Standard 2, Consumer Economics and Family Resources). Teacher educators might assign teacher candidates to write lesson plans that include the three systems of action such as (a) help learners obtain, examine, and apply scientific knowledge and efficient procedures for recycling and other sustaining practices; (b) devise questions and activities to promote dialogue about the values that support and detract from a healthy environment and about the valued ends desired by families and communities; or (c) seek problematic situations and create action plans to improve sustainability in local communities. Assessment of philosophical and historical projects would likely address depth of thinking, ability to show examples of progress over time, and a range of inclusion of key empowerment concepts. Prospective teachers should be able to analyze how differing philosophical ideas lead to different alternatives and illustrate abstract philosophical principles with pragmatic applications.

The prospective family and consumer sciences teacher who understands history and philosophy should be able to incorporate appropriate curriculum, facilitate student learning in daily practice, utilize appropriate technologies and resources, and assess students and programs (Standards 5, 6, and 9) within a relational context and holistic perspective. Because all professional activities of FCS teacher candidates will involve ethical decision-making, this important component of professionalism is delineated in the next section.

Ethics: Achieving Our Professional Mission

The focus to this point in the article has been to convey the nature and distinct mission of the family and consumer sciences profession across time. Some of the phrases we have used to communicate the mission of the FCS profession include (a) improve daily living, (b) address practical problems in a morally and intellectually justifiable way, (c) help others create
meaningful lives, (d) reflect on the highest ideals of life, and (e) empower families with communicative and emancipative values and actions as supported by the best technical knowledge. How can FCS educators begin to achieve aims of such consequence? A deep sense of commitment to ethical standards is the foundation of professional practice (Nickols & Belliston, 2001).

We now shift our attention to ethics, which are ideas or principles that guide behavior as to the right course of action (Craig, 1991). Family and consumer sciences professionals experience many situations where they must decide on the right course of action. Prospective FCS teachers, for example, might imagine they are the teacher in the following scenario. Tonia, an FCS teacher, meets Sylvia while working out at the gym. Sylvia has just been diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes. Having covered the subject in a college course, Tonia is naturally curious about her situation. Tonia mentions that she teaches high school nutrition, and asks if Sylvia is on medication. Sylvia responds that she takes a prescription medication called Glucophage. Sylvia continues to discuss the kinds of problems she is having and experienced before diagnosis. Knowing that Tonia teaches nutrition, she then asks about the reasons behind her symptoms. Sylvia wants information about the type of diet she should follow and why she may have to start taking insulin injections. At this point in the conversation, Tonia is feeling uncomfortable. Should Tonia explain the information she understands concerning the subject, or should she tell Sylvia nothing at all? How should Tonia approach the situation?

Three dominant approaches to ethics include “rules that will bring about the greatest good over bad for all concerned,” a process of reasoning or critical thinking, and an analysis of the consequences of actions (Arcus, 1997, p. 6). Knorr and Manning (1997) indicate that the latter is one of several interrelated types of reasoning important for solving practical problems. If Tonia relies on a rules approach to ethics she might draw upon the code of ethics developed by the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) and inform Sylvia that she does not have the necessary background (professional competence) to prescribe a diet or make recommendations. A process where Tonia uses practical reasoning would address “uncertainty by determining what course of action is best supported by reasons. Such reasoning is always comparative. A policy or course of action is judged to be more or less desirable in relation to alternative courses of action” (Coombs, 1997, p. 50). Foremost in Tonia’s mind would be a professional value on preventing health problems by providing current nutrition information. Coombs suggests that to realize this value she must consider various standards for competent reasoning. In the process of reasoning she can ask herself questions such as:

1. Do I have sufficient information about the alternative courses of action?
2. How much evidence is there to support each alternative, and how credible are the authorities who support each option?
3. Have I thought of all plausible alternatives?
4. Where did my professional value come from?
5. Which alternative will contribute the most to Sylvia’s health in the long run?
6. What will life be like in the short-term and future given each alternative?

Tonia would not have to consider all of the standards to decide that she does not have sufficient information about Sylvia’s health status, nor sufficient knowledge of nutrition therapy. An analysis of the consequences of giving Sylvia advice would similarly lead Tonia to decide that counseling Sylvia could cause serious harm because of her lack of adequate information. In all three instances, Tonia should pinpoint the experts who are competent to address Sylvia’s health problem. Whereas using the rules, reasoning, or consequences approaches in Tonia’s
situation lead to similar results, other cases could result in different solutions based on the specific approach to ethics that is employed.

Perhaps now more than at other times in the history of the profession, day-to-day decisions require a thorough understanding of ethics. Much confusion exists within society concerning ethical behavior as evidenced by extensive media attention on violations of ethics in government, business, and education. Unethical behavior is “explained away or excused because of personal need or extenuating circumstances” (Craig, 1991, p. 3). A Machiavellian orientation of success at any price seems to be the underlying message (Cho, Yoo, & Johnson, 2005; Davis & Jordan, 1990). This notion can be supplanted as family and consumer sciences teacher candidates rely on ethics to make decisions, and integrate skills and abilities for ethical reasoning throughout the curriculum (Arcus, 1997). Courage is crucial when faced with difficult decisions amid adversity such as criticism from others (Center for Academic Integrity, 1999).

Nickols and Belliston (2001) advocate using the AAFCS Code of Ethics (American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences [AAFCS], 2005) as a guide to professional practice. The document includes principles that focus on ethical dilemmas common within the profession (MacCleave, 1990). Although this code of ethics does not cover every situation, the Statement of Principles for Professional Practice is comprehensive. The statement encompasses six principles including: (a) professional competence, (b) respect for diversity, (c) scholarship and research, (d) confidentiality, (e) conflict of interest, and (f) responsibility to the profession. These principles help to raise consciousness among family and consumer sciences professionals concerning “ethical ideals and values held by the profession and ethical dimensions of practice . . . [and] may also encourage professionals to remain committed to ideals of practice” (MacCleave, p. 3) in trying situations. Teachers often make decisions amid “confusing situations and disorienting dilemmas” (Hira, 1996, p. 6) where solutions are not clear-cut. Furthermore, codes of ethics sometimes come into conflict. In such instances it is important to make judgments so that the consequences of actions do not cause pain or anguish to those involved (Brown, 1980).

Careful study of the AAFCS Code of Ethics (AAFCS, 2005) reveals many kinds of actions associated with professional practice. Some of these include spending sufficient time on professional responsibilities and persisting until work is complete. For example, for family and consumer sciences educators this would include planning for instruction, assessing student work, and doing a fair share. These actions require teacher candidates to set priorities to ensure that they succeed at fewer things rather than being mediocre at many. Professional behavior also includes building and encouraging colleagues as well as engaging in professional development and service to the profession. Such practices have been important throughout the history of the profession and contribute to each professional’s development in terms of increasing experience, knowledge, and wisdom.

**Toward the Future as Professionals: Learning to Apply Ethical Decision Making**

Because dilemmas often emerge unexpectedly in teaching in general and in particular when teaching about family life or other value-laden issues, ethical decision-making is not easily taught. Because ethical practices involve alternative possibilities and are based in unique situations, they also are not easily assessed. Perhaps the best way to practice applying ethical principles to realistic situations is through case studies. Short scenarios followed by a consideration of several questions and comments illustrate a variety of approaches to ethics that are available to prospective family and consumer sciences teachers. Again, these approaches
include rules (e.g., laws, the AAFCS Code of Ethics, school-wide policies), reasoning or critical thinking, and the consequences of actions on individuals. Rules are developed by groups of people to protect the common good. However, teacher candidates must be ready to use reasoning and examine consequences when rules do not exist or application of rules is not clear. Keep in mind that individuals can uphold rules and still be unethical. Thus, an understanding of a variety of approaches is useful. Table 1 shows several scenarios useful in teaching ethical decision-making.

Teacher education courses or units in ethics could be developed to include many types of case studies (e.g., written, video cases or movies, electronically published, news stories, or slices from students’ real lives). These then could be used to illustrate principles such as determining one’s fair share, building up colleagues in genuine ways, or identifying when one has adequate information. Learners could be assessed by adequacy of evidence in justifying a decision in a particular case or on the basis of whether or not the six principles in the AAFCS Code of Ethics are included. Reflective papers describing ethical situations encountered in field experiences, issues confronted, processes of decision making used, decisions made, and consequences on students and teachers could be assessed for integrity of thinking and consideration of alternatives as choices are made. Of course, the behaviors of family and consumer sciences teacher candidates showing ethical choices (e.g., coming to class regularly, participating, supporting peers in discussions and team projects, honesty in communications, timely completion of assignments, willingness to participate in professional opportunities, etc.) typically are assessed formally or informally and are pertinent to prospective principals and employers. In addition to requiring ethical practices, Standard 8, as part of a model of excellence, requires prospective FCS teachers to be actively engaged in affecting families through civic engagement and advocacy. The next section focuses on these significant professional responsibilities, their relationship to public policy, and the AAFCS Code of Ethics.

Public Policy

The history, philosophy, attributes, and accomplishments of public policy allow identification of four components for civic engagement and advocacy by family and consumer sciences professionals. They are delineated as follows:

1. Public policy participation in issues affecting families is an ethical obligation for FCS specialists, generalists, and students.
2. Professionals teach and interpret, for both internal and external audiences, the evaluating and decision-making processes that are integral to democracy and liberty.
3. FCS professional public policy responsibilities include educating leaders, professionals, and families in advocacy skills in support of optimal courses of action.
4. FCS professionals seek to rediscover and add to the “leadership skills that improve the human condition” (American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences [AAFCS], 2006, Cover Page).

Ethical Responsibility and Public Policy

Family and consumer sciences professionals extol the family as the basic unit of society and proclaim the FCS voice as a definitive one for family. It is, therefore, a matter of integrity for prospective FCS professionals to participate in public policy decisions that impact the family. The ethical responsibility is extended to include educating and enabling others to understand, respect, and enter into the reciprocal relationship between family and society at any and all public policy levels.
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<th>Scenarios</th>
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| 1. A student confides in her family and consumer sciences teacher that she is pregnant. | **Rules:** Do legal guidelines exist within the state? If so, what are they? Confidentiality is an important ethical principle within the profession’s code of ethics. Did the student expect that the teacher would keep the information confidential?  
**Reasoning:** Are there certain types of information that would prompt a teacher to decide that she should tell the student’s parents or a school counselor? Are there times when a teacher should tell a school counselor but not the parents? Who are the experts who could help in this situation?  
**Consequences:** Are there circumstances that will harm anyone involved? |
| 2. A teacher has taken his students to an FCCLA state meeting. Upon returning from the meeting several students report that two students took alcohol on the trip. The teacher searched students’ luggage before they loaded a bus, but found nothing. Further, students and their parents signed a code of conduct statement before the event. | **Rules:** Does the school have a policy concerning the possession of alcohol? What is the proof?  
**Reasoning:** Who should be involved? What should the teacher do to obtain more information?  
**Consequences:** How will the teacher’s actions affect these students? |
| 3. A student has been absent from her advanced nutrition class for three weeks. She has been at home with her younger sister who is ill. The student’s mother is a single parent who works three part time jobs. The student arrives after school to ask for makeup work. | **Rules:** What is the school policy in such circumstances? Does the teacher also have her own rule?  
**Reasoning:** What are some alternatives? Should the teacher indicate that the subject is very important, and that the student should retake the class next semester? Should the teacher create alternate assignments that the student can complete at home?  
**Consequences:** What is the important factual information that the student will lose or gain by each alternative? What values are reflected in each alternative? |
| 4. A student turns in a research paper during a consumer economics course on the use of | **Rules:** Is a school-wide policy for cheating in place?  
**Reasoning:** Should the teacher allow the student to rewrite the paper? Should the student fail? What |
credit. The sentence structure and range of vocabulary are much more complex than previous work. The teacher approaches the student with her suspicions. The student admits that he downloaded most of the paper from the Web because he works nights and weekends to save money for college, and he just does not have enough time to complete all of his school work.

Consequences: How will the teacher’s actions in each alternative affect the student? Affect other students? Should others be involved with this situation? Who?

Because it ethically obligates its members to represent the needs of families, family and consumer sciences has impacted public policy endeavors worldwide. A history of policy involvement in advocating for family-friendly social changes and public achievements can be traced in the pages of the *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences* and in the annals and archives of its predecessor, the *Journal of Home Economics*. FCS members and leaders have been pacesetters who initiated ethical action and put in place needed conventions in society. The record in support of improving basic human needs, important professional practices, and the wellbeing of families is admirable. Ethically, FCS obligated itself to represent the needs of families, and by doing so the profession has affected public policy endeavors worldwide.

**The Philosophical Lineage**

Family and consumer sciences advocacy is needs-based, requiring professionals to continuously answer to a changing constituency. The reality of constant response to changing needs underscores two seemingly opposite approaches for participation by professionals and others in civic engagement. On the one hand, advocates have the freedom to launch new policy. On the other hand, advocates have the freedom to abandon existing policy. Understanding how the "two freedoms" operate is basic to the FCS philosophy of advocacy.

For example, early in the profession’s history, leaders and members advocated a new public policy tradition enabling women to enter higher education degree programs. Simultaneously, leaders and members broke with, abandoned, and attacked old public policy traditions limiting women’s educational goals (Clarke, 1973; Hunt, 1912). Together, the use of the two freedoms encompass both the family and consumer sciences approach and FCS participation in civic engagement to support the education of women (Gregg, 1999)

A major reason home economics gained prominence in the early 1900s was due to its almost unparalleled propensity for solving major societal problems affecting individuals and families (Stage & Vincenti, 1997). Brief summaries of two cases illustrate this focus over time.

**Case 1.** In 1934, the state of Washington ruled that a year of home economics be "required" in their public school system. The decision was not made because educators believed that students needed primarily to acquire ‘home’ skills and technical information. Rather, it was because . . . the real contribution of home economics is social understanding [which would help students to] interpret the problems of adult life more clearly. (Rowntree, 1934, p. 17)

**Case 2.** Seventy years later in 2004, several states including Kentucky, Montana, Utah, and others, ruled that family and consumer sciences courses focusing on financial literacy be a
requirement for high school graduation. Speaking as a representative of other advocates and leaders, the wife of the Governor of Utah said, "Financial problems occur in families and in society. Teachers of family and consumer sciences understand both and teach the reciprocal relationship between the two" (Felshaw, 2005). This statement was widely quoted and FCS advocacy helped establish the policy, guide development of the curriculum, and determine that FCS teachers were well-qualified to teach the courses.

Professional Development and Public Policy

An important goal of family and consumer sciences teacher candidates should be building competence and proficiency in identifying alternatives that are valid solutions for problems. Because "public policy is derived from both the private and the public sectors of a society" (Anderson & Miles, 1990, p. 7), FCS professionals often collaborate with others and sponsor professional development for advocacy in schools, churches, youth groups, and other professional organizations. Because analyzing public policy problems cuts across large segments of varied populations and diverse groups, FCS advocacy is often part of the dialogue about controversial issues and agendas. Therefore, the process of professional development often takes place in communities of learning (Anderson, 2004; Ralston, Lerner, Mullis, Simerly, & Murray, 2000).

Family and consumer sciences educators teach decision-making processes that enable changes in public policy traditions, while values are addressed along with critical thinking and contextual learning. The goal is to both educate about and build participation in public policy endeavors. FCS places value on critical thinking in professional development for public policy endeavors. Whether written or otherwise, we advocate and present a particular point of view that supports underlying convictions. Prospective FCS teachers can understand these issues by applying a “criterion of accuracy and proof to evaluate information, assertions, reasoning, and evidence to make judgments of acceptability and worth” (Coleman & Ganong, 2003, p. 86).

Public policy information is best utilized and practiced in a problem-solving context, which allows the expression of contrasting and opposing views of an argument, one point at a time. This type of point/counterpoint approach allows participants to sift out irrelevant material, detect biases, and uncover assumptions and ambiguity. The approach also is a way to identify credible sources of accurate information, support defensible points of view, and impact judgment so that more persuasive arguments can be made (Coleman & Ganong, 2003). The use of procedural knowledge to problem-solve allows connections between an issue and the impact of proposed solutions upon individuals as family members, citizens, and workers. Expertise results from a deep conceptual understanding supported by study and experience.

Stages and Platforms

One of the defining purposes of family and consumer sciences public policy is dissemination of knowledge in ways that allow opportunity for students, parents, and other citizens to engage in decision-making related to social change. Therefore, effective advocacy requires a stage from which the work of advocacy can become visible.

Many groups and organizations provide avenues of communication (stages) with large audiences. One example of these is the Cooperative Extension Service and its related organizations. The Extension Service has an office in every state and county in the United States, and one assignment of Extension personnel in family and consumer sciences and other areas is to work with public policy. This allows placement of new and re-occurring topics on the agendas of local and national leaders. They, in turn, put topics and information on agendas for meetings,
conventions, press conferences, press releases, and others. In addition, a stellar record of advocacy is prominent among the many accomplishments of the Cooperative Extension Service 4-H programs. Because the Extension Service is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture, 4-H comprises the only youth organization personally sponsored by the President of the United States of America. Through community-based 4-H clubs, local, state, and national leaders provide visibility and programs for advocacy. For example, young people are encouraged to complete 4-H Citizenship training and public policy projects.

Another important youth group that provides stages for family and consumer sciences advocacy is FCCLA. This national organization sponsors chapters within the secondary school system. As the school-based student organization for FCS, FCS teachers serve as FCCLA advisors (Standard 10, Student Organization Integration). Through this organization, student leaders and members can facilitate student and parent communication and provide visibility, generate interest, and enable larger audiences to enter into a dialogue aimed at building and supporting specific platforms.

Community youth leaders in many civic and education programs as well as parents of students who enroll in family and consumer sciences courses can be valuable participants with FCS professionals. Together they can define problems, refine platforms, propose solutions, and communicate the needs and wants of families and other constituencies. This bond of leaders, youth, and parents confirms the FCS understanding of ethical connections between family and society. "Partnerships between parents, families and FCS professionals are at the foundation of families having a meaningful voice in the policy process" (Anderson, 2004, p. 111).

**Collaboration and Coalitions**

Building stages and putting platforms in place demands that family and consumer sciences professionals be at the forefront of appropriate collaborations and coalitions. "The problems and issues . . . facing families [require that many] players work together to develop community-driven programs [that] work" (Chiles, 2000, Foreword). "Effective collaborations involve working toward a high level of shared responsibility based on shared decision-making and ownership of and commitment to solutions" (White, 1999, p. 82). A collaboration framework is often grounded in diversity. Then bridges are built, and purposes and outcomes are shared (White).

Historically, one of the first of these bridges, and one of the most lasting, formed naturally because of commonalities of family and consumer sciences teachers and other vocational teachers, now designated in most school systems as career and technical (CTE) teachers. Presently, in the United States public school system, CTE has staff members and personnel in most local schools along with its own divisions in district, state, and federal offices of education (Legislative History of Vocational Education 1917-1947, 1976). Educators designated as CTE, including FCS teachers, are grouped together, through common interests such as education and advocacy, as well as by law.

Other coalitions and collaborations have continued to form naturally between family and consumer sciences and those who share like missions and interests about specific social issues and agendas. The list is a long one. It includes the Children’s Defense Fund, Head Start, the American Dietetics Association, the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR), and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). These and others have been important FCS public policy partners in gaining support and advocating for policies related to families and children.
Within the last two decades, collaboration has been particularly important. It continues to be crucial that educators at all levels of academia, policy makers, legislators, and community members work together. As the family and consumer sciences knowledge base continues to grow, public policy is one of the pillars that both undergirds and results from the growth. Because FCS professionals have a moral commitment to improve the quality of life for individuals and families worldwide, the FCS public policy voice has been heard, and it will continue to be heard.

The history, the philosophy, the attributes, and the accomplishments of public policy allows identification of four components that appear to be the essence of a moral contract for civic engagement by family and consumer sciences professionals. The four are: (a) FCS public policy participation is an ethical obligation; (b) FCS professionals are responsible to teach and interpret processes for evaluating and making decisions, which are integral to democracy and liberty for both internal and external audiences; (c) FCS professional public policy responsibilities include educating leaders in advocacy; and (d) FCS professionals seek to rediscover and add to the "leadership skills that improve the human condition" (AAFCS, 2006, Cover Page).

**Toward the Future as Professionals: Becoming Engaged in Public Policy**

How can prospective family and consumer sciences teachers gain knowledge about public policy and skills advocating for policies that benefit families? AAFCS has produced a number of publications, such as *Family and Community Policy: Strategies for Civic Engagement* (Anderson, 2004) and “deliberation guides” on financial fitness (Gentry, 2007) and weight control (Williams, Hartough, Miles, & Braun, 2005), which could be used in university classes. FCS teacher candidates could adopt positions on a pertinent policy issue and work in teams to advocate for selected policies in point/counterpoint fashion. As they listen to opposing positions and advocate for their own positions, they could identify and critique their assumptions, biases, and information in a critical reflection notebook. It would be valuable for teacher candidates to organize a portfolio of evidence as they identify and organize credible and essential information. Such a project might serve a culminating purpose to engage in the policy arena by writing persuasive letters to legislators, creating public service materials or Web sites to post information supporting their perspective, or holding a public meeting to garner additional voices in understanding.

As part of Standard 10, Student Organization Integration, prospective family and consumer sciences teachers might plan a yearlong curriculum, instructional strategies, and resources (also pertinent to Standards 5, 6, and 7) to infuse public policy education and action into a secondary school class or FCCLA chapter. Panels of individuals from the community could be invited to share why they have opposing perspectives on a family or career oriented issue. This could be followed by a synchronous electronic discussion for students to identify their own positions and reasoning as well as respond to others with different positions—with a purpose to arrive at consensus on where the profession of FCS should focus advocacy. Criteria for assessing policy skills might include speaking, dialogical, pedagogical, and writing skills in addition to the ability to collaborate and build a case for a particular policy with evidence, reasoning, and ability to act.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, family and consumer sciences teacher candidates have inherited the responsibility and privilege to empower families with communicative and emancipative values
and actions as supported by the best technical knowledge. They have the obligation to approach all professional decisions on ethical principles and processes, and they have power to participate in influencing public policies that support high quality family life.

Ralston (2001) challenges new professionals to consider their work as a calling, "Choose to be a change agent" (p. 28) and "find a passion in what you are doing" (p. 28). With timeless and enduring philosophical values centered on helping others create meaningful lives within changing ecological contexts, prospective family and consumer sciences educators are called to an exciting and momentous endeavor.

Annotated List of Suggested Resources

Books and Publications
This guide assists teachers and others in deliberating public policy approaches to address financial literacy and security. A framework is provided for informed judgments and moving to common ground regarding possible solutions to financial problems ranging from bankruptcy to inability to retire due to lack of finances.

This issue of the Journal was a theme issue on “the soul of the profession” and included a variety of philosophical and historical reflections on themes of purpose and mission as well as what it means to be a family and consumer sciences professional.

The guide frames the issue of obesity in useful terms for citizens and public decision makers. It can be used to open dialogue between policy makers and their constituents about the public health, economic, psychological, and social implications of obesity as well as solutions.

Internet Resources
This online resource provides information about Congress, preparing a position, communicating with Congress and the media, and regulations concerning advocacy versus lobbying. Excellent resources and models that can be used for handouts or to guide understanding are also provided.

Sponsored by the Association of College Honor Societies, this national ethics project provides objectives for participating in honor societies, ideas for putting on programs on ethics, and a wide range of links to resources on ethics (from business ethics to creating an ethical code, from plagiarism to character education).
This national resource makes the historical time, personality, and accomplishments of
Ellen Richards come alive for modern audiences. Created by historian Joyce Miles, this
Web site offers links to historical photographs, electronic articles and information on
Ellen S. Richards, resources, and blogs.

Presents case studies of family and consumer sciences professionals who have designed,
evaluated, or implemented a successful program. They can serve as role models of how to
become civically engaged in community issues and needs.

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