



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1982 Volume VI: The Changing American Family: Historical and Comparative Perspectives

Consumer Practices of Low-Income Families with Strategies for Improved Financial Management

Guide for Curriculum Unit 82.06.11
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This unit examines the research findings on the consumer practices of low-income families in order to provide the teacher with an understanding of the spending patterns of the majority of our students. It also includes (in the lesson plans) a questionnaire for students to examine their own and their families' expenditure patterns in order for them to assess how well they are coping economically. In reviewing the research findings, the teacher will be able to perceive areas in which education would be most effective, and also gain new insights as to the best teaching techniques to use. The topics discussed include participation of husbands and wives in financial planning, decision-making process, the sources of consumers' knowledge, manipulation of the poor in the marketplace, and the unethical and illegal practices engaged in by merchants against poor families. The findings are then examined in the framework of the following five rules for good income management:

1. Buy necessities first and luxuries last. 2. Take advantage of benefits available to low-income families. 3. Budget carefully and plan in advance. 4. Get the best quality for the lowest price, 5. Try to get what is needed without spending money or spend only for raw materials.

The lesson plan, in addition to the previously mentioned questionnaire, include activities concerning budgeting, home production, shopping, sources of consumer protection, consumer periodicals, and a vocabulary list. Also included are annotated student and teacher bibliographies. The unit is designed to be implemented during the first and second quarters of Consumer or Proficiency Math. It can also be adapted for use in Consumer Law, Distributive Education, Home Economics, and Family Life classes, whenever consumer practices are being discussed.

(Recommended for 10th grade Consumer or Proficiency Math, 11th grade Distributive Education, 12th grade Consumer Law, and 9th through 12th grade Home Economics and Family Life)

Key Words

Budgeting Consumer Practices Low Income Families Family Life Financial Management Mathematics General Applications

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