impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Secondary FCS teachers and UI Extension educators connect through sewing

AT A GLANCE

Promoting University of Idaho Extension programming for Idaho secondary education FCS teachers through "Needles & Hems" class, discussion of student application and available programming.

The Situation

Fifty-five secondary education family and consumer sciences (FCS) teachers from Idaho gathered for a two-day conference at Rigby High School, focusing on curriculum, teaching strategies and networking. Of Idaho's 44 counties, teachers from 17 counties attended the conference, and participants in the "Needles and Hems" class represented 17 of those counties. Many FCS teachers have indicated that they are not familiar with what UI Extension has to offer or have never had UI Extension educators in their classroom. A hands-on sewing option was highly sought after.

Our Response

An opportunity to promote University of Idaho Extension programming in conjunction with a hands-on, skill-based activity (hemming slacks and hemming jeans) and discussion surrounding STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts and math) and entrepreneurship in FCS classrooms was a perfect way to connect with teachers from all over the state and share what UI Extension educators have to offer youth.

The class "Needles & Hems" was presented through two, one-hour sessions. A total of 51 teachers participated in one of the two sessions, more than any of the other 21 classes. The class included the following focus areas:

Teachers participate in "Needles & Hems" class at Idaho Family and Consumer Sciences Conference. Photo by Shanon Holt.

- Outlined UI Extension programming offers FCS in secondary education classrooms, including youth financial literacy; food safety and nutrition; health and well-being; and leadership.
- Discussed how teachers can foster industry-forward education for students demonstrating skill-sets for entrepreneurial endeavors.
- Presented criteria to select correct needles and thread weight based on textiles being used and project parameters.
- Provided hands-on activities to create two different hem samples.

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UI Extension, Jefferson County
208-745-6685 • 208-745-6686 (fax)
210 Courthouse Way, Suite 180, Rigby, ID 83442

- Provided a detailed lesson plan for this topic, as well as a PowerPoint slideshow and handouts to facilitate student learning.

It was intended that teachers will use this information, PowerPoint media and topic approach to instruct their students to learn a new skill, apply new knowledge regarding thread weight and needle anatomy, and consider technology and textiles, to be able to create successful sewing projects. Discussion ensued that this understanding had the potential to lead current family and consumer sciences students to be productive in the textile science or clothing design and construction industry, even creating their own businesses.

Program Outcomes

FCS teachers from all over Idaho became students as they learned how to determine which needles and weight of thread to use pertaining to the textile and project being sewn. Over 85% of the participants learned what a "shim" was and how to use it, indicating they would use this tool in their classrooms. All (100%) participants indicated that the skills learned were valuable and would be transferable to their specific courses taught even if it wasn't sewing related. Teachers discussed ways they would engage students in transferring those new skills to either better their lives personally or create pathways in which they could create businesses (not necessarily sewing related) and fulfill their own financial goals.

These teachers also discovered what FCS programming educators can present to their students and indicated in their surveys what topics they are interested in UI Extension bringing to their classroom. Conference participants listed topics not already available that they were interested in having UI Extension educators provide through a one- or two-class series in their classrooms: The most sought-after topics were financially managing a business, clothing construction skill sets and managing employees, knife skills, managing a home kitchen, child nutrition for caregivers, nutrition for teens, and budgeting and money management as a young adult after leaving home. Teachers were provided contact information for county UI Extension educators respective to the location in which they teach and encouraged to reach out and connect with those educators, even inviting them to present. Teachers gained momentum in their enthusiasm to have educators come and present, not realizing that Extension educators provide these opportunities at no cost. These participants expressed excitement to have a "guest speaker" and suggested that opportunities like this would be appreciated by their students.

Table 1. Knowledge and skills gained

Knowledge and skills gained	Response N(%)
Plan and execute projects with needle purpose, thread capabilities and textile in mind	24(100%)
Select needle based on textile	23(95%)
Select thread based on needle	23(95%)
Correctly construct blind hem	22(91%)
Use a shim to achieve consistant stitches on denim rolled hem	100(100%)

The Future

Extension educators in family and consumer sciences should expect an increase in inquiries from secondary education FCS teachers in the coming school year.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Idaho Family and Consumer Sciences Conference Committee provided funds for kits consisting of thread, textiles for sample pant legs and needles.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Deanna Poulsen, FCS Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Jefferson County • 208-745-6685 • dpoulsen@uidaho.edu

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