

Development and Testing of a High School Housing Unit Based on Student Interests and Needs'

Luella Slagh
Suzanne Lindamood

A problem faced by all secondary home economics teachers, and especially those who are teaching economically disadvantaged students, is understanding the needs and interests of the students and orienting the curricula so that those needs can be met. Traditional subject matter and alternatives need to be critically analyzed against alternatives to see whether other approaches could better meet the needs of the students, and whether they have greater potential for improving the quality of their lives.

Housing is an area that seems particularly crucial to the quality of life of individuals as well as communities. It is questionable, however, whether the approach often taken at the high school level really attacks the issues and gives the students knowledge that will help with the hous-

ing problems of the low income. The high school housing unit, as it is outlined in the *Alabama Study of Home Economics* (1974) is highly design and decorating oriented. It is questionable whether low income students can relate their housing needs to this middle class approach. Students are not likely to view wallpaper, paint and curtains as a solution when their family is paying high rent for a two room shack that leaks, and has no heat or running water. Although "bedroom decor" may be more fun to teach than "programs in our community for plumbing", the latter may be more related to quality of life issues for low income students.

It is theorized that a new approach to housing, focusing on social, economic and political aspects, will stimulate more interest in learning about housing, and that students will become more aware of their part in getting better housing for themselves and members of their communities when they become adults.

Luella Slagh is a Vocational Home Economics teacher in Alabama. Suzanne Lindamood is an assistant professor in the Department of Family Economics, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS.

'An earlier version of this paper by Slagh placed fourth in the 1977 Tessie Agan Scholarship Competition.

Description of the Study

This paper is based on research conducted in a rural high school in southeast Alabama. The purpose of the research was to develop a housing unit that would better meet the needs and interests

of the students than did the housing unit that had been taught in the past.

Presentation of Housing Units

Procedures

Sample

All home economics students enrolled in ninth through twelfth grade of a rural small town high school in southeast Alabama during the 1976-1977 school year were included in the study. The sample consisted of 59 students, with slightly over half being male and slightly over half being black. (Table 1)

Table 1. Distribution of Students by Sex and Race

	Male	Female	Total
Black	27.1 (n=16)	28.8 (n=)	56.6 (n=33)
White	30.5 (n=18)	13.6 (n=8)	44.1 (n=26)
Total	57.6 (n=34)	42.4 (=25)	

Instruments Used

Each student was given a series of five instruments to determine: 1) interest, 2) knowledge, 3) student characteristics, 4) housing facilities and 5) housing satisfactions. A sixth instrument to evaluate objective housing quality was used by the teacher after a visit to each student's home.

The first five instruments were given before any housing units were presented. Then after both the experimental and traditional housing units were presented, a post-test was given to see what housing concepts were learned during the housing unit.

The classes were introduced to the social, political and economic aspects of housing by using the unpublished HELPS entitled, "Housing: Where Do We Start?" (Appendix A). Lesson I entitled, "A Look Backward at Housing Policy" covered the 1974 Housing Act and its origin. The students took notes by special request but at this point showed little interest. Lesson II, Housing Needs of Americans, covered how people's needs, values and standards are reflected or not reflected in their dwelling unit. A game called, "Housing Needs of Americans" was played to reinforce concepts in the social, political and economic aspects of housing, and the students showed a great deal of interest in playing the game and coming up with the right answers. Next the Rural Housing Alliance films, "Six Houses Six Homes" and "This House is Not for Living" were shown to point out the need for improved housing and the role of self-help housing in assisting low-income families in rural areas to improve their housing. The students seemed to empathize with the families in the films. A tape, "A Place to Rent," discussed problems of renting, the portion of income that should be spent on housing, and how husband and wife may hold different values toward housing. Again, the students showed a great deal of interest, especially in the possible value differences of husbands and wives. Lesson III, Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 and HUD, covered housing subsidies and how HUD and Farmers Home Administration help low income families and elderly through mortgage and rent subsidies. Some of the students were concerned about the government giving too much help to families. It was pointed out that middle and higher income families who own their own homes have a form of government subsidy in the deduction of interest and property taxes from federal taxes, and that all income levels receive some form of government assistance.

For the traditional unit on housing, the teaching aid "Decorating Made Easy" by Sears Consumer Information Services was used. The objectives covered were styles of furnishing, room arrangement, color schemes, accessories and how to select furniture. Steps in refinishing furniture were explained and some students actually refinished a piece of furniture for the school's Annual Fashion, Craft and Refinishing Show. The students seemed to enjoy refinishing the furniture but most of them showed little interest in the objectives in the "Decorating Made Easy" teaching aid.

Findings and Discussion

Characteristics of the Students

The abilities of the students, their backgrounds and their plans should be considered when developing educational materials. IQ scores were obtained from student records for the 46 percent of the sample whose scores were recorded. The mean IQ score for those students was 89.85, with a range of 59 to 119.

The educational projections of the students show that 92 percent planned to complete high school, 41 percent planned to go to college, 27 percent planned to go to vocational school, and 32 percent did not have any plans for after graduation. Those with no plans may have an effect on the high drop out rate experienced at this school during the eleventh and twelfth grades.

Many of the students came from homes with one of the parents absent. Fifty-one of the fifty-nine had mothers living in the home, seven had a mother surrogate (an aunt or sister), while only thirty-seven had a father living in the home. Most of the fathers were employed as laborers, and two were in management and personnel work. About half the mothers were housewives, and the rest were primarily laborers, with a few clerical workers, and one in administration. Half the students

reported that their family income was below \$5,000 per year.

Table 2. Distribution of Family Income

Income	Percent
0 — \$2,999	36
\$3,000 — \$4,999	16
\$5,000 — \$6,999	22
\$7,000 — \$8,999	18
\$9,000 and above	8
	100.0 (n=50)

The number of children in the home ranged from three to twelve, with the average being 4.5. Nine of the families had another family living with them in their home.

Description of Housing

An instrument which listed twenty-three possible facilities in the home, including types of rooms, equipment, electricity, and water was used for the students to report their housing facilities. All of the homes had a refrigerator, 93 percent had a range, 22 percent had dishwashers, 68 percent had washing machines, 46 percent had dryers. Only 67.8 percent indicated they had running water in the home. An additional instrument of housing quality was filled out by the teacher after she made home visits. The teacher's instrument contained information on the condition of the structure, paint, holes or sagging in walls and/or roof, and the condition of furnishings. Each house was further described in terms of being: a shack; old and remodeled; fairly new (1200 sq. ft. or less); fairly new (1200 sq. ft. or more); or a mobile home. Table 3 shows the distribution of housing types.

Table 3. Distribution of Housing Types

Types	(percent)
Shacks	32.2
Old, remodeled	23.7
Fairly new, less than 1200 sq. ft.	22.0
Mobile home	10.2
Fairly new, more than 1200 sq. ft.	8.5
Don't know	3.4
	100.0 (n=59)

Satisfaction with Housing

Satisfaction with housing in terms of the amount of space, the condition of the house, the way the house looks, and the neighborhood, was found to be fairly high. Of five possible categories, for overall satisfaction 34 percent rated their homes as very good, 40 percent as pretty good, 16 percent as so-so, 5 percent as pretty bad and 5 percent as terrible. The student ratings were not consistent with the quality ratings assigned to the homes by the teacher, as some students were satisfied with homes with low quality ratings, and others were dissatisfied with homes that had high quality ratings.

Housing Interest Items

Students ranked 29 items related to housing according to how important they thought that item was to study. (Table 4) Items reflecting traditional housing unit (T) were based on the concepts of teaching housing presented in the *Alabama Course Study for Home Economics* (1974). The experimental items (E) were based on the HELPS developed for this study. (Appendix A) The list was presented to the students before either housing unit had been presented, and after both the traditional and experimental units had been presented.

Prior to instruction, the top five interest categories were related to consumer aspects of housing. The five considered least important had to do with specialized decorating problems, and were all part of the state guidelines.

After the housing units had been presented, there was increased interest expressed in the socio-psychological as well as consumer aspects of housing. The item that showed the greatest increase was that of "government programs in housing assistance", moving from 19th to 10th place.

The test on housing information showed a slightly higher increase in knowledge of the experimental items, as the mean pre-test, post-test scores were 63 and 70, compared to 52 and 57 for the traditional items.

Summary

The underlying assumption of this research was that knowledge of student interests, their present housing conditions, levels of housing satisfaction, and housing knowledge should aid in planning positive learning experiences about housing. In the present study, the students were largely from disadvantaged homes in a low income region. Thus experiences need to be developed that would help the student see the possibilities and means for making improvements in their own housing; to understand how others in the community may have achieved or could possibly achieve adequate housing; and identify factors that may inhibit achievement of adequate housing.

The Home Economics teacher must help youths understand that better housing conditions are created both through individual advancement (knowledge and higher income) and through the involvement of the political and economic systems via programs, incentives, and opportunities. The improvement of housing is dependent upon the interaction of both, and education will help the individual and the community become more aware and more capable of improving housing conditions.

Table 4. Items of Housing Interest Before and After Presentation of the Housing Units

Pre-Rank	Pre-Scores*	Post Scores*	Post Rank
1 What to look for when renting a house/apartment. (E)	186	199	3
2 Planning for location of a home. (E)	186	196	4
3 Financing a home. (E)	183	200	2
4 Understanding heating, air conditioning, water and plumbing (T)	182	186	7
5 Improving home grounds (T)	182	181	13
6 What to look for in a housetrailer. (E)	180	186	6
7 Selection of major appliances for kitchen/laundry (T)	179	187	8
8 Influence of housing on people. (E)	177	203	1
9 Plan areas of home in relation to family needs, personal preferences and concepts of design. (E)	175	188	5
10 Determining storage needs of the home. (E)	174	171	20
11 Planning lights for the home. (T)	170	179	16
12 Selecting living quarters at the different stages of the family life cycle. (E)	167	182	12
13 Plan for wall treatments such as paint, wallpaper, paneling. (T)	167	184	9
14 Plan for floor coverings and how to figure cost. (T)	167	180	15
16 Learning how to arrange furniture in living room, family room and dining room. (T)	165	182	11
17 Study the uses of accessories in decorating a bedroom. (T)	163	176	18
18 Draw a floor plan of a bedroom to scale and arrange furniture cutouts for best arrangement. (T)	161	180	14
19 Government programs involved in housing assistance. (E)	161	183	10
20 Understand and be able to apply the elements of design and principles of art to interior design. (T)	155	177	17
21 Learning the furniture styles (T)	154	157	28
22 Repairing furniture — scrape off old paint, put on new	154	176	19
23 Studying house designs. (T)	153	166	24
24 Advanced window treatment (measure, figure yardage) (T)	152	168	22
25 Use of pictures in decorating. (T)	149	161	26
26 Interpreting and evaluating floor plans. (T)	148	161	27
27 Reupholstering a chair. (T)	139	163	25
28 Plan ways of decorating a bedroom window. (T)	139	167	28
29 Making slip covers (T)	126	151	29

*Calculated by multiplying the number of responses in each of the four response categories value for that category. (Of no importance = 1; of little importance = 2; of some importance = 3; of great importance = 4).

Appendix A. HELPS developed for use in this study.

Teacher Section

HELPS: HOME ECONOMICS LEARNING PACKAGE

title: HOUSING: SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS

subject: Social, political and economic aspects of housing

performance level:

Maturity level: Secondary

Complexity level: Advanced

Taxonomic level: Cognitive domain

purpose: This learning package is planned to provide knowledge about the complexity of housing at all socioeconomic levels with the main emphasis on political intervention.

GENERALIZATION TO BE LEARNED

The affect of social, political and economic forces on housing.

COMPONENT IDEAS

1. A look backwards at housing policy.
2. Housing needs of Americans during the family life cycle and all income levels.
3. Federal government policy through HUD and the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.
4. How a Housing Survey can help a community determine its housing needs and influence government help.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

1. To enable you to see how the federal government started housing legislation.
2. To help you understand the housing needs of all American families and what affects their housing attainment.
3. To help you see how HUD plays a part in carrying out the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.

4. To take a housing survey and to see if local families are aware of government policies.

I. INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

The Student Section of this learning package is composed of four lessons. Within these lessons are learning activities using different techniques. The student will begin the package by taking a Pre-Test. In the section for the student is the key to this test. The student will score his or her Pre-Test, then will discuss the results with the teacher to determine next steps, lessons or Post-Test. The teacher will need to have certain materials available and these are listed below. The teacher will administer the Final-Test and score it.

II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE LEARNERS

This learning package is designed for senior males and females. It could also be used in an advanced class of females only or for independent study.

III. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

MATERIALS NEEDED:

• Books

- Consumer Housing*, Pauline G. Garrett, Chas. A. Bennett Co., Inc. Peoria, Ill. 1972.
Housing Urban America. Pynoos, Schafer, Hartman. Aldine Publishing Co., Chicago, Ill., 1973.

• Periodicals

- Duns Review* April 1976. pp. 58-61
U. S. News and World Report Sept. 8, 1975. pp. 57-59.

• Films

- This House Is Not For Living*. Rural Housing Alliance, Dupont Circle Building, 1246 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington D.C. 20036
Six House Six Homes. Rural Housing Alliance, Dupont Circle Building, 1246 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington D.C., 20036

●**Tape**

A Place to Rent, and booklets, (1) *You and Your Landlord*, (2) *Food, Clothing & Shelter Record Book*, (5) *You and Your Landlord*, (6) *A Home of Your Own*, and *A Place to Rent*. 1974. Instructional Systems Div., Grolier Educational Corp., 845 Third Ave., N.Y. 10022

●**Government Publications**

U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development, *Housing for Low Income Families*. Washington D.C. Govt. Printing Office, 1975.

IV. EVALUATION INSTRUCTIONS

Enclosed in the learning package are —

1. Teacher's Section:
 - a. Lesson II — Key for Game Questions
 - b. Lesson III — Key for Self-Test Questions
 - c. Lesson III — Key for Word Puzzle
 - d. Final Test
2. Student Section:
 - a. Pre-Test and Key
 - b. Self-Test Game for Lesson II
 - c. Lesson III — Work Puzzle

LESSON II KEY FOR GAME QUESTIONS

1. Stages in Family Life Cycle
2. Single-Family Detached Home
3. Suburban
4. Black
5. Crowding
6. Home
7. Slum Dwellers
8. Zoning
9. Mobile
10. \$27,000
11. \$40,000
12. Goals
13. Home Ownership
14. Social
15. 24%
16. Values
17. Young-Children Stage

HELPS: STUDENT SECTION

Introduction

These materials are planned to help you learn about housing from a macro level through looking at political policy making at the Federal level, and how the Federal government looks at the social and economic factors in the dwelling needs of individuals and families.

Learning Objectives

1. To enable you to see how the federal government started housing legislation.
2. To help you understand the housing needs of all American families and what affects their housing attainment.
3. To help you see how HUD plays a part in carrying out the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.
4. To take a housing survey and to see if local families are aware of government policies.

Pre-Test

The purpose of this test is to see where you are in understanding concepts about government policy in housing.

Directions: Read the items carefully. When you have completed the test, check it with the key on page 30. Then take your test copy to the teacher and discuss with her any areas in which you need further study.

TRUE OR FALSE: Read each statement carefully. Use **T** for **TRUE** and **F** for **FALSE**.

- ___1. Hud is a name for a type of house trailer.
- ___2. Very-low income families use between 25-50% of their income on housing costs.
- ___3. FNMA and GNMA are initials for government mortgage associations to have available money for housing.
- ___4. Urban homesteading is a way to help rehabilitate the inner cities.
- ___5. Most of the federal government housing programs help the very poor families the most.
- ___6. the awareness that we have housing re-

sponsibilities comes from beliefs and values transplanted in colonial days from European societies.

- ___7. The President's committee on Urban Housing which met in 1970 estimated a need for 26 million dwelling units.
- ___8. Long-term credit reaches the housing industry by a series of complicated routes.
- ___9. The Department of Housing and Urban Development is a cabinet-level executive department of our federal government.
- ___10. The FHA system of mortgage insurance, has helped to make the low down payment, long-term, fully amortized mortgage the standard in mortgage lending.
- ___11. The American housing norm is a single-family detached home with land.
- ___12. Mobile homes are considered dwelling units.
- ___13. Public housing has been limited to the poorest of our families.
- ___14. Income tax deductions for house owning is a form of government subsidies.

Answers to Pre-Test

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T | 11. T |
| 2. T | 7. T | 12. T |
| 3. T | 8. T | 13. T |
| 4. T | 9. T | 14. T |
| 5. F | 10. T | |

LESSON I

Component Idea

A look backwards at housing policy.

Objective

To enable you to see how the federal government started housing legislation.

Instructions

You are expected to carry out the first 4 activities. Activity 5 is for extra credit and additional study for those whom think it necessary.

Learning Activities

1. READ: Report "The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974; A Brief Review of its Historical Origin and Application to Communities Today."

2. READ: *Consumer Housing*, p. 221 and 228-229; National Awareness; Operation Breakthrough
3. CHART: The Housing Policies since 1933 and give the main characteristics of each. (Turn in to teacher for credit)
4. WRITE: A brief report on "How the policies helped all the economic levels; low, medium and high."
5. COLLECT: A newspaper or a magazine article on housing policies. Write it up and report to rest of class.

LESSON II

Component Idea

Housing needs of Americans.

Objective

To help you understand the housing needs of all American families and what affects their housing attainment.

Instructions

You are expected to carry out the first 3 activities; in activity 4 you are to pick out one of the readings and start a class discussion using it. Everyone is to participate in the self-test.

Learning Activities

1. READ: In *Consumer Housing* the following section-Planning for Environmental Space pp. 6-19.
2. WRITE: How people's needs, values, and standards are reflected in certain homes that you have observed and visited.
3. READ: In *Consumer Housing* the following sections: (a) High-Rise Apartment Building p. 227-228; (b) Mobile Homes & Housing Supply p. 232-233; (c) New Single-Family Housing Increasingly Expensive p. 233; (d) Antidiscrimination Practices in Housing p. 234-235.
4. READ: In *Housing Urban America* the following: (a) The Effects of Poor Housing pp. 158-165; (b) Environmental Preferences of Future Housing Consumers p 191-199;

(c) Fear and the House — as Haven in the Lower Class p. 191-199.

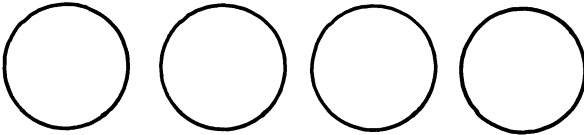
Self-Test

Pick four classmates and play the "Housing Needs of Americans Game."

LESSON II

Directions for game "Housing Needs of Americans."

1. Place question cards on playing board. (Type or print the 17 questions on individual small index cards.)
2. Players place their FACE CIRCLES on start. (Make 4 circle faces for playing pieces as follows — color each one as stated.)
white black yellow red



3. Roll dice to see who goes first; highest number is the first player.
4. First player picks a question card and moves to where the answer is, if he does not know the answer he stays at the start position. If he knows answer he moves to it and gets 10 points. Then place the card on bottom of card pile. The first time a player goes around the game board and passes the start box he gets an extra 20 points.
5. Winner is the person who gets 100 points first.

QUESTIONS TO PUT ON CARDS:

1. Housing preferences vary according to _____.
2. Most young families prefer to own a _____.
3. The movement to _____ areas promises to continue through the next few decades.
4. The urban _____ suffers from some of the worst housing conditions in the country.
5. _____ has the most serious effects on the family and socialization.
6. The _____ has more central to its definition other functions which have to do with self-

expression and self-realization.

7. The _____ primary focus in housing seems to be as a shelter from both external and internal threats.
8. _____ serves the purposes of regulating the use of land, restricting the height of structures.
9. _____ homes contribute significantly to the housing supply outside of the central city and in smaller communities.
10. The cost of a median price house in 1970 was _____.
11. The cost of a median price house in 1976 was _____.
12. Your housing _____ often change as your income changes.
13. Low-income families cannot afford _____.
14. When considering how a house can best meet your _____ needs, you will want to think about the interests and activities of each family member.
15. If you are a typical consumer you will spend about _____ of your income for housing.
16. As your tastes change, your _____ will also change.
17. In the _____ the neighborhood and community is much more important.

LESSON III

Component Idea

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 and HUD.

Objective

To help you see how HUD plays a part in carrying out the Housing and Community Act of 1974 and to understand the purposes of the Act.

Instructions

You are expected to do learning activities 1, 2, and 4. For extra credit you may do number 3. Everyone is expected to do the self-test and turn in.

Learning Activities

1. READ & DISCUSS: With another student the magazine article, "Housing Subsidies for 70 Million People." *U.S. New & World Report*, Sept. 8, 1975, pp. 57-59.

2. READ & WRITE: An analysis of the magazine article, "A New Housing Dilemma." *Duns Review*, April 1976. pp. 58-61.
3. READ: "HUD'S New Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments Program." HUD-392-F August 1975.
4. READ: In *Consumer Housing* the section on "Housing and Urban Development and the FHA System. pp. 226-227.

Self-Test

Do the Word Puzzle and turn in.

Find the answers to the questions and then discover the **words** in the puzzle.

Self-Test Questions

Directions: Read the questions carefully and then write the single or double word answers in the blank. The answers to these questions are found in the Word Puzzle in which you are to circle the words.

1. A form of government subsidized housing for individual families in the cities?_____
2. What is a form of housing that is not new, but is being redone?_____
3. Who is the latest Secretary of HUD?_____
4. What is a person called who rents out apartments or houses?_____
5. a word which means "first things first?"_____
6. What are the initials for the local housing authority?_____
7. What is a name given to a person renting a dwelling unit?_____
8. What is the nickname for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development?_____
9. What are dwelling units called that are already available?_____
10. What is the name of a dwelling unit which is being or will be built?_____
11. Rents which HUD and/or LHA uses to base subsidized rents on?_____

12. What is the name of the form of subsidy a low or moderate income person can get in order to purchase a house?_____
13. The section 8 helps what low income group find adequate housing?_____
14. What is the name of the sections found at the peripheral areas of a city?_____
15. What are the initials for the agencies that are to be contacted about HUD's New Section 8 Housing Assistance payments Program?_____
16. What is the actual rent charged by the landlord of an apartment or house and used by the PHA to determine subsidies?_____

References

- Alabama Course of Study for Home Economics*, State of Alabama Department of Education, Montgomery, 1974.
- Alabama Development Office. *State Housing Plan: Problems and Obstacles Mid-Decade Housing Inventory*. State Planning Div., Montgomery
- "Decorating Made Easy". Consumer Information Filmstrip Unit, Consumer Information Service, Dept. 703 — Public Relations, Chicago, Illinois, 60611.
- Lindamood, Suzanne. A Thesis presented to the Graduate School of Cornell University. *Obstacles to Change Among Poverty Groups: The Relationship of Housing and Housing Satisfaction to School Achievement Among Teen-Agers*. June 1970
- Miller, Roger Leroy. *Economic Issues for Consumers*. St. Paul, Minn.; West Publishing Co., 1975.
- Morris, E. J. and Winter, M. Housing and Occupational Subcultures. *Housing Educators Journal*, Vol. 3 N. 3. September 1976.
- Sporakowski, M. J., and Eubanks. "Parent-Adolescent Communications and School Adjustment," *The School Counselor*. January 1976.