



Amber Tiernan

National Board Certified Teacher

Education

B.S. in Family and Consumer Sciences Education
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction/Educational Leadership
McDaniel College

Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction
Liberty University

Lagniappe: A Little Something Extra

While not related specifically to the career field, this is a fun fact about myself. I have always loved everything under the FCS umbrella growing up. My mom's side were gifted bakers and my father's side were excellent sewists and quilters. Through family research, I discovered that one of my great aunts and I both attended the same college to be Home Economics/FCS teachers. We graduated 72 years apart!

FCS Teacher/Department Chair

Amber Tiernan, PhD, NBCT currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Virginia Association for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences and is a FCS teacher/department chair at Prince William County Schools in Northern Virginia. She resides in Warrenton, Virginia with her husband and two daughters.

Uniqueness of Career Journey

I started at IUP in 1999 as an FCS Ed major. This was during a time when not many people were entering the field and programs were starting to close. There were only a handful of schools in Pennsylvania that still offered FCS Ed, also still referred to as Home Economics, during that time period. I was one of ten when I graduated. Most teachers that I encounter now are career switchers into FCS. There are very few of us who have undergraduate FCS Ed degrees.

Inspiration for Career Choice

My motivation for becoming a FCS teacher was because of my teacher, Rebecca Fest. I ended up in 9th grade sewing class as a junior because I had a hole in my schedule. It was the only class open during that time that I was interested in, since I was already in her Child Development class. I fell in love with sewing. I took all of the FCS classes I could as a senior. I had always known I wanted to be a teacher, but it was because I wanted to be like Mrs. Fest when I grew up that I chose to teach FCS. It's been the best decision!

Skills Vital to Success in Career

I believe the ability to be reflective is one of the most vital skills in any career, but especially teaching because it helps shape who you are as a teacher and your career path. You need to continuously reflect on your craft and be able to identify what works and what doesn't. Furthermore, you have to be open to change, be flexible, and have a sense of humor. These skills will help you get the tough spots and not sweat the little things in education.

Best Advice to Someone Considering This Career

The best advice I got when I first started teaching was to never stop learning. My mentor teacher used to tell us "Good teachers steal," in the sense that we should observe others and "steal" best practices to implement in our own classrooms. She would follow that statement with "There are first year teachers who teach like they are 20-year veteran teachers and there are 20-year veteran teachers who teach like they are first year teachers." I'm constantly trying to refine and learn to make myself better as a teacher and a person.

Recommended Educational Preparation

You need to identify what you like and where your passion lies. From teaching the Teachers for Tomorrow and Early Childhood Education programs, I figured out I wanted to be a college professor. I researched the requirements for professors and went from there. One of the best things you can do to help you on your path is to join your professional organization at both the state and national levels. They have so many resources to help you on their websites as well as their yearly conferences.

How the Field Has Changed Over Time

I've seen the demand for FCS teachers start to grow over the last ten years due to the amount of people retiring from the field. But I think we're also starting to see a societal shift in demand for FCS due in part to the pandemic. Millions of people realized the deficit in the acquisition of important life skills in young people.

Projected Changes in the Future

I really believe we're going to see more young people enter the field and see a rise in FCS in schools. If you look at social media, people WANT to learn what we have to offer. We have to work to show others the original vision that Ellen S. Richards had for her "human ecology." I believe that's where we find the future of FCS.