



Carmen Pedersen

Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher

Education

B.S. in Family and Consumer Sciences from the University of Georgia

M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from Valdosta State University

Ph.D in Family and Consumer Sciences Education from Texas Tech University

Lagniappe:

A Little Something Extra

First, teachers must learn to prioritize a work-life balance. There is always more you can do to plan, grade, or create, but the time is not always there. Set a timer on what you're comfortable spending and try not to go much over that. Next, learn your state or district's pay schedule and benefits are feel free to shop around to find the school that offers you the most value for your time. This may mean getting an additional degree or certificate, coaching, or advising a student group. Lastly, but most importantly in my opinion, is to get involved with FCCLA, as this will open your eyes and your students' eyes to the world of opportunities, connections, competitions, and memories. Get to know other FCS teachers through FCCLA and through professional organizations and use those teachers for ideas. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. Also, working with other FCS teachers, you'll find your teacher besties, those people you can call on when you need support, to celebrate, or to vent.

Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher

My name is Carmen Pedersen. I am a family and consumer sciences teacher at Apalachee High School in northeast Georgia.

My Career Path

I decided to become an FCS teacher through my experience with FCCLA. While in college, I worked as an intern from Georgia FCCLA. I obtained my degree in December 2009, and I started teaching that next month in January of 2010. From 2012 to 2013, I completed my master's degree online. The next year, I started my doctoral program and was afforded the opportunity to move from Georgia to Texas to serve as a graduate part-time instructor and to recruit future FCS educators. I lived in Texas from 2015 to 2018, when I completed my degree. I moved home in 2018 and returned to the secondary classroom. In 2019, I was approached to co-author a textbook for middle level FCS students. In 2022, I was named Georgia Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher of the Year, and in 2023, I was named National Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher of the Year.

Inspiration for Career Choice

I grew up in a single-parent, low-income household. When I started high school, I enrolled in FCS classes and learned many skills that my mother either didn't know herself or didn't have time to share with us due to her busy work schedule. Additionally, I became involved in FCCLA. My adviser helped me attend events all over the country and gave me so many new experiences. Those experiences changed the trajectory of my life. I knew then that I wanted to provide those same opportunities and relationships to future students, so I became an FCS teacher like Mrs. Frances Ammons.

Skills Vital to Success in Career

FCS teachers have to be organized to keep track of their lessons, materials, and to-do lists. They must be patient and effectively communicate when working with students, families, community members, and fellow educators. In regards to knowledge, FCS teachers need content knowledge and an understanding of the teaching and learning process. FCS teachers also should be committed to their programs and students and passionate about their subject matter.

Best Advice to Someone Considering This Career

There are a lot of great things about teaching, but teaching definitely has its challenges. I always encourage others to job shadow before starting down any career field to make sure the day to day schedule is similar to your expectations. If becoming an FCS teacher is a good fit for you, you will need to find a program that offers FCS Education as a major or find an alternative route to certification. Once you start teaching, the first 3 years of teaching are the most challenging. Give it time. Be persistent. Don't give up, because it will get easier. Also, keep in mind that each position is different. One school may not be a good fit for you, so you may have to work in different districts with different administrators or different environments to find what works best for you.

Recommended Educational Preparation

In most career fields, job experience goes a long way. Having the proper educational background for a career is a positive aspect in an interview, but actual job experience and internships will help with making you a stand out candidate. The degree concentrations of myself and my leaders are Nutrition, Food Science, Child & Family Studies, and Fermentation Science.

How the Field Has Changed Over Time

As smart phones are increasingly popular, the use of phones in the classroom is as well. This can help, as it provides new apps and software students can use. But it can be a major burden, as it distracts learners and causes various behavior management problems. Artificial Intelligence is a new change that can make for some neat project ideas but can also cause issues with plagiarism and cheating. Aside from technology, student behavior and parent interactions have changed significantly since I began teaching and even more so since COVID. Every school has different expectations for how and if you can assess students' soft skills or work ethic as a part of their professionalism grade (given that we teach CTE courses).