

HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT AND LIVING SKILLS

Functioning successfully in a home environment is a basic skill required of all people. The skills associated with acquiring and maintaining a suitable and appropriate household must therefore be included in curricular experiences as early as possible in the school career and then must be continually stressed into adulthood.

When home-oriented school experiences are provided in the schools, they traditionally are scheduled in the secondary years. Unfortunately, many such experiences are last-minute attempts to bridge the gap between the artificiality of typical curricula and the reality of the world the soon-to-graduate student will face. It therefore becomes imperative that preparation for successful functioning as a member of a household should start with the beginning school years and not just before upper school commencement. School and home experiences must be coordinated in cooperative attempts by teachers, related staff and parents to provide consistency, reinforcement, and practice. The home, as the natural environment, provides a special laboratory where newly acquired skills can be practiced *in vivo*, thus increasing the likelihood that the skills will be maintained and will be expressed independently at a future time.

This module illuminates the critical need for modification and adaptations in school design and equipment. To successfully program for these instructional experiences, it would be valuable to have a model living unit and to have present the furniture and appliances normally found in a home. A broom, dustpan, and vacuum cleaner thus become important educational equipment equal to or surpassing the functional value of a piece of equipment more usually identified as important, such as a tape recorder.

The home not only provides a natural setting in which students may acquire the variety of skills pertinent to that setting, but also provides a place where parents or their counterparts may work with their children on a variety of other skills that transcend settings, for example, communication and interpersonal skills. Because of the critical role parents play in the education of children with disabilities, and because education for this population cannot be restricted to a school schedule, school programs must include a strong parental training program.

The myriad tasks inherent in becoming and being an integral part of a cohesive and successful household must receive the attention of curriculum planners and must be assiduously taught. These tasks include those activities of daily life that are from planning, purchasing, storing and preparing food, as well as purchasing and maintaining clothes. They also extend to the many activities required to satisfactorily maintain the household and its various functional and decorative equipment, appliances, and accessories. Further, they encompass those competencies that make any home a satisfying and pleasurable place to live, to carry out countless household duties and responsibilities, to engage in various interpersonal exchanges, and to spend time in leisure activities.

