Curriculum Connections

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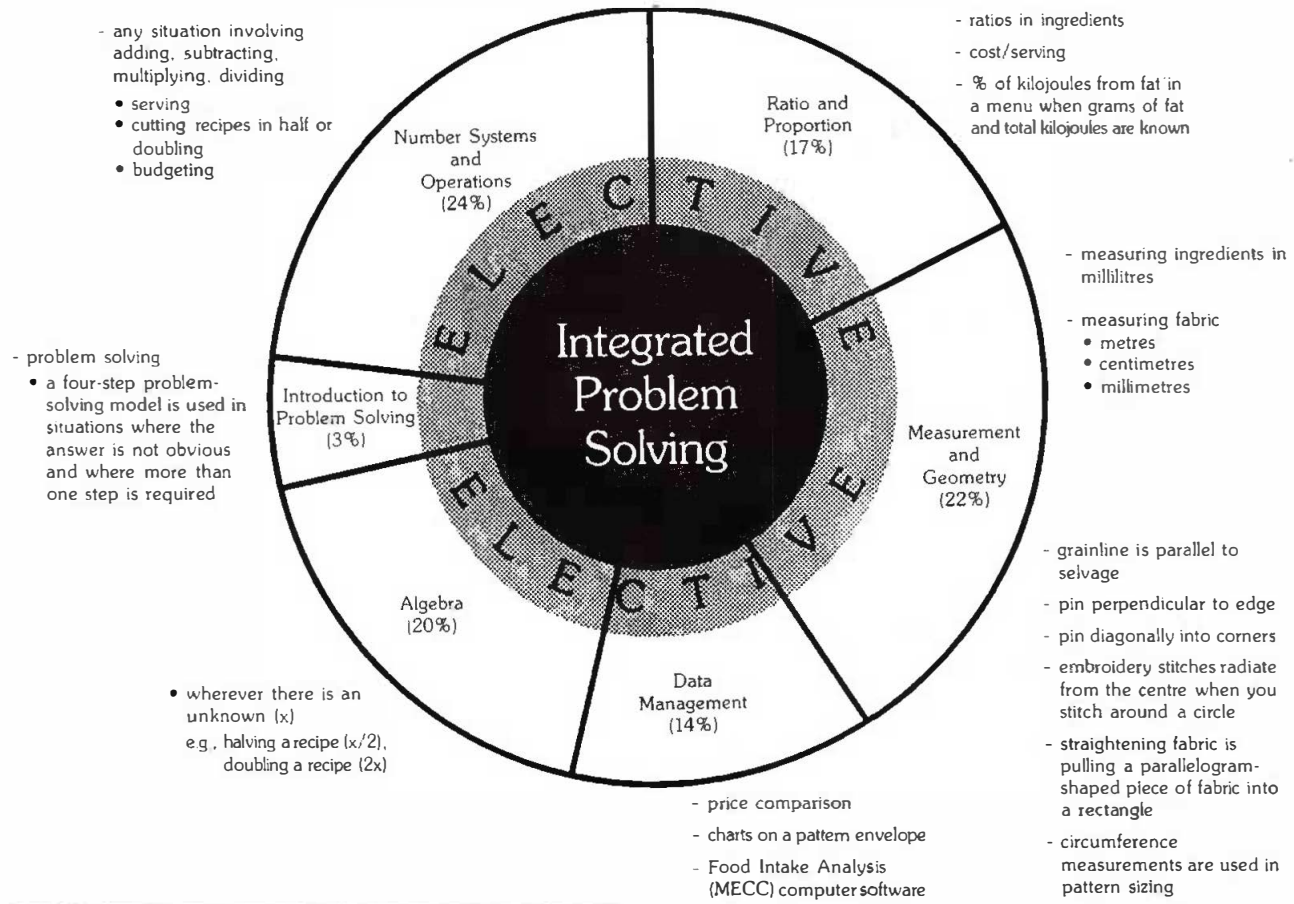
The opportunities for learning within the home economics curriculum are almost endless. I was therefore interested in being a part of a group of Calgary home economics teachers that was examining subject curricula in looking for "curriculum connections." An examination of the junior high math curriculum yielded even more connections than I expected. I found opportunities to incorporate each of the math strands in the home economics program, which in turn supported and developed the rationale and philosophy of the math program. The home economics program provides many relevant and concrete opportunities for students to apply math concepts and, therefore, generate positive attitudes toward using math daily.

The following diagram shows the six strands of the math program, with examples from the home economics program.

Grade 9 Mathematics



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The following activity from the module "A New View of Food" (Foods III, Unit V) requires the student to use five of the six math strands. Example 2 similarly involves five of the six math strands plus the use of the MECC computer program Food Intake Analysis to help students organize and display data and eliminate computations.

Example 1

Visit a supermarket to compare food prices. Record your findings on this chart.

Food Item	Size	Total Cost per Package	Cost per Serving (1 serving = 35 g)
Corn Flakes	350 g		
Corn Flakes	575 g		
Corn Flakes	675 g		
Corn Flakes (generic)	500 g		

What would be the best buy for your family? Explain here.

1. Problem solving because the answer is not obvious
2. Ratio and proportion: $350/\$ = 35/x$
3. Data management: collecting, interpreting, organizing, making predictions
4. Algebra because there is an unknown
5. Number systems and operations because you have to multiply and divide

Example 2

According to Jesse's Food Intake Analysis, he consumed 2,400 calories on Tuesday. The menu contained 80 grams of fat. A healthy diet should not contain more than 30 percent fat calories. What percentage of the calories in this diet comes from fat?

Additional examples of the application of mathematics skills are also found in "Challenges and Choices" and "Personal Money Management" (both in Family Studies III module).

This is the vital question: Is there a better way to help students interpret and understand their world in relation to math than to use math to develop consumer skills, clothing construction skills or other life simulation activities that are part of the home economics program?

My familiarity with the math curriculum has added another dimension to my program. I can relate math situations in home economics to specific concepts in the math program using terms with which students are familiar.

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