

Transcribed from the Family Album Radio Program, a co-production of University of Florida IFAS Extension, the Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences and of WUFT-FM. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our website at familyalbumradio.org

*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

Marriage Preparation¹

Donna Davis²

The state of Florida set a precedent in 1998 when the legislature established the Florida Marriage Preparation And Preservation Act of 1998. Hailed as a model for the nation, the law requires couples to read the Family Law Handbook provided by the clerk of the court and gives them the option of taking a four-hour marriage course prior to their nuptials for a discount of \$32.50 on their marriage license. The act was approved by the Florida legislature with the intent of helping couples better understand the commitment of marriage and to improve communication skills among couples. The penalty for not taking the course is a three-day waiting period for a marriage license and full price on the fee. The state also mandated high schools to incorporate marriage instruction as part of the existing required life management skills course.

Does marriage preparation work? Most family researchers believe the answer is yes. Premarital education can slow couples down and foster deliberation. It sends a message that marriage matters, it can help couples learn options if they need help later, and in some cases, it can lower risks for subsequent marital distress or termination.

But critics also argue over the effectiveness of marriage preparation courses, particularly when offered in schools. No one seems to be arguing that premarital education is a good

1. This document is FAR3002, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. First published November 2007. In the interest of time or clarity, the broadcast version of this script may have been modified. Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Donna Davis, Senior Producer, Family Album Radio, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611. Reviewed by Suzanna Smith, associate professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, University of Florida, and Executive Producer, Family Album Radio.

idea. But debate remains heated about the "wheres, whens, whys and hows" about premarital education.

Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life. "Family Album" is a co-production of University of Florida IFAS Extension, the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences and of WUFT-FM. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our Web site at <http://www.familyalbumradio.org>.

To listen to the radio broadcast:

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/marriageprep.mp3

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/marriageprep.wav