Headteachers’ comments on the influence of the 1986 report

First schools
- We are currently thinking of starting re-structuring our tuckshop and its management. ‘Better’ foods are now included.
- We buy reduced-fat crisps, when available, from the cash-and-carry.
- The report highlighted the time-consuming nature of tuckshops and the negative effects on health—teeth in particular.
- The children have enough sweets at home. A biscuit is better with milk.
- We changed our school policy in response to the last report—we now have a healthy eating policy—i.e., no ‘red’ items in school!

Middle schools
- We are looking at a wholefood supermarket in Halifax with a view to encouraging new lines.
- We try to encourage the children to choose healthy food, i.e., cereal bars and apples.
- We bought low-fat crisps.
- We are attempting to educate the children’s snack food—a long process.
- We stopped selling sweets.
- We sell fewer toffee and chocolate bars.

Upper schools
- The school canteen provides hot snacks at break-time, i.e., sausage rolls, Cornish pasties, chip butties. However, the year tuckshops continue to operate and these are considering the sale of more health-conscious foods.

Special schools
- The report confirmed our original opinions.
- If we decide to run a tuckshop, we have a definite feeling that we would be looking towards healthy eating.


detrimental to health: First schools in particular should stock semi-skimmed milk for children to buy.

10. A working party should be convened to tackle the problems of supplying suitable snack foods to school tuckshops.

Conclusion
The overall picture in Bradford may be highlighted as follows:
1. First schools provide the healthiest ‘tuck’, and have improved since 1986.
2. Middle schools still provide high-fat snacks, but are selling less confectionery. They need to sell more fresh fruit.
3. Upper schools are improving, stocking more fresh fruit, miscellaneous items, and nuts. They need to market their healthy snacks more positively.
4. Special schools are also improving—but none sell fresh fruit yet.

My thanks are due to all the schools that participated in the survey, and to Mrs Joan Phillips for typing the report.

Contact Sue Curtis (Mrs), District Dietician, Tameside General Hospital, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs. OL6 9RW (Tel: 061-330 8373 ext. 6520).

A media study with pupils and parents

Barry Ecuyer
Moorhead Primary School
Alvaston, Derby

A school’s investigation into the television viewing habits of its pupils has proved to be a valuable component of its Media Education programme. As well as introducing elements of questionnaire design and data processing, the results have relevance for PSHE work and have led to the involvement of parents in the questionnaire study and the follow-up meeting.

Work on Media Education has been developing in this school over a number of years. In an attempt to involve the parents more, we arranged an Open Forum at which the BBC, ITV, IBA, and the LEA were represented, along with the independent producer Philip Whitehead. To publicise this event, and to focus attention on the subject of children and their use of television, we devised a questionnaire for parents and a viewing diary for children. These were offered to every school in Derby, and were used by just three of them, including Moorhead Primary School. The results were then returned to parents and members of the public at an Open Forum.

When children are asked to list programmes watched, we have found the results unreliable. For example, programmes may be listed by a variety of names, and peer pressure influences the choice of programmes which a child (as with an adult!) will publicly admit to watching. The diary method we have used eliminates both these factors, and yields, we believe, a more reliable result.

The children’s diary consisted of a listing of all programmes transmitted between 3.30 and 10.30 on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in the second week of February, 1988, together with a separate record for breakfast-time television.

The recording system
In discussion with the older children, it had become apparent that they recognised several different levels of viewing. At one level there is total involvement with the programme. At the other end of the scale there is listening to the soundtrack whilst engaging in other activities, looking at the screen only when stimulated to do so by interesting sounds. We asked all the children to record whatever they watched by entering either a C or a P against the programme—C denoting complete attention, P denoting partial or background attention.

We suggested that the very young ones might simply record ‘viewed’ or ‘not viewed’, but many of them used the differentiating record, which caused no
difficulty for the older children. A total of 151 children took part, their ages ranging from four to 11, as follows:

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Processing the data
If a programme was watched only briefly, it has not been included, and where the diary included a number of programmes being watched simultaneously it was discarded. However, the diary was included even if no programmes were watched.

It is interesting to note that our survey results closely match those of the IBA's survey of this region on the same days.

We used the INFORM databank program, listing programme numbers into separate fields according to day and type of viewing (Mon. C, Mon. P, etc.). Age and sex made up the final fields. Pairs of children working in shifts fed the data in and also did random checks to ensure accuracy.

The data was retrieved by taking a printout of all records containing a particular programme number. By printing such a list for every programme in turn, viewing charts were built up. Children sorted each list of records into C/P groups and each of these into boy/girl groups: although this could have been done by computer, we found it quicker to use child labour!

The parents' survey
Even though the questionnaire forms were anonymous, it was anticipated that there might be a tendency for parents to understate the time their children spend watching television. However, after converting the children's record of programmes watched into minutes of viewing we found that the parents' estimate of viewing time matched, on average, the average viewing time recorded by the children. This was three hours a day, in line with the national average as described in 'Schoolchildren and popular television' (DES, 1983).

Findings
In addition to giving a detailed breakdown of individual programmes watched, leading to a 'Top Ten', some more general results were also obtained.

Average viewing times: Just under half the children watched for more than three hours a day, and 10% watched for over five hours (Table 1). These figures do not include breakfast-time television, which was viewed for an average of 30 minutes a day by 19% of the children. Nor do they include the 5% of children who watched at least one video each day.

Whilst three hours of viewing is a substantial amount, our findings indicate that for 40% of this time television was providing no more than a background to other activities. Talking during programmes was the outstanding cause of argument, especially at the age of five when children most want to talk!

Viewing times and suitable programmes:
Table 2 shows the time-limits set by parents for different ages. However, a majority of parents felt that the 9 p.m. 'watershed' system could not be relied upon, and over 60 post-9 p.m. viewings were recorded. Of the parents, 36% felt that the system of not showing 'adult' programmes before 9 could not be relied on, 28% thought that the system works well, and 29% considered that more information should be given before a programme starts.

Although 61% of parents found the PG rating system useful when choosing a video, those who attended the Forum expressed concern about the lack of information available on video covers.

Too much TV?: In Table 3 the answers from parents who thought that their child did or did not watch too much television are combined with their average estimated viewing times. It seems that an average viewing time of up to three hours is considered acceptable by most parents, although the age of the children is not taken into account in these results.

Conclusion
As a means of encouraging more parental involvement in Media Education, the surveys cannot claim any measure of success. The audience of some 60 people at the heavily-publicised Open Forum included only a dozen or so parents. However, a concerned and supportive 10% is a good base to build on.

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Table 1. Hours of evening television viewing based on records for three weekday evenings in February. These figures are derived from the programmes watched, and do not include use of videos. On average, 'concentrated' viewing occupied 60% of the time; for the other 40% the television was providing a background only. The calculated overall average was just over 3 hours.

Table 2. The latest time allowed for television viewing, as stated by the parents in the survey.

Latest viewing time

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The health educator's hat
John Balding
HEA Schools Health Education Unit
University of Exeter

Stereotyped images are useful and powerful — but are not always accurate. This article explores how personal labels can affect expectations: from professional status within a social context to the more humdrum concept of the boy who spends his time fishing.

As teachers within our own staff rooms, our colleagues have expectations of us. In addition to expert knowledge in our own fields, we also have projected upon us expectations of certain standards of behaviour and particular subject areas that we should be interested in. Socially, when we meet members of other professions, it is not unusual to draw upon particular expertise — for example, to raise dental problems with a dentist or disease problems with the doctor. There is also a tendency to be conscious of aspects of our own behaviour when in the presence of members of other professional groups: how does the presence of a policeman or a clergyman affect conversation and behaviour? Standing in the staffroom one day I juggled with a biscuit and dropped it; it broke into three pieces which, being a dirty biologist at heart, I picked up and ate. This caused considerable hot debate about appropriate behaviour I left before its conclusion, but clearly I had let some people down.

On my arrival one day at the meal table to join colleagues participating in the joys of cafeteria lunch, with my health-education hat apparent, the conversation turned to the perils of smoking and secondary smoking. Mike Golby, a very fit and health conscious colleague, remarked upon some explanations he had recently read in the press of reasons given by intelligent and caring pregnant women and mothers of young children for their continued need to smoke, despite the abundant evidence that it would damage not only their own health but that of their unborn and young children. We think that the press article was based on a journalist's translation of some of Hilary Graham's recent work following earlier researches (Graham, 1987). The explanation was that the activity provided a private space into which the harassed Mum could withdraw and regain composure before returning to the chores of being a parent.

Fishing and smoking

Feeling the relevance of this explanation, I immediately reflected upon the context of questions in the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire for behavioural situations which might provide this withdrawal atmosphere for young people; the question that sprang to mind was: Do you go fishing? Reporting this to my lunch-time colleagues and perhaps being misunderstood (being busy with my pie and chips) Mike's further comment was to observe that whenever his jogging route took him along the Tiverton canal "all the fishermen were smoking". It was inevitable thereafter that we should