The success of the initial training days offered by TACADE has prompted the HEA to extend the number of courses that are available by providing additional funding. At the time of writing 29 courses have taken place, almost 500 participants have been involved — mostly teachers, but with other health professionals such as Health Promotion Officers, Youth Workers, School Nurses and Health Visitors taking part. In addition, 36 more courses are confirmed and over 30 are awaiting details.

Comments from teachers on their ‘likes’ for the smoking and classroom materials have included:
- Clear and well laid-out
- A variety of triggers and strategies
- User-friendly
- Pupil-oriented
- Structured lesson notes
- Progression of lessons
- Skills may be transferred to other areas

FLEXIBILITY

The flexibility of methods of choosing groups and generic materials means many teachers that there are no hard and fast rules about how groups should form. However, there must be adequate time for preparation to allow both pupils and teachers to develop the skills that are needed in order to have a novel approach. It is essential that the classroom environment is as close to real as possible and exercises should be simple and predictable. This is particularly necessary in lessons that are designed to be used in self-confidence of pupils, may take place. If the material is used without forethought then the outcome may be far from desirable, as can happen with any work of this kind. In addition to the training days, the HEA have provided additional funding to TACADE to produce a training manual, due for publication in November 1990. This will provide the opportunity for schools to take on other in-service training. Courses for trainers in the use of the manual are also being provided by TACADE. A second important development of the intention, by the HEA, to publish by early next year a document on how to formulate a school policy on smoking.

DECISIONS

In conclusion, it should be stated that the teachers involved in these courses have highlighted the importance of the development of self-worth and self-confidence in young people in order that they might choose to make informed decisions about a healthy lifestyle.

SAM is one of the ‘bullets’ that may be used by a teacher to reduce the prevalence of smoking among young people. Research has shown that the longer the onset of smoking can be delayed the greater the chance that the young person will not take up the habit, and this is one of the aims of the resource. It is known, however, that approximately 8-7% of children aged 11-12 years may already be ‘regular’ smokers and it is crucial that the educational process for these groups should be appropriate and constructive. Hopefully educational intervention may support a policy of ‘stopping them from starting’ rather than ‘starting them stopping’. The latter could certainly be much more difficult.

For more information on the training courses offered free of charge to schools by TACADE, please contact Louise Marland at 1 Holme Place, The Crescent, Salford M5 QAA (tel. 061-765 8925). Copies of Smoking and Me are available from TACADE at a cost of £7.25.

Contact Margaret Ward (formerly Advisory Teacher for Health Education, Wigan Education Authority), 44 Walker Street Avenue, Greenhill, Wigan WN1 2HR (0942 41564).

Reference:

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JOHN BALDWIN

TERESA CODE

‘Just a Tick’ surveys: a voice for all in the curriculum

The interesting task then for each individual school is to reconcile these differences by taking into account the differing viewpoints, and through discussion and debate to reach an acceptable form of curriculum content. The use of ‘Just a Tick’ therefore, does give the staff and governors an opportunity, perhaps to consider all opinions that have been obtained and considered before making any decisions about the curriculum.

Those topics which show a similarity of response, whether positive or negative, from all groups, put the staff and governors in a strong position to make decisions without further debate. What kind of agreements and differences are likely to occur?

Each school community and catchment area is unique, and the results will never be exactly duplicated elsewhere. But the following results, based on our analysis of over 26,000 questionnaires completed in primary schools in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, give a guide to the likely responses to certain questions:

WINNER

Among topics of high importance for primary children, the ‘winner’ is often Caring for pets, closely followed by First Aid and

Conservation. Also highly placed are likely to be Water safety and Safety at home, Physical fitness for boys, and Care of hair, teeth and skin for girls.

For adults (taking parents, teachers, and health-care professionals together), the high-importance topic is likely to be Safety in traffic, Water safety, and Being honest. Care of hair, teeth and skin, Safety at home, and Being responsible are also likely to be highly placed.

PETS

It is interesting that Caring for pets also appeals to teachers of infant or first school classes, but at the junior or middle school level it appears well down the priority list of choices. Faced with evidence that youngsters right through the primary-school years are much more interested in ‘pets’ than in any other orthodoxy topic such as How my body works or Staying well, curriculum planning in this area may prove more successful if concentrated on ‘pets’ and animals as a way into these human biology topics.

The typically low rating of First Aid by teachers, and the high interest expressed by children, may again force staff and governors to...
face what looks like an unwelcome topic. The reasons for its low priority would have to be considered. Could it be that most teachers do not feel competent to handle it, or because of organisation problems, or because they think the children are too young to learn?

Undoubtedly it could one day be vital to have some knowledge of what to do if First Aid is required, and if such a course were to be offered, it would be useful to have someone from the Road Safety Unit, or a PGA (Public Health Association), to give instruction.


topics

1. How is my body works
2. Eating well
3. Immunisation (vaccinations) and drops
4. First aid
5. Talking with doctors, nurses, dentists
6. Care of hair, teeth, skin
7. Care of eye
8. Care of feet
9. How is a baby is made (human reproduction)
10. Menses and period
11. Food and health
12. Drinking alcohol
13. Drugs and smoking


topics

14. Drugs and smoking
15. Stress and relaxation
16. The difference between boys and girls
17. Physical growth and development
18. Relationships with other boys and girls at the same age
19. Understanding the different groups
20. Feeling sick, feeling worried, anxious
21. Bullying
22. Building self-confidence
23. Making friends
24. Honesty
25. Responsibility for your own behaviour
26. Spare time activities
27. Boresons
28. Caring for pets
29. Good and bad things
30. Questions


topics

31. Stress and relaxation
32. The difference between boys and girls
33. Physical growth and development
34. Relationships with other boys and girls at the same age
35. Understanding the different groups
36. Feeling sick, feeling worried, anxious
37. Bullying
38. Building self-confidence
39. Making friends
40. Honesty
41. Responsibility for your own behaviour
42. Spare time activities
43. Boresons
44. Caring for pets
45. Questions

The complete set of ‘Just A Tick’ questionnaires are intended for pupils, parents, teaching staff, and health-care professionals.

PARENTS

However, our experience based on reports from samples of the 200 schools using this planning method, as well as time spent in the schools, at teachers' meetings, and at parents' feedback evenings, shows that the benefits extend beyond simply 'recruiting differences'. Establishing links with parents has proved to be tremendously important.

So much of health education is concerned with attitudes and habits which are often firmly established at home, that teachers should begin by making children aware of the importance of such factors, and then consider the need for parent education.

Another teacher wrote: ‘Although not all parents returned the questionnaires, the one that did evidently gave much thought to their replies and indicated their interest to the staff.’ In fact the response rate to the parents' questionnaires is typically very high, from 60-70% upwards, and we have cases of schools recording 100% returns. This positive response has implications: