John Balding

How clean are your kids?

The exercise was enjoyable and the sharing of ideas was vigorous. There was always more than one group composing statements for the same target audience so that clarification through comparison was facilitated.

The focus of the exercise was the reports on their own behaviour and the challenge was to promote some action based on the evidence. The exploration for the children was a real situation in which they were identified as too good and bad practice in personal hygiene. Methods of putting pressure on their peers through information from teachers, shock horror poster/leaflet routines, and via messages home to parents were formulated. The opportunity to improve practice by improving the facilities was also lost on some with the exercise.

To what extent involvement in this exercise heightened awareness of good practice and promoted and attitudes towards it remains untested.

The same exercise using other selections of tables to suit science, PE, English and home economics would be easy to contrive. Doubtless other target groups for communication and to advise on action could be

Percentage

0% 25% 50% 75% 100% 125%

1/2 times 3/4 times 5/6 times

Never Sometimes When Pass

No. times

Percentage

0% 25% 50% 75% 100% 125%

Never Sometimes When Pass

No. times

The data to produce these histograms was read off the original tables and typed into an Archimedes A3000 computer. It was then read into the GraphBox package (Minerva Software, Exeter) and turned into the graphs labelled in the same package.

The graphs, saved as files, were printed using the PostScript driver supplied with the A3000, in conjunction with the IDna package (also supplied free). The IDna package is necessary to print graphics, and can also be used to include extra text and different fonts, but the labelling on the illustrated histograms was done using GraphBox.

The data must be typed in rows separated by commas, the standard format for numerical data. This can be done using 1/2/4 (also supplied free), but we used Mathematix 3.0 (Coltan Software, Cambridge). This can manipulate numbers as well as text with great power.

We hope to be able to offer schools discs readable by their own systems, and not just by the route described above. This is an exciting possibility, and we are grateful to Mike Wood of Minerva Software for his invaluable help in this work.