EILEEN ROWE
Co-ordinating the Suffolk approach

High profile
The decision was made to make a high-profile start with a major Conference Workshop day in 1989 for Health Authority officers. Co-operation from these colleagues was instant, since they had been recently involved in the planning of the Suffolk Health Authority's Health Promotion Conference. The workshop was well attended, and provided a stimulus for further work.

Working as a co-ordinated team will ensure that all our advisory teachers take the same philosophy with them into our schools. It is already clear that schools appreciate consistency at a time of rapid change.

Food
The idea of 'love' was explored at the primary stage using 'Draw and Write' techniques. This illustrated younger pupils' perspectives of 'love' in family relationships and care for pets, and it illustrated how 'caring' was already seen by pupils as part of loving relationships.

Plan
The plan for the secondary stage in the context of sexual maturation, emotions for pop- idols and media images. Participants explored ways in which the teenage years could be a starting point for exploring 'Responsible parenting'. This debate led to an introduction to more structured sex education and HIV/AIDS education using role-play and decision-making exercises.

Suffolk's curriculum policy has always made collaborative thinking possible. The Suffolk philosophy was to prove the platform for general co-ordination. The County Advisers for physical education, science, and social education have made the planning team and we decided to bring together all our advisory teachers for a common in-service programme.

Reinforced
We reinforced the need for active learning and for using visitors as resources rather than as lecturers. The workshop illustrated the importance of progression — for example, the idea of 'love' was explored at the primary stage using 'Draw and Write' techniques. This illustrated younger pupils' perspectives of 'love' in family relationships and care for pets, and it illustrated how 'caring' was already seen by pupils as part of loving relationships.

Envisable
Since April 1990 we have been in the enviable position of having three advisory teachers for health education — two funded in the ESC and one from Regional Health Authority funding.

Broad and scope
This development is in its trial period, but schools have responded positively. The most notable outcomes have been the increased interest in the breadth and scope of health education within the advisory team — where it has once been a matter of developing elements of health education in isolation from one another.

A new advisory teacher invited to work with a school on one aspect of health education is more likely to respond to a collaborative proposal to work alongside a colleague as part of a team.

An example of this approach was the request for help in 'improving the cookery corner', which was to focus on 'choosing foods, and nutrition', but then developed into 'designing a healthy sandwich' — an activity which quickly became an excellent result for Design and Technology. Involving another primary advisory teacher was one way of working which we thought of good practice for this new foundation stage.

The development is an example of how health education components can be an explicit element of broader curriculum planning.
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School events

One event, scheduled for the autumn term, is a Suffolk focus on health education. The hope is that if not all schools in the county will put a particular focus on health education over an identified period of time.

We are not asking for extra work, but rather for emphasis on current and new practice, with open invitations for parent and governor involvement, and pupil-produced exhibitions. The idea is that each school plans its own event — we wished to avoid expensive central exhibitions which attract only a limited audience. At present we have no idea how successful this will be!

Health Authority personnel have already indicated that they will be willing to set up parent-focused programmes over the same period of time to reinforce the nature of adult collaboration in developing a healthy lifestyle.

Some examples of schools' interest are being collated. These include a high school which has used the formal opening of its Health Related Fitness Studio as a focus; another is offering parents the opportunity to 'design and make' their own non-alcoholic beverages in place of the usual coffee-break in the morning. A series of governors' training sessions will be taking place in early spring to reinforce the importance of health education and provide governors with workshop experiences.

Child abuse

There is a county training team for child abuse and protection, consisting of a leader from social services, a psychologist, a court officer, and a Health Authority expert.

This jointly-funded team is responsible for training specialist and training groups. The teacher is also involved in developing a structured family education programme (5-18 years) as a context for sex education and for secondary child protection issues — we would wish to see all our pupils involved in some work which explores the needs of young children and young people and which examines the strategies which can give rise to abuse of any family member.

Responsibility

The team has developed a detailed "needs identification" process from which other aspects of our health education planning can benefit. Personal and social education has always been identified as a responsibility of every Advisor in Suffolk. It is a responsibility which we cannot afford to avoid, and it is the context for our curriculum development.

A formal policy document is nearing completion, and this is the contextual document for co-ordinated in-service work for health education. Working as a co-ordinated team will ensure that all our advisory teachers take the same philosophy with them into our schools. It is already clear that schools appreciate consistency at a time of rapid change.

The move towards co-ordination of health education materials has happened swiftly — the decision was surprisingly easy to negotiate. It would have been impossible, however, if colleagues had been unwilling to set aside territorial interests. The negotiation has been possible because of commonly-held philosophies about teaching and learning and a commitment to uphold the particular expertise of individuals within the co-ordinating team.

Management

We have a tight management structure which has ensured that decisions are made and developments are discussed and clarified before any initiative takes place — at times this can seem constraining if a particularly good idea is not viewed as one person.

However, the value of clear targets and success criteria is already evident and these prevent the main developments becoming fragmented into many individual responses. The range of levels at which co-ordination is now developing suggests that individuals feel that this is positive and supportive. Perhaps most important the challenge has been a stimulant.

Contact Eileen Rowe, County Advisor for Home Economics and Social Education, Education Dept., St Andrew House, County Hall, Ipswich IP4 1LQ, Suffolk (0473-264771).

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Wordsearch


Can you find the six risk factors in this wordsearch?

Clue: The words form a shape related to the disease they are associated with!