

Only purchasers of the DVD are authorised to make use of these notes.

'Learning Together'

Developing activities for pupils to take home and share with parents is a common approach employed by most schools. However, the *'Learning Together'* concept, by asking parents to come into school and work alongside the children, takes this involvement a step further. But to work successfully, it is important to choose the most appropriate topic. In 1998 the Government published its 10-year strategy for tackling drugs misuse and its recommendations included:

'Prevention should start early, with broad life skills approaches at Primary School and built on over time.'

'Because of the complexity of the problem, partnership is essential at every level.'

The DVD looks at how Suffolk primary schools, by using the *'Learning Together'* concept, have successfully introduced 'drug education' as a PSE theme from Key Stage One onwards. The programme is divided into the 5 steps that should be considered by schools or Education Authorities contemplating a similar approach and can be stopped after each section to open discussion or answer questions - these notes provide further information and facts to support this approach. **Apart from being used to brief teaching staff, the DVD can be played at the Parents Meeting.**

Why involve parents in Drug Education?

- By actively involving parents, a more positive attitude towards learning and school is achieved.
- By sharing the experience, it provides an opportunity for parents to develop communication skills with their children.
- Provides parents with an access to information that they may previously have found either difficult to obtain or understand.
- Demonstrates that parents and schools have a shared responsibility in drug education and that an ongoing programme during Primary years provides a solid foundation for future development
- By involving parents, the school is recognising that parents have skills and experience that can enhance learning.
- Provides an opportunity to explain the objectives behind the safety issues being debated in school.
- Demonstrates how parents can play their part in contributing to their children's personal safety.

STEP 1 - Planning

The initial issue needs to be establishing, from your curriculum, where 'Learning Together' would be most appropriate and the topics to be covered e.g. safety of medicines, substance misuse. Develop a checklist of the issues to be resolved and set realistic dates by which these can be achieved e.g. decide on Activity topics, establish & plan the Activity exercises (step 1), parent meeting (step 2), the Activity Session (step 3), evaluation (step 4), celebration (step 5)

Some of the Issues To Consider:

- When would be the best time in the school day for the Activity Session?
- How much time is needed to prepare the Activity and supporting exercises?
- Who will be responsible to provide support material for the exercises?
- Are there any costs involved – if so how will these be covered?
- How much space will be needed for the initial parent meeting, the Activity & evaluation?
- How many staff/parents will be required to help at each stage?
- Do you want to involve professional assistance e.g. police, community worker?
- How can you ensure that all parents are invited to the parent meeting?
- Is a follow up letter needed after the invitation letter has been sent?
- If parents are unable to attend the Activity can others be approached – e.g. governors?
- Can all parents read and write?
- For parents with younger children - can a suitable play area be established for them?
- Should a reminder letter be sent to parents reminding them of the Activity Session?
- Who will be responsible for evaluation?

Planning – sample letter to parents

The following example can be used to invite parents to attend the initial meeting prior to the Activity Session taking place. One idea is to involve the children in addressing their own envelope to establish an initial link between school and parent with this Activity.

'As part of this terms work in Personal & Social Education we will be focusing on the topics of & We believe that parent participation in these sessions is very important and we would therefore like to invite you to join with us and work with your child on in the school hall/classroom. During this Activity Session we shall take part in exercises to help children understand the main issues and we hope as many parents as possible will be able to work with their own child on this occasion.

To find out more about this project, how you can help and how we plan to organise the day it would be useful if you could attend a Pre-Activity meeting on at in the school hall/classroom. At this meeting we will also be showing a DVD 'Learning Together' demonstrating how this approach has been successfully used in other schools. Please complete the reply slip and return it to the school.'

I will/will not be able to attend the Pre-Activity meeting on

Signed Child's name Class

STEP 2 - The Parent Meeting – Objectives

This meeting provides an invaluable opportunity to:

- Explain that the Activity Session is part of an ongoing PSE programme
- Emphasise how important it is, particularly with drug education, to establish open discussion between school, parent and child
- Explain that other adults can attend in their place – vital to ensure that each pupil will be working with an adult
- Assure parents that teaching staff will be in attendance and directing the Activity Session
- Outline how the Activity Session will be organised and how the different groups will be established – each working on an individual exercise
- Outline what the individual exercises are and the objectives of each
- Assure parents that the exercises are non threatening and non judgemental
- Comment on others who will be assisting on the day e.g. local police, community workers
- Provide an opportunity for parents to ask questions, voice opinion etc.

'*Learning Together*' can play an important role in the meeting by reassuring parents that the scheme has been successfully used in other schools.

Parent Meeting - Agenda

As with all meetings it is important to have an agenda and an idea of the time that you intend to spend discussing each topic. The following is an example of a structure comprising of key comments that could be used to explain the objectives of '*Learning Together*' and provide details of the Activity Session.

- Welcome, thank you for attending
- Introduce the meeting and then play the video '*Learning Together*'

The DVD can either be played in sections or played complete. The key points to be discussed should include:

- The topics and objectives of your Activity Session (*e.g. part of ongoing PSE programme continuing throughout schooling years*)
- Importance of introducing drug education at Primary level (*key facts/figures, Govt. findings.*)
- Benefits of involving parents in your Activity Session (*see introduction card*)
- How you plan to run your Activity Session (*groups each with an individual exercise*)
- The exercises you will be running (*details and possibly dummy run one*)
- Open question/answer session
- Establish who can attend (*substitutes, others helping on the day*)

STEP 3 - The Activity Session

Before the Activity Session commences the teacher will need to:

- Prepare pupils for the session e.g. behaviour issues, working with others, responding to adults etc
- Plan the layout of the venue according to how many groups there will be
- Organise the support material for the exercises including pens, pencils, adequate supply of answer sheets, group table numbers etc
- Ensure a strict and workable timetable for the Activity Session is established and outlined to all those helping
- Decide how to plan the groups – who will be in each, seating required etc

At the beginning of the Activity Session:

- Before commencing the Activity, have children seated on floor in the groups they will be divided into with adults standing behind.
- Invite adults to join their children
- Briefly outline what will happen i.e. working in groups, teacher directs changeover, leave all support material for next group etc
- Once everyone clear, direct the groups to the individual workstations each of which should be equipped with all the necessary support material required.

STEP 4 - Evaluation

After the Activity Session is concluded it is important to evaluate the session and this should be handled as two separate meetings one with the parents and one with the children. An example of how to achieve this is set out below:

- Thank adults for attending and children for participating
- Review the learning with parents and children together to establish any key points that can be discussed at the individual evaluation meetings
- Children then return to classroom and given the chance to comment without parents in attendance
- Parents have own debrief/evaluation meeting – again chance to speak without children overhearing – supported by coffee/tea etc.
- At the end of the parent evaluation, remind parents of date of Celebration Assembly

STEP 5 - Celebration Assembly

By inviting parents into morning assembly the Celebration provides the chance to build on the partnership between school, parent and child. The school should consider providing a memento of

the Activity possibly in the form of a simple certificate outlining date, topics discussed and name of recipient. The assembly should be arranged no more than one week after the Activity Session.

Having had the benefit of several days passing since the Activity Session, the Celebration Assembly is also an informal opportunity for parents to add to the comments they made at evaluation.

FACTS & FIGURES

Government White Paper – ‘Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain’

- Drugs Misuse is most common amongst people in their teens and early twenties but the average age of first drug use is becoming younger
- The earlier a young person starts taking drugs, the greater the chance they have of developing a serious drug problem
- Most young people who take drugs do so out of curiosity, boredom or peer pressure
- Amongst young people there is a strong correlation between the use of illegal drugs and the use of volatile substances, tobacco and alcohol
- Almost 50% of young people are likely to take drugs at some time in their lives but only 20% of these will become regular misusers (i.e. at least once a month) with a tiny minority of that group taking drugs on a daily basis.
- Family and peer networks are the most decisive influences on the development of drug misuse amongst young people

Roehampton Institute Survey

- One third of youngsters considered cigarettes easy to obtain
- Young smokers are 22 times more likely to use illicit drugs than non-smokers
- Young regular drinkers have tried a greater number of illicit drugs than irregular drinkers
- 96% of 11 to 13 year olds and 70% of 14 to 16 year olds have never tried an illicit drug
- 75% of secondary pupils thought young people should be taught about drugs

Health Education Authority

- Average age of first cigarette – 8 years old

Aggleton P Health Promotion & Young People

- 20% of young people aged 9 to 15 years have had their first alcoholic drink by the age of 8 years and almost 90% by the age of 13 years